

McGILL UNIVERSITY

INCEST: CAUSALITY AND TREATMENT

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by

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ABSTRACT

This research project focused on the treatment of the incestuous family. The main purposes were to find out: (1) if there is a theoretical body of knowledge concerning the problem of incest, and (2) if this knowledge is being utilized in intervention techniques with the individuals involved in an incest situation. In doing this, the possible rôle of social workers in this area was studied. In addition, the study may be seen as preliminary to further research.

The design of the study was exploratory descriptive. It consisted of two parts. The major section was a literature review of the psychosocial causes of incest and its effects on the family, with a focus on suggested modes of intervention. The review was based on all current psychological and sociological material on incest since 1900 available at the McGill libraries. The second and minor part of the project consisted of a survey of ten agencies in Montreal which were expected to be in contact with incest cases, with the purpose of finding out what therapeutic approach is taken. The agencies comprised correctional, family and children services. They were studied in terms of four aspects - number of incest cases, referral source, treatment interventions and knowledge of the literature.

The literature findings describe incest as generally occurring in a family setting with all the members playing a rôle. Treatment of the family, as individuals or in various groupings, is recommended. The findings of the agency survey, although inconclusive in themselves, indicate that the workers are not familiar with the literature on incest, and current treatment interventions are based on individual style and agency approach rather than on theoretical knowledge.

Research questions based on the findings were formulated. Points of relevance for social work practice were also discussed. It was suggested that social workers should have a more theoretical knowledge of the incest problem and should develop policies and techniques to deal with it.

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A.B.P.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Origin of the Study

The researcher's past working experience on a forensic ward of a psychiatric hospital brought her into contact with several incest cases. These were usually the fathers in a father-daughter incest relationship who had been sent by the courts for assessment with regard to fitness to stand trial. Members of the "offender's"<sup>1</sup> family, usually the wife and the victim involved, were contacted for the purpose of obtaining a social history. At that time the researcher became aware of the complexity of the family dynamics in such incestuous cases. However, since the offender was usually not "insane",<sup>2</sup> he was declared fit to stand trial and was sentenced to imprisonment.<sup>3</sup> With the father incarcerated,

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<sup>1</sup> Incest is a criminal offence.

<sup>2</sup> "Defence of Insanity:

"(1) Where, upon the trial of an accused who is charged with an indictable offence, evidence is given that the accused was insane at the time the offence was committed and the accused is acquitted,

(a) the jury, or

(b) the judge or magistrate, where there is no jury, shall find whether the accused was insane at the time the offence was committed and shall declare whether he is acquitted on account of insanity." Canada, Department of Justice, Criminal Code and Selected Statutes, 1973, XVII, sec. 542, p. 291.

<sup>3</sup>

According to section 150 (2) of the Criminal Code the maximum sentence is fourteen years. However, the cases the writer was dealing with usually received sentences from six to twenty-four months. A psychiatrist at the hospital made the observation that at one point the father was often incarcerated until the youngest daughter was old enough to leave the home and that in recent years there had been a decrease in the length of sentences.

the family usually received financial assistance but there was no other agency involvement. The researcher's concern was aroused since she had become aware of the multiple problems in these families and could not see how the removal of the father rectified the situation.

Certain questions were raised. What are the causes of incest? Does the mother/wife play a rôle? How do family members relate after the arrest? Do they blame the victim? How does the wife and mother feel? How does the community see them? What happens when the father returns? Why do some families take the father back while others refuse to have anything to do with him?

The present research evolved out of the above concerns on the part of the writer with the main focus on two questions:

- (1) Does a theoretical body of knowledge concerning the problem of incest exist?
- (2) Is it utilized in intervention techniques with the individuals involved in an incest situation (offender and family members)?

#### Primary Aims

The primary aims of this research are as follows:

1. To carry out a literature review of the psycho-social causes of incest and the effects of incest on family members, with a focus on suggested modes of intervention.
2. To examine a limited number of agencies in Montreal which could be expected to be in contact with incest cases in order to find out what therapeutic approach is taken.

3. To formulate questions for further research.
4. To examine the potential rôle of social workers in dealing with the problem of incest.

### History of the Incest Taboo

A brief history of the incest taboo is described in order to provide a comprehensive background of the phenomenon of incest.

#### A. Incest in myth and scripture

"Man invents his gods, saints and heroes. And he endows them with those very qualities and forms of behaviour which are his own or which correspond with his more or less conscious wishes, tendencies or ideals." <sup>1</sup> Masters states that "novelists, playwrights, poets and literary critic-essayists have made a greater contribution to the understanding of incest than have scholars and scientists." <sup>2</sup> There are several examples of incest among the gods in early Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Persian myths, as well as in the Old Testament narratives of the Hebrews.

Brother-sister and mother-son sexual relations were frequent among the gods. Maisch describes the relationship from Greek mythology between Mother Earth and her son, Uranos, which gave birth to six sons and six daughters. <sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Maisch, Incest, trans. by Colin Bearne (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1973), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> R.E.L. Masters, Patterns of Incest (New York: The Julian Press, 1963), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> "Kronos, one of the sons, knew of his father's evil deeds and that he was his brother. Kronos had an especially close relationship with his mother and hated his father as an oedipal rival. One day Kronos surprised his brother-father, Uranos, as he was having marital coitus with Mother Earth and he castrated him. Kronos then married his sister, who gave him three sons and three daughters. Kronos is unmanned by his son, Zeus, who mounts the throne of the gods and marries his sister, Hera." Maisch, Incest, p. 13.

The labors of Sigmund Freud have made the most famous case of mythical incest, that of Oedipus. Oedipus was separated in infancy from his mother, Jocasta. Later, the two unwittingly married and two sons and two daughters were born of their union. Then, the incest became known. Oedipus blinded himself; Jocasta committed suicide by hanging; the two sons, victims of the incest curse, killed each other; and the two daughters, also victims of the curse, were buried alive. This version of the myth - that of Sophocles - was the one used by Freud. In an earlier version, the incest goes unpunished. The change in the ending of the myth paralleled, it would seem, changes in Greek attitudes and practices.<sup>1</sup>

Masters also cites several incestuous unions from the Old Testament.

For example, we are all "children of incest", meaning incest was the original sin. Adam and Eve were either brother and sister or father and daughter. Their children were also obliged to commit incest in order to carry on the species. There is also the history of Ham, the Negro son of Noah, who "is supposed to have committed the incestuous and homosexual assault upon his father while Noah lay in a drunken stupor. For this, Ham was condemned to unending slavery, along with all his children after him."<sup>2</sup>

#### B. Incest in history

There are many accounts of incest in primitive tribes, and succeeding eras. "Dionysios invites you to dinner for the marriage of his children at Ischyron's house tomorrow, the 30th, at the 9th hour."<sup>3</sup> This wedding invitation has survived from the Roman Egyptian second century.

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<sup>1</sup> Masters, Patterns of Incest, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-15.

<sup>3</sup> Luciano P.R. Santiago, The Children of Oedipus (New York: Libra Publishers, Inc., 1973), p. 43.

For thousands of years the Egyptian royalty engaged in brother-sister marriages. Cleopatra was a product of such an incestuous relationship. Will Durant cites that in the second century, two-thirds of the citizens of Arsinoe were involved in sibling marriages. In Persia, incestuous marriage was looked upon as being holy and such unions were legally sanctioned for the ruling and priestly classes. King Cambyses married both his elder and his youngest sister. In Italy, incest was common among the popes.<sup>1</sup> The Roman Empire, under the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, prohibited and punished incest.

The laws were very strict and the bans on marriage extended to seventh cousins, godparents and relations of the priest who had baptised or confirmed a person. In the first century B.C., the punishment was death by throwing the offender from a cliff and later death was by burning. It is interesting to note that Ancient Rome did not punish incest as a crime in itself, but only in connection with certain marriage laws.<sup>2</sup> "Although, as A.S. Diamond has remarked, 'incest is one of the earliest crimes known to the law, along with murder by magic and a few sacral offences', it is in fact one of the latest crimes to enter the English criminal law calendar, dating as it does from 1908."<sup>3</sup>

As indicated above, incest is not a modern invention. Some current writers question whether there should be a taboo at all. Masters poses such questions in his evaluation of the effects of the taboo.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Maisch, Incest, pp. 21-30.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 26-33.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 219.

<sup>4</sup> Masters, Patterns of Incest, pp. 193-201.

It has recently been reported that a special government committee in Sweden is attempting to do away with the incest prohibition. This would result in incestuous relations being treated like any other sexual act.<sup>1</sup>

### C. Reasons for prohibition of incest

There have been many different kinds of explanations and the researcher will limit herself to the more general ones.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, objections to incestuous unions were still of a predominantly ethical, social and religious nature.<sup>2</sup> "They appear to have believed that incest was unnatural; and they disapproved of such unions, too, on the grounds that the family's range of social relationships would be narrowed."<sup>3</sup> This is closely related to the notion of prohibition for the purpose of enhancing socio-economic interests. In 1889, E.B. Tylor reported that he saw the ban on incest and the necessity of having to marry outside a certain group as a means of increasing the chances of survival.<sup>4</sup> Margaret Mead in 1959 reported that when she asked a certain Arapesh his attitude toward incest he responded:

What, you want to marry your sister? Are you not quite right in the head? Don't you want any in-laws? Can't you see that you can gain at least two in-laws if you marry another man's sister and another man marries your sister? With whom will you go hunting and till the fields, and who can you visit?<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Editorial, Montreal Star, February 27, 1976.

<sup>2</sup> Maisch, Incest, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Masters, Patterns of Incest, p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Maisch, Incest, p. 47.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 47-48.

At the end of the nineteenth century a biological or physiological notion was purposed: the Frenchman, de Maitre, believed he found negative hereditary effects of incest and inbreeding.<sup>1</sup> Westermarck in 1889 asserted that members of the same household have an innate predisposition to lose sexual interest in each other and hence to avoid mating.<sup>2</sup> Ninkoff in 1961 stated that incest is to some degree biologically harmful.<sup>3</sup>

The French sociologist, Durkheim, in 1898, purposed the theory of totemism which is somewhat similar to the biological theory. However, in this view the people are not bound by consanguinity but by a totem.<sup>4</sup> Inbreeding between members of the same name-given totem was a great sin since they believed that the totem was of the same blood as the man or the clan to which he belonged.<sup>5</sup>

Anthropological studies, which have been done on primitive peoples and kin-based social systems, have focused on the description and analysis of the basic forms of the incest taboo and its extensions. Seligman, in her study of clans and the classificatory system in 1929, stressed how the

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<sup>1</sup> Maisch, Incest, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Albert Ellis, The Origins and the Development of the Incest Taboo, trans. by Edward Sagarin (New York: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1963), p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> "The totem itself is a being, animate or inanimate, and generally a plant or an animal, from which the group is reputed to be descended, and which serves the members as both an emblem and a collective name." Emile Durkheim, Incest: The Nature and Origin of the Taboo, trans. by Edward Sagarin (New York: Lyle Stuart, Inc., 1963), p. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-24.

incest taboo creates solidarity within the family.<sup>1</sup> She contended that exogamy develops out of the incest taboo rather than forming the basis of the concept.<sup>2</sup>

Freud purposes the well-known psychological theory:

Freud's well-known explanation of the origins of the taboo on incest in "Totem and Taboo" is that at one stage in the history of the race, the father had absolute right over all the members, and especially over the daughters whom he jealously guarded and initiated sexually. Freud postulates that the sons rose against the father and destroyed him because he did not allow them access to the young women. The origin of the incest taboo is seen as resulting from this revolt of the sons. After killing the father they were able to possess the women, but for their own protection, and because of guilt, they created a defence against the father/daughter incest.<sup>3</sup>

The sociologist, Davis, in 1948, saw the incest taboo as being very useful in the development of rôle theory. He stated that the family has certain social functions which it can carry out only as an organized group. Its members must "occupy a definite set of mutual statuses, interact according to definite behavior patterns, and are motivated by reciprocal attitudes and sentiments." The incest taboo helps to prevent confusion and maintain family organization by confining sexual relations and sentiments to the married pair alone.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Brenda Z. Seligman, "Incest and Descent: Their Influence on Social Organization", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, LIX (1929), pp. 232-372.

<sup>2</sup> Exogamy refers to "the prohibition of marriage within the clan". Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> Bruno M. Cormier, Miriam Kennedy and Jadwiga Sangowicz, "Psychodynamics of Father-Daughter Incest", Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal, VII, 5 (1962), p. 212.

<sup>4</sup> Kingsley Davis, Human Society (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), pp. 401-2.

If brother-sister relations were allowed: (a) sexual rivalry would develop between brothers and between sisters, (b) there would be confusion, since a brother would be a child's father and his uncle, (c) a family would arise within a family. If parent-child relations were permitted: (a) sexual rivalry would develop between mother and daughter and between father and son, and this would be incompatible with the sentiments necessary between the two, (b) there would be confusion of statuses if children were born - the brother of his own mother, the son of his own sister, stepson of his own grandmother, (c) it would be contrary to authoritarian relations which are so essential to the fulfilment of parental duties (for example, father-daughter incest would put the daughter in a position of subordination), (d) control by the father and his jealous resentment of outsiders would hinder the girl's opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

#### Age-old beliefs about incest

In early studies certain isolated phenomena such as poor housing, poverty, alcohol, low intelligence, hypersexuality and rural environments were pointed out as sole causes of incest. These factors have been cited as major determinants of incest until very recently, and despite current research it seems that these misconceptions still prevail and are widely held. Such misconceptions are found in the following studies:

##### 1. Studies supporting beliefs

Krafft-Ebing (1886) attributed incest behaviour to

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Kingsley Davis, Human Society, pp. 401-2.

great sensuality and defective ideas of law and morals... Drinking and a state of intoxication in men; weak-mindedness which does not allow the development of the feeling of shame, and which, under certain circumstances, is associated with eroticism in females <sup>1</sup> - these facilitate the occurrence of incestuous acts.

Weiner summarizes a number of reports which stress the importance of inadequate housing, rural environments and lower social class living as major contributors, if not sole causes, of incest behaviour: Sondon's study in 1936 of 241 incest families who were brought before Swedish courts in the period from 1913 to 1933 found that (1) all of the offenders were from the lower social class, (2) more offences were committed in rural environments, and (3) crowded and bad living quarters play important rôles. Other studies which support Sondon's idea of lower social stratum are: Flugel in 1926, Ebner in 1937 and Guttmacher in 1951. Scherrer in 1959 supports Sondon on rural findings of incest. He stressed "the difficulty of persons living in remote rural areas to establish normal emotional and social contacts outside the family." Ebner's study in 1937, Hirning's in 1947 and Szabo's study in 1957 also cited "inadequate housing as a causative factor." <sup>2</sup> Svend Riemer in his study in 1940 of agricultural and industrial workers in Sweden also emphasized the lower class phenomenon. <sup>3</sup>

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1

Masters, Patterns of Incest, p. 79.

2

Irving B. Weiner, "On Incest: A Survey", Excerpta Criminologica, IV (1964), 138-39.

3

Svend Riemer, "A Research Note on Incest", American Journal of Sociology, XLV, 4, (1940), pp. 566-75.

## 2. Studies refuting beliefs

With regard to the aforementioned rural findings, Riemer in 1940 pointed out that while rural incest rates are relatively high in Sweden, there are more occurrences in urban than in rural areas in Germany and Denmark.<sup>1</sup> Weinberg's study in 1955 found that incest rates in the United States and England were not sensitive to the rise of urbanisation or increase in population.<sup>2</sup>

The foregoing beliefs concerning social class factors have also been questioned: Cavallin comments that the incest cases in his study in 1966 were of successful, middle-class professional families.<sup>3</sup> Weiner notes "Kubo (39) [1959] found that in Japan, although a bad social environment is common in incest cases, it is by no means essential."<sup>4</sup>

Nurberger's study in 1955 reported similar findings to Gerchow's study. They refute the above beliefs concerning the rôle played by inadequate housing in leading to incest. Gerchow "in observing the post-war psychological impact of wartime experiences, found that incest barriers are often violated when there are neither miserable social conditions nor scarcity of dwellings and when the primary social situation of the offender is satisfactory."<sup>5</sup>

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1

Riemer, "A Research Note on Incest".

2

S. Kirson Weinberg, Incest Behavior (New York: Citadel Press, 1955), p. 40.

3

Hector Cavallin, "Incestuous Fathers: A Clinical Report", The American Journal of Psychiatry, CXXII, 10 (1966), p. 1132.

4

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 139.

5

Ibid.

The limitations of the sampling procedures used in early sociological studies were elaborated by Weiner:

The necessity of relying on criminal and court records to study large numbers of incest cases is itself a contaminating influence inasmuch as conviction rates for all personal crimes are more numerous among lower than middle or upper class groups. One would therefore expect to find large numbers of lower class persons in prison populations, independent of incestuous behavior, and it is an error to infer that incest is relatively rare in the middle and upper classes merely because known incest offenders are mainly of the working class.<sup>1</sup>

Summary. -- In early studies, isolated phenomena such as poverty, alcoholism and overcrowding were pointed out as sole explanations of incest. Although such factors are significant, incest has been found where such a factor as poverty does not exist. Also it can be noted that there seems to be a differential response to similar situations and there are many poor families where incest does not exist. Today the tendency is to disregard the view of unilateral causality and to look at it in terms of multi-causality or psycho-social causes.

#### Relevance to Social Work

Incest is both an individual problem and a social problem. Cormier, Kennedy and Sangowicz describe it as "an extreme symptom of family maladjustment." It involves a breakdown in the rôle structure of the family and has psychological damaging effects on individuals and families.<sup>2</sup>

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1

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 139.

2

Cormier, Kennedy, Sangowicz, "Psychodynamics", pp. 203-17.

Social work has been defined as a professional attempt to help solve problems in social functioning.<sup>1</sup> Incest involves the family and in social work

... emphasis is on the importance of the family in molding and influencing behavior. Social workers attempt to understand the principles underlying family interaction and to work with the family as a basic unit of improving social functioning, recognizing that most social problems inhere in inadequate or imbalanced family relationships.<sup>2</sup> The family is usually regarded as the case in social work.

Treatment also includes prevention. It seems that if social workers were more aware of the dynamics involved, they would be more sensitive to family situations that indicate the potential of an incestuous relationship developing and could work with the family before incest occurs. In families where incest already exists, social workers would have a greater ability to detect and treat the situation before it reaches the point of going to court. An enhanced awareness would probably mean increased openness about the problem and this could possibly lead to a greater number of people seeking help.

"... even when incestuous experiences are kept completely secret, the victims may still suffer feelings of shame and self-loathing." Masters and Johnson go on to ask, "And how does it happen in this day and age that so many people, scarred by damaging sexual experiences, feel they have nowhere to run for help?"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rex A. Skidmore and Milton G. Thackeray, Introduction to Social Work (New York: Meredith Publishing Company, 1964), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, "Incest: The Ultimate Sexual Taboo", Redbook Magazine, April 1976, pp. 54-58.

The incest problem appears in many fields of social work practice, including public assistance, family, child welfare, mental hygiene, health, school and corrections. This suggests that the incest problem is not relevant only to a small group of social work specialists but to a large number in many fields of practice.

It is difficult to assess the problem in terms of the number of cases since statistics on the incidence of incest behaviour are rare:

1. In criminal statistical reports, all sexual offences come under the general heading of "sexual offences". There is no way of telling the number of incest cases from these statistics.
2. The variations in the definition of incest make the gathering of statistical information very difficult.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the available statistics on incest come from "criminal court records and research studies of imprisoned offenders. Consequently, evaluation of the statistics must take into account discrepancies between the actual number of offences and the frequency with which they are reported."<sup>2</sup>

Masters stated that detected and reported cases in the United States do not exceed two annually for every million persons in the population.<sup>3</sup> However, along with several others, he feels that it occurs more often than is detected and reported: Weiner notes, "Rennert reports that while incest perpetrators who are apprehended generally manifest psychopathology, cases

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1

These variations are dealt with in the definition (See Chapter II).

2

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 137.

3

Masters, "Patterns of Incest", pp. 63-64.

involving persons of normal intelligence who live in ordinary social circumstances are less likely to be detected." <sup>1</sup> Cavallin contends that "... its being an intrafamilial event makes detection difficult. The shame and guilt experienced by the family causes it to be denied and hidden." <sup>2</sup> Cushion and Friedlander similarly attribute difficulty in obtaining accurate data to "social stigma and difficulty of proof". They also cite that the girl is often too fond of the aggressor to furnish sufficient proof against him." <sup>3</sup>

Other reasons have been given to explain the unknown figure:

- (1) a fear of the total economic and social collapse of the family;
- (2) a fear that the entire family will be discriminated against by the community,
- (3) a shyness because of the sexual affair. <sup>4</sup>

At a workshop on incest which the researcher attended, two of the participants reported briefly on studies they had carried out with college students in the United States. <sup>5</sup> The purpose of the research was to inquire whether the students had ever been involved in incest behaviour. The findings showed that 20 per cent of the students in each study had been involved in incest behaviour.

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Irving B. Weiner, "Father-Daughter Incest", The Psychiatric Quarterly, XXXVI (October, 1962), p. 608.

2

Cavallin, "Incestuous Fathers", p. 1132.

3

John W. Rhinehart, "Genesis of Overt Incest", Comprehensive Psychiatry, II, 6 (1961), p. 338.

4

Maisch, Incest, p. 87.

5

American Criminology Conference, Toronto, October 1975.

Masters contends that "children's courts and social workers know of far more cases than ever are prosecuted and/or get into the literature."<sup>1</sup>

Thus it can be assumed that:

- (1) incest is a social problem that is larger than legal statistics indicate,
- (2) it appears in many social work settings,
- (3) it has psychologically damaging effects on individuals and families.

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Masters, Patterns of Incest, p. 63.

## CHAPTER II

### SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

#### The Focus of the Study

This is an exploratory-descriptive study. Selltiz et al. describe such research as a way to "gain familiarity with a phenomenon or to achieve new insights into it, often in order to formulate a more precise research problem or to develop hypotheses." <sup>1</sup>

This research was undertaken to aid in the understanding of incest as a family problem and to see how it is handled in social agencies. The writer's treatment of "incest" goes further than the legal perspective, which identifies an 'offender' and a 'victim'. The behaviour is seen as existing in the milieu of a family with many complex factors sharing a part in the evolution of the symptoms.

The main focus of the study is the treatment of the 'incestuous family'. <sup>2</sup> In examining the literature and in studying agency treatment interventions, the writer is searching for possible modes of intervention

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1

Claire Selltiz, et al., Research Methods in Social Relations (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1960), p. 50.

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By this term, the researcher is referring to a family in which there are incestuous relationships.

for social workers in dealing with such families. Since this is a relatively unexplored area, it was felt that this study might suggest further areas of exploration into the problem and form a basis for more research.

The main part of the report will consist of a literature review. The review will be comprised of all current psychological and sociological literature at McGill University libraries. The literature will be examined in terms of the following research questions:

1. What are the psycho-social causes of incest?
2. What are the effects of incest on family members?
3. What treatment interventions are suggested?

The report will also include a limited survey of agencies in Montreal which could be expected to be in contact with incest cases. The agencies will be examined in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What agencies are dealing with problems of incest?
2. How extensive is the problem - approximately how many cases are there in each agency?
3. What are the referral sources?
4. Are the clinicians aware of any theoretical material on incest?
5. Are their interventions based on such material?

#### Limitations

There are several limitations existing in the study which should be noted if the significance of the data is to be fully understood.

Literature from the McGill libraries only was reviewed and this material in general covered the period from 1900 to the present.

The number of agency interviews was limited to ten. The small size of the sample obviously does not allow for broad generalisations and the findings discussed here cannot in any way be perceived as applicable to all agencies in Montreal. There was no attempt at random sampling. The aim of the study is to give some indication as to whether current treatment interventions being used with incest cases are based on the theory concerning incest.

Initially it had been explained to each agency that the researcher would require information from its various workers on the number of incest cases they were treating, the referral sources and individual treatment approaches. The agency was asked to choose the most appropriate or informed person to be interviewed by the researcher. However, nine of the workers being interviewed appeared to find it difficult to generalize for other workers since he/she was not aware of the co-workers' modes of intervention or of the kinds of cases being dealt with by others. Their perspective on incest would complete the total agency picture of the incest problem. However, the information was relevant since the worker spoke of the agency's general approach - to treat the family or to treat the individual - and this was the essential information the researcher required.

The researcher was permitted to see charts in only three of the agencies.

Another limitation was the fact that the researcher speaks only English and foresaw she would have difficulty in interviewing French language agencies. She therefore selected mostly English agencies. There was one exception where the worker was bilingual and was willing to speak English.

In summary, despite these limitations, the study may be seen as providing informative data on the theory relating to incest with a miniature view of current treatment interventions being used in some agencies in Montreal. All conclusions to be drawn, however, must be viewed within the context of the limitations inherent in the study.

#### Definition of Incest

Incest, a complex phenomenon, varies from country to country and even from state to state. This section will include:

1. The Canadian legal definition, including a brief comparative legal review of the law in different countries. Definitions will include the proposed punishments.
2. A clinical definition, as compared to a legal definition.
3. A definition of incest by Dr. S. K. Weinberg which delineates "three types of aggressive incest participants."<sup>1</sup>
4. A working definition for this study.

#### 1. Legal definition

##### a) Canada

The legal definition of incest is very complex. Consummated incest can be dealt with in the criminal court under Section 150 of the Criminal Code, or in the social welfare court under Article 33

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Weinberg, Incest Behavior, p. 251.

of the Juvenile Delinquents Act or Article 15 of the Youth Protection Act.<sup>1</sup>

According to Section 150 of the Canadian Criminal Code:

(1) Everyone commits incest who, knowing that another person is by blood relationship his or her parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent or grandchild, as the case may be, has sexual intercourse with that person.

(2) Everyone who commits incest is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable to imprisonment for fourteen years.

(3) Where a female person is convicted of an offence under this section and the court is satisfied that she committed the offence by reason only that she was under restraint, duress or fear of that person with whom she had the sexual intercourse, the court is not required to impose any punishment upon her.

(4) In this section, "brother" and "sister",<sup>2</sup> respectively, include half-brother and half-sister.

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Due to lack of time, the researcher did not obtain information on the number prosecuted under the Criminal Code as compared to the number under Article 33 and Article 15. This would be a pertinent study. It would also be interesting to discover what determines which system the offender will come under.

Two agencies studied by the researcher felt that incest was dealt with under Articles 33 and 15 to avoid putting the child through the traumatic court procedure of having to prove consummated incest. Under these Articles, consummated incest does not have to be proved in order for action to be taken. The judge from the juvenile court whom the researcher interviewed stated that he has a tendency to use the Articles since he feels that incest is very difficult to prove and one "cannot take the child's word against the word of the father". Also, since the family, especially the mother and child, plays a major rôle, he does not like to give the father a criminal record. Prosecution under the Articles is sufficient for ordering the family to obtain treatment.

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Canada, Criminal Code and Selected Statutes (1973), sec. 150, pp. 73-74.

According to the Criminal Code, consummated incest must be proved in order for action to be taken, whereas under Article 33 and Article 15, action can be taken without proof of consummated incest. It is interesting to note that unconsummated incest never appears in adult court, but it does in juvenile court because the law provides for sexual play. It should also be mentioned that punishment for consummated incest varies under the different court procedures.

According to Article 33 of the Juvenile Delinquents Act:

(1) Any person, whether the parent or guardian of the child or not, who, knowingly or wilfully,

(a) aids, causes, abets or connives at the commission by a child of a delinquency, or

(b) does any act producing, promoting, or contributing to a child's being or becoming a juvenile delinquent or likely to make any child a juvenile delinquent,

is liable on summary conviction before a juvenile court or a magistrate to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding two years, or to both.

.....

(3) The court or magistrate may postpone or adjourn the hearing of a charge under this section for such periods as the court may deem advisable or may postpone or adjourn the hearing sine die and may impose conditions upon any person found guilty under this section and suspend sentence subject to those conditions, and on proof at any time that those conditions have been violated may pass sentence on such person.<sup>1</sup>

According to Article 15 of Quebec's Youth Protection Act:

When a child is particularly exposed to moral or physical dangers, by reason of its environment or other special circumstances, and for such reasons needs to be protected, any person in authority may bring him or have

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Canada, The Juvenile Delinquents Act, Criminal Code and Selected Statutes, 1973, 160, 33, p. 649.

him brought before a judge. A judge may also, upon information which he deems serious, to the effect that a child is in the above described conditions, order that he be brought before him.

.....

Throughout the pendency of the case the judge, in case of urgency, may take for the benefit of the child such provisional protective measures as he may deem useful by confiding the child to any person, home, society, reception centre or institution capable of receiving him temporarily.<sup>1</sup>

"Every prosecution for an offence contemplated in this section shall be prescribed by one year."<sup>2</sup>

b) England

England's definition of incest does not include grandparent-grandchild relations, whereas in Canada these are included. The maximum sentence is generally seven years but it is life imprisonment in the case of incest with a girl under thirteen. This law also includes incest and attempted incest and there are different punishments for both.<sup>3</sup>

c) United States

The jurisdiction is generally much wider. All the states add grandmother-grandson, uncle-niece, aunt-nephew relationships. Half of

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<sup>1</sup> Quebec, Youth Protection Act, Statutes of Quebec, 14 George VI, 1960, c.42, s.15, pp. 5-7.

<sup>2</sup> Quebec, Youth Protection Act, c.42, s.39, pp. 12-13.

<sup>3</sup> Graham Hughes, "The Crime of Incest", Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science, LV, 3 (1964), p. 322.

the states include first cousins. In some states sexual relations between non-blood relations is legally defined as incest. Examples of this are as follows: stepfather-stepdaughter (Georgia), stepmother-stepson (Indiana), and brother-in-law and sister-in-law (Ohio). Some states require proof of mutual consent to distinguish between incest and rape (Missouri). In Illinois, the consent of the female is not necessary. In some states knowledge that the person is related is not necessary (Florida). These are just some of the variations in definition from state to state.<sup>1</sup>

Most states have only one penalty, regardless of nearness or distance of the kin. However, some have two penalties: Colorado, Nebraska and New Jersey impose a heavier sentence upon the father than upon other male incest offenders. In North Carolina, male offenders in the immediate family are charged with felony and are liable to imprisonment for not more than fifteen years, while male offenders in uncle-niece and aunt-nephew relationships are charged with misdemeanour and are given a milder penalty, subject to the discretion of the court.<sup>2</sup>

c) Other

In Luxemburg, Portugal and Turkey, all types of incest phenomena are unpunished. In Belgium, Holland and France, incest is not punished as a separate offence, but as part of indecent offences with children.<sup>3</sup>

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Hughes, "The Crime of Incest", p. 323.

2

Ibid., pp. 323-24.

3

Maisch, Incest, pp. 67-68.

In Italy the offence is only prosecuted when a 'public nuisance' is deemed to have occurred, and the Spanish legal authorities try only the male partner in brother-sister incest ... In Denmark's legal code incest is today no longer treated as a sexual offence, but as a transgression against the family, and is limited to members of the family in immediate ascending and descending order, and to brothers and sisters.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Clinical definition versus legal definition

There is considerable variation between clinical and legal definitions of incest: for example, there is no mention of homosexual incest in the Criminal Code. The legal definition implies coitus or consummation of intercourse, thus limiting incest to heterosexuality. However, such homosexual relations in the family are approached by some clinicians as incest.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Criminal Code, incest is consummated incest, but some clinicians regard sexual play among family participants as incest. An important point to be noted is that incest does not have to be consummated to be illegal. As already indicated, the law does not deal with non-consummated incest in the Criminal Code, but under Article 33 of the Juvenile Delinquents Act and Article 15 of the Youth Protection Act.

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Maisch, Incest, p. 67.

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Bruno M. Cormier and Ingrid Cooper, "Homosexual Incest" (Paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Psychiatric Association, Ottawa, September 1974), p. 1.

3. Three types of aggressive incest participants<sup>1</sup>

(1) An indiscriminate promiscuity where the incest is part of a pattern of sexual psychopathology.

(2) An intense craving for young children, paedophilia, which also includes the daughter as a sexual object.

(3) The endogamic or intra-familial oriented incest.

The endogamic type concentrates most of his social and sexual activities within the family and often may see a resemblance in the female participant to some other sexually inaccessible family member such as his mother, sister or dead wife. Usually, he does not seek or pursue women outside the family.<sup>2</sup>

4. Working definition

In this study, the working definition of incest refers to sexual play between the following people:

- (a) Father-daughter including stepfather-stepdaughter relations.
- (b) Mother-son including stepmother-stepson relations.
- (c) Siblings including brother-sister, half brother-half sister, brother-brother and sister-sister relations.<sup>3</sup>
- (d) Homosexual including father-son and mother-daughter relations.

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Weinberg, Incest Behavior, p. 251.

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Ibid., pp. 251-52.

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For the purpose of this paper the researcher has chosen to include brother-brother and sister-sister relations in sibling incest. Some writers, such as Donald W. Cory ("Homosexual Incest", in Masters, Patterns of Incest, pp. 265-271) cite such relations to be homosexual incest. Cormier et al. classify them under sibling incest.

This study is concerned with Weinberg's third type of aggressive participant, the endogamic or intra-familial oriented incest.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter will discuss the methodology that was used in collecting the data for this study. It will include descriptions of the methodology used in doing both the literature review and the agency study. It can be noted that the literature review, as the major part of the paper, took considerably more time to complete than the agency study, which forms a minor part of the research.

#### A. Literature Review

The purpose of this major segment of the research is to review the psycho-social causes of incest and its effects on the whole family unit and its individual members, with emphasis on treatment suggestions. Psychological and sociological material, written from approximately 1900 to the present, was examined. Some anthropological material was also reviewed. (All material was obtained from McGill University libraries.) The researcher began with Weiner's lengthy bibliography and continued from there.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

Weiner, "Incest Survey", pp. 153-55.

## B. Agency Study

The purpose of this secondary segment of the research was to look briefly at some agencies in Montreal in order to discover what interventions are currently being used in the treatment of families where incest has been discovered.

Descriptions of the research tool, the research sample, and the procedures that were followed in collecting the sample for the agency study are as follows.

### The Research Interview

The data were gathered by means of an unstructured interview. In describing the advantages of the interview as a means of collecting data, it has been stated: "Its flexibility makes the interview a far superior technique for the exploration of areas where there is little basis for knowing either what questions to ask or how to formulate them."<sup>1</sup> According to this, the use of the interview technique would seem an appropriate method for gathering information from agencies about treatment interventions used in connection with the incest problem. This is an exploratory study and we are not aware of the number of cases, sources of referral, or how the problem is handled, or on what theory the interventive techniques are based. The value of the unstructured interview in fulfilling these aims has been explained: "Not only does it permit the subject's definition of the interviewing situation to receive full and

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Selltiz, et al., Research Methods, p. 242.

detailed expression, it should also elicit the personal and social context of beliefs and feelings." <sup>1</sup>

Although the main format of the interviews was unstructured, the interviews were focused to a certain degree; that is, they were focused on a particular aspect - the treatment interventions used with incest cases. In a focused interview, "the main function of the interviewer is to focus attention upon a given experience and its effects." <sup>2</sup>

While the interviews were mainly conducted in an unstructured manner which permitted the subjects to free associate and therefore deliver a fuller picture, certain aspects were held in the mind of this investigator while conducting the interviews. These aspects were: (1) number of cases, (2) referral source, (3) treatment approach, and (4) familiarity with the literature on the subject. By using this procedure, the interviewer "knows in advance what topics, or what aspects of a question, he wishes to cover. He has freedom to explore reasons and motives, to probe further in directions that were unanticipated." <sup>3</sup> This method allowed for elaboration and freedom in discussion while still maintaining a central focus.

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<sup>1</sup>

Selltiz, et al., Research Methods, p. 263.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>3</sup>

Ibid.

### The Selection of the Research Sample

It was immediately decided to interview a small number of agencies including correctional, family and children services who could be expected to have dealt with incest cases. This approach is described as a purposive sampling:

The basic assumption behind purposive sampling is that with good judgment and an appropriate strategy one can hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample and thus develop samples that are satisfactory in relation to one's needs.<sup>1</sup>

There was no attempt to use a vigorous sampling procedure since the main focus was to review the literature. It was felt that a general picture of treatment interventions used with incestuous cases in Montreal would make the review of the literature more relevant and give some indication of whether any approach currently used is based on theory. This would aid in the development of further research questions.

The general approach used to contact ten of a total of eleven agencies was as follows: The research adviser made the initial contact with a supervisor or intake worker in each agency. She explained the nature of the research and asked if it would be possible for the researcher to interview one of the workers, either an intake worker or someone working with incest cases. It was also requested that the writer be permitted to look at a small number of charts on incest cases. Depending on the reply received, the researcher called the person she was to interview and again explained the nature of the study and an appointment was arranged at the worker's office.

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Selltiz, et al., Research Methods, p. 520.

Ten agencies were contacted, using the preceding format, and eight office interviews were held. Of the other two, one failed to return a call to the adviser's initial request; the second responded positively to the request but told the researcher they really did not have much information. She refused an office interview but gave the basic required information during the telephone conversation so will therefore be included as a sample. Only three of the agencies permitted the researcher to see charts.

The general format was not used in contacting the eleventh agency. The researcher made the initial contact with an administrative member and a second contact with a research worker. This agency was not cooperative and the researcher was not able to obtain much information during the brief telephone calls. However, since some information was obtained, this agency will also be included in the findings.

When meeting the subjects, the interviewer introduced herself and thanked the person for participating. The nature of the study was clarified by saying that the purpose was to explore how different agencies were dealing with incest cases. The length of the interviews ranged from fifteen minutes to one hour.

#### Description of the Sample

Precise descriptions of the sample cannot be given here because it was agreed that agencies would not be identified.

Out of a total of eleven agencies contacted, ten are included in the sample. However, one of the agencies will not be included in all the

sections of the findings since, through a lack of co-operation on its part, the researcher was unable to obtain all the necessary information. Approximately five of the ten were correctional agencies operating in Montreal. Another four were composed of family and children services. The tenth was the McGill Clinic in Forensic Psychiatry, which has agreed to being identified.

## CHAPTER IV

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Psycho-Social Causes and Effects

This section will include a literature review of the personal and family dynamics involved in all four types of incest - father-daughter, sibling, mother-son, and homosexual. The effects of incest will be dealt with only briefly since there has been very little written on this aspect. The majority of the material pertains to father-daughter relationships. Although the purpose of this review is not to give case histories, they are included at certain points to allow the reader to have a fuller picture of an incest situation.

#### 1. Father-Daughter Incest<sup>1</sup>

Most studies state that this is the most commonly reported and detected type of incest, and the majority of them describe the father as being approximately forty years of age. Cormier et al. cite reasons for that age bracket:

In these decades, the marital relationship is more subject to change through death, separation and divorce than in the earlier years of the marriage. Marital stress is also more likely to develop during this period. With time, a marriage may become increasingly frustrating, and where there is the presence of a

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<sup>1</sup>

This includes stepfather-stepdaughter relationships (see supra, p. 26.

daughter who has reached puberty and become appealing,  
incest may occur.<sup>1</sup>

The general consensus from the literature is that fathers tend to choose the eldest daughter first and may afterwards try to initiate incest with other accessible daughters. The father-daughter incest relationships tend to be protracted rather than episodic. Rennert cites the average duration of such relationships to be 24.5 months.<sup>2</sup> Most studies indicate that father-daughter incest is symptomatic of family dysfunction and is made possible and perpetuated by the collusion of the other family members, particularly the mother.

A. The father

Riemer,<sup>3</sup> Weinberg,<sup>4</sup> and Kaufman, Peck and Taguiri,<sup>5</sup> describe similar findings on the fathers. Their backgrounds are characterized by

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Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", p. 204.

2

Helmut Rennert, "Problems of Incest", D.Z. fur Ger. Med., XLVIII (1953), p. 56.

3

A study of 100 Swedish fathers under court indictment for incest. Svend Riemer, "A Research Note on Incest", American Journal of Sociology, XLV, 4 (1940), pp. 566-75.

4

A review of the files of 159 fathers convicted of incest in Illinois. Weinberg, Incest Behavior, pp. 41-60.

5

Information gathered on five incestuous fathers who were seen at the Judge Baker Clinic in Boston. Irving Kaufman, Alice L. Peck, and C. K. Taguiri, "The Family Constellation and Overt Incestuous Relations Between Father and Daughter", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXIV (April, 1954), p. 268.

marital disagreement, alcoholism and poverty. Having left home at an early age with little formal education, they made poor occupational adjustments, became involved with alcohol and lived in poverty. Reimer comments that prior to incest, the fathers find themselves barred from sexual relations.<sup>1</sup> Cormier, et al. also note this.<sup>2</sup> Kaufman, et al. add that the fathers are infantile, dependent people who received little warmth or understanding from their parents. In the incest situation they were continually searching for a gratifying mother figure.<sup>3</sup> Weinberg states that the wives in his study complained of there being no affection in the relationship and that their husbands used them in an exclusively physical way.<sup>4</sup>

The fathers in the Cormier study were of normal or above normal intelligence with acceptable social and occupational adjustment. They were highly authoritarian fathers who in many ways also acted like an adolescent, namely, attempting to win a young girl. They saw themselves as their daughter's protector and were very jealous of her. There was incomplete psychosexual maturation with poor masculine identification and feelings of inadequacy with regard to their wives and their social rôles.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Reimer, "Research Note on Incest", pp. 570-71.

2 Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", p. 207.

3 Kaufman, et al., "Family Constellation", p. 268.

4 Weinberg, "Incest Behavior", pp. 105-110.

5 A study of twenty-seven fathers convicted of incest in Montreal. Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", pp. 203-211.

Weiner also finds evidence of difficulty in establishing masculine identity and he offers a psychoanalytic interpretation of the situation. Having histories of disturbed relationships with harsh and authoritarian fathers, each of the men appeared to have unresolved and ungratified longings for a close, loving relationship with his ambivalently held father, who in each case was either distant and cold or physically absent.<sup>1</sup>

It seemed that each of these men, as a consequence of his relationship with his father, was burdened with passive homosexual longings and furthermore that to some extent each was identifying with his child in the incestuous activity and thus receiving in fantasy the desired fatherly affection.<sup>2</sup>

While most authors state that there is little incidence of psychosis in the fathers, there is some diversity of opinion about the degree of pathology. Weiner reviews some of these studies, which he describes as being not particularly informative since they do not include detailed psychiatric and psychological test examinations. These studies are as follows: Karpman considers incest to be an expression of psychopathology. Ellis and Brancale cite evidence of 'severe emotional immaturity'. Sondon states that insanity is rarely a causative factor, and Holder reports the occurrence of incest in a number of well adapted individuals.<sup>3</sup> Weiner states that his own previous work in 1962 is the only reported

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A clinical report of five incest cases in New York. Weiner, "Father-Daughter Incest", pp. 10-24.

2

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 144.

3

Ibid., pp. 142-43.

clinical psychological testing on incestuous fathers.<sup>1</sup> The fathers in this study were all successful, middle class business and professional persons of superior intelligence. There were no psychotic features.<sup>2</sup> Cormier, et al. also report an absence of psychotic features.<sup>3</sup> Cavallin reports that two of the cases in his study showed signs of psychotic disorders. It is interesting to note that the histories of these cases seem to indicate that severe disorganization took place only after the incest had been reported and incarceration had occurred.<sup>4</sup>

Although Ebner, and Ellis and Brancale cite that about 40 per cent of their incest offenders showed previous criminal behaviour,<sup>5</sup> most of the literature suggests that the incestuous fathers have little or no other criminal behaviour. Szabo reports no criminal records in 69 of his 96 incestuous fathers.<sup>6</sup> Frosch and Bromberg cite that 11 of 17 had committed no previous criminal act.<sup>7</sup>

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"In this paper five men who applied for psychotherapy to an outpatient clinic are described in terms of their backgrounds, incestuous involvement and psychological test performance." Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 143. This study is described in "Father-Daughter Incest", by Weiner.

2

Weiner, "Father-Daughter Incest", pp. 15-17.

3

Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamices", p. 203.

4

A clinical study of twelve incest cases which underwent psychiatric evaluation at the Kansas State Reception and Diagnostic Center over a period of eighteen months. Cavallin, "Incestuous Fathers", pp. 1133-38.

5

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 142.

6

Ibid.

7

Ibid.

The twenty-seven fathers in the Cormier study were generally non-criminal.<sup>1</sup> Gibbons comments that "incest offenders lack criminalistic self-images and often deny their involvement in incest."<sup>2</sup> It is important to note Weiner's comment that "although criminal persons may commit incest, there is ample basis for considering the impetus toward incestuous behavior as fairly independent of general criminal tendencies."<sup>3</sup>

There has been very little written on the effects of the incestuous relationship on the father. In his study in 1962, Weiner states that fathers demonstrate unusual capacity to rationalize their incestuous behaviour and thus avoid guilt feelings. Many fathers even argue that they would have been remiss as fathers had they not engaged their daughters sexually.<sup>4</sup> Reinhardt supports Weiner's findings.<sup>5</sup> However, Cormier, et al. report that guilt is pervasive, even when denied, and rationalisations utilized at the inception of incest break down after disclosure.<sup>6</sup>

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Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", p. 203.

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Don C. Gibbons, Society, Crime, and Criminal Careers (2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), p. 402.

3

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 142.

4

Weiner, "Father-Daughter Incest", pp. 15-18.

5

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 142.

6

Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", pp. 207-8.

After incest has been discovered, there is almost invariably an invasion of deep guilt and remorse about the wife. It results from the realisation of having injured her and substituted another in her place, with irreparable damage to the relationship, and a resulting anxiety that he can never return to his wife, and as a consequence may lose his family.<sup>1</sup>

There is also guilt towards the daughter and in relation to the other children - the daughters who have not been victimized, and the sons.

"This results from the realisation by the father that he has been a bad parent."<sup>2</sup>

#### B. The mother

Most of the current literature gives considerable attention to the rôle of the mother:

In cases where the wife's unavailability is associated with pregnancy or illness, her participation in the incest might be considered coincidental; however, 'incestuous wives' (so labelled to emphasize their usual collusion in the incest) have frequently been observed actively to frustrate their husbands and promote his intimacy with their daughters.<sup>3</sup>

Kaufman, et al. gathered information on the families of five girls seen at the Judge Baker Clinic and describe the mother as being like the maternal grandmother - stern, demanding, controlling, cold and extremely hostile women, who tend to reject their daughters and pamper their sons.

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1

Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", pp. 207-8.

2

Ibid., p. 208.

3

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 145.

Infantile and dependent, they marry men who are also infantile and dependent. There is evidence of promiscuity on their part. They are poor housekeepers, panicky in the face of responsibility and seem on the surface to be satisfied to live in disorder and poverty. Like the fathers, they also left home and school at an early age to marry or work. They had been deserted by their mothers and forced into the mother rôle. Now they single out their eldest daughter and force her into the mother rôle. The daughter becomes a replica of the maternal grandmother and the mothers become daughters again. In this process both the daughter and the husband are abandoned, presumably to each other.<sup>1</sup> Lustig, et al. give a similar description of the mother and her rôle in the incestuous relationship.<sup>2</sup>

There is much evidence in the literature to suggest that the wives of incestuous fathers promote the incest by frustrating their husbands sexually or deserting them in some fashion and by pushing their daughters into sexual rôles with their fathers. Barry and Johnson describe the case of a frigid woman who always rejected her husband's sexual advances but condoned his sleeping with their daughter and engaging in sex play.<sup>3</sup> Reimer reports that the majority of wives were not available as sex

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Kaufman, et al., "Family Constellation", pp. 269-71.

2

A study of the basic family constellation in six cases of incest. Noel Lustig, et al., "Incest: A Family Group Survival Pattern", Archives of General Psychiatry, XIV (January, 1966), pp. 5-8.

3

Maurice J. Barry and Adelaide Johnson, "The Incest Barrier", Psychoanalytic Quarterly, XXVII (1958), pp. 485-500.

partners.<sup>1</sup> Weinberg found many wives who seemed to provoke their husbands sexually but then refused to co-operate.<sup>2</sup> Rhinehart provides a good illustration of the collusion of the incestuous wife. He describes the case of a woman who voiced concern to others about protecting her daughter from the father, yet while she was pregnant, she covertly approved of them sleeping together and went to the hospital to deliver, leaving them entirely alone at home.<sup>3</sup>

Having set up a situation conducive to incest, the incestuous wife subsequently displays one of two typical patterns: either she tolerates the incestuous activity with little or only token protest, or by obvious use of denial she blinds herself to the ongoing incest she has promoted.<sup>4</sup> In neither case is the wife likely to report the incest.

In relation to this, Cushing asserts that many women are too guilty over their own rôle in the incestuous relationship or too fond of their husbands to bring charges against them. When the wife does report it to authorities, it is usually because she is angry at her husband for something else and wants him punished. Having laid the charges, it is quite typical for her to plead on his behalf.<sup>5</sup> "The efforts of wives to defend their accused husbands attest to their own psychological need to preserve the type of intrafamilial relationships which have led to incest."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Riemer, "Research Note on Incest", p. 574.

<sup>2</sup> Weinberg, "Incest Behavior", pp. 109-10.

<sup>3</sup> Rhinehart, "Overt Incest", pp. 344-45.

<sup>4</sup> Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 145.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 146.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

From Greene's study, it appears that the mothers are unwilling or unable to keep the fathers out of the home, openly blame their daughters, and prefer their husbands to their own daughters.<sup>1</sup>

In their discussion of the mother's rôle in father-daughter incest, Cormier, et al. point out that whether the mother is unaware or is refusing to see what is happening, she is no longer able to fulfil her function in the family and protect her daughter.<sup>2</sup> In another study, Cormier and Kennedy maintain that when the incestuous relationship is disclosed, the mother can no longer deny what is happening and is faced with "a many-sided anger": against herself, against the husband, and often against the daughter. "Their self-esteem is greatly shaken, inasmuch as they have been blind, and they tend to evade this by thinking of themselves as victims."<sup>3</sup>

#### C. The daughter

There is little general personality description of the incestuous daughter in the literature. Intelligence is one personality feature which has received considerable comment, but reports are inconclusive.

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A review of fourteen case histories of families where child molesting has occurred. The study was carried out in a juvenile probation agency in California. Nancy B. Greene, "A View of Family Pathology Involving Child Molest - From a Juvenile Probation Perspective". (Paper presented at the American Society of Criminology Conference, Toronto, October 1975), p. 9.

2

Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", p. 207.

3

Miriam Kennedy and Bruno M. Cormier, "Father-Daughter Incest - Treatment of the Family", Laval Médical, XL (November 1969), p. 949.

Some of the studies reviewed by Weiner are as follows: Holder reports that the daughters show an accumulation of the most pronounced defects of intelligence, whereas Szabo comments that only thirty-eight of ninety-six in his study reveal any intellectual handicaps. Brunold concludes that intelligence plays a small part in the participation of children in sexual acts with adults.<sup>1</sup> Heims and Kaufman assert that they are typically precocious in learning, reality mastery and morality.<sup>2</sup>

With regard to the daughter's rôle in the incestuous relationship, Weinberg concludes that she is a passive participant who is coerced into performing the sexual act.<sup>3</sup> However, much evidence exists of her collusion in the liaison. Bender and Blau state that incestuous daughters play an active and initiating rôle in establishing incest. They also state that in most cases the incestuous activity is not broken off until it is discovered and that even then the children rarely act as if they are injured parties.<sup>4</sup> Sloane and Karpinski conclude that sex relations took place at frequent intervals over long periods, in contrast to the daughter's frequent protestation of innocence.<sup>5</sup> Kaufman, et al. claim that fearful

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Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 148.

2

Lora W. Heims and Irving Kaufman, "Variations On A Theme of Incest", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, XXXIII (1963), p. 311.

3

Weinberg, Incest Behavior, p. 122.

4

Lauretta Bender and Abram Blau, "The Reaction of Children to Sexual Relations with Adults", American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, VII (1937), pp. 510-13.

5

Paul Sloane and Eva Karpinski, "Effects of Incest on the Participants", ibid., XII (1942), p. 670.

and lonely girls accept their fathers' sexual advances as expressions of affection.<sup>1</sup> Van Krevelan describes the case of a girl who accepted intercourse with her father in connection with her unresolved oedipal needs.<sup>2</sup> Markey cites the case of a girl who resisted her father's cruelty but not his sexual proposals.<sup>3</sup>

Several interpretations about the daughters' guilt are offered. Bender and Blau find that incestuous daughters are generally placid and without guilt.<sup>4</sup> Barry and Johnson suggest that anxiety and guilt are minimal in cases where the collusion of the mother is most clear.<sup>5</sup> Karpman suggests that the daughter avoids guilt by assuming a passive rôle and by admitting to none of her pleasure.<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to note that some studies relate the girls' guilt to feelings concerning their mothers rather than to their fathers. For example, Sloane and Karpinski feel that although there is outstanding guilt, it is related to hostile wishes against the mother rather than to violation of the sexual taboo.<sup>7</sup>

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1

Kaufman, et al., "Family Constellation", p. 277.

2

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 146.

3

Ibid.

4

Bender and Blau, "Sexual Relations", pp. 513-17.

5

Barry and Johnson, "The Incest Barrier", p. 492.

6

Benjamin Karpman, The Sexual Offender and His Offenses, (New York: The Julian Press, Inc., 1954), p. 129.

7

Sloane and Karpinski, "Effects on Participants", p. 671.

Gordon feels that incestuous activity is an elaboration for the girl of oral attachments to the mother. Although the girls may seem very attached to their fathers, their involvement primarily provides satisfaction of revenge wishes against the mothers for pre-oedipal frustrations.<sup>1</sup> Rascovsky and Rascovsky conclude that the daughters have an extremely frustrated relationship with their mothers and overcompensate for the primary maternal frustration by attempts to possess the father's penis.<sup>2</sup>

Like their mothers, the daughters are unlikely to raise protests or report their fathers unless they are angry at them for some other reason. For example, the girl may feel that her father has withdrawn his attention from her so she may report him out of jealousy and revenge. Friedlander states that daughters may find it difficult to accuse their fathers because of their own oedipal guilt and feelings of loyalty toward them.<sup>3</sup>

Although studies on the effects of incestuous relationship on the girls are inconclusive, many suggest that they have a tendency to become promiscuous. Weiner comments, "It has often been noted that such girls have a tendency, after giving up incest, to seek a substitute in promiscuous relationships with other men."<sup>4</sup> Kennedy and Cormier support this view.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 147.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 147-48.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>5</sup> Kennedy and Cormier, "Treatment", p. 949.

Weiner also reports studies which conclude that the incestuous relationship has resulted in anti-social acting out on the part of the daughter.<sup>1</sup> He also finds that these studies are inconclusive.

Sloane and Karpinski feel that the potential for psychological damage to the daughter is greater when incest begins in adolescence than it is with pre-adolescent onset.<sup>2</sup> Kennedy and Cormier support the above findings and add:

A crisis can be created for the daughters as much from the consequences of the disclosure and the highly charged reactions of those around them as from the on-going fact of incest to which they have previously accommodated. By the act of disclosure, the father is endangered, there is fear of the mother, and guilt in exposing the family. What causes great anxiety for many daughters is putting the family in jeopardy, either by dislocating or breaking it and being abandoned.<sup>3</sup>

Chaneles asserts that the legal proceedings evoke deep feelings of shame, guilt, and depression in the child.<sup>4</sup>

#### D. The family dynamics

From the literature review it appears that the importance of intra-familial relationships has frequently been stressed. In the 1950's a few studies began to look at family disorganisation as a cause of incest. It

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<sup>1</sup> Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 148.

<sup>2</sup> Sloane and Karpinski, "Effects on Participants", p. 666.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy and Cormier, "Treatment", p. 949.

<sup>4</sup> Sol Chaneles, "Child Victims of Sexual Offenses", Federal Probation, XXXI (June, 1967), p. 54.

was not, however, until the 1960's that more detailed psychodynamic descriptions of the incestuous family appeared.

"Hersko, Haleick, Rosenberg and Pacht (32) /1961/ present findings which support a hypothesis that father-daughter incest is one symptom of family disorganization and that both parents and involved daughters have strong dependency needs which contribute to the incestuous liaison."<sup>1</sup> Cormier, et al. stress how often an incestuous relationship conceals latent conflicts in the family and they refer to the frequency with which public disclosure and subsequent termination of the incest lead to disruption of the family equilibrium. They also point out that this equilibrium is seldom re-established (a new one evolves in its place) and that recidivism in incest is rare after disclosure.<sup>2</sup>

Having reviewed the literature, Weiner concludes that the sexual activity begins with and is perpetuated by collusion of all family members.<sup>3</sup>

Cormier, et al. describe the psychodynamics involved as follows: the daughter replaces the wife; she is not a woman outside the family with whom it would be a sin to commit adultery, but someone who belongs to the father, a permissible alternative to the wife, who is no longer able to fulfil her rôle as wife and mother. The father recaptures in his daughter the image of his young wife, and transforms him self in the

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1

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 141.

2

Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", pp. 214-15.

3

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 142.

same process. He forgets his actual age and status and plays the young lover. He may also attempt to maintain and even to reinforce his rôle of the omnipotent father. The wife now becomes a severe mother who will punish him when she discovers what he is doing. The daughter now also assumes the rôle of his early good image of the mother. In taking the daughter he is able to possess the mother he felt was denied to him in his childhood and whom he can take because he is now powerful. He has found in his daughter the all-giving maternal figure of his childhood dreams.<sup>1</sup>

Lustig, et al., analyse the family in terms of the following:  
they begin by defining a functional family as

an integrated structure of institutionalized rôle relations differentiated along sexual and generational lines. It can make use of its inter-relationships, the active patterns which emerge in its structure, as a means to achieve culturally defined goals for its members both as individuals and as a family unit.<sup>2</sup>

They go on to describe the incestuous family as a dysfunctional one which relies heavily on non-institutionalised rôle relationships. "The family's differentiation of rôles and transactional patterns only superficially resembled those of the functional family ... The normal generational differentiation was destroyed in the rôle reversal between mother and daughter."<sup>3</sup> The child's normal developmental goals were subverted

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1

Cormier, et al., "Psychodynamics", pp. 211-12.

2

Lustig, et al., "Incest: A Family Group Survival Pattern", p. 11.

3

Ibid.

in the service of the idiosyncratic needs of the parents. The relationship of the family to society is tenuous. The incestuous relationship serves the parents' pregenital dependency needs; it is a defence against feelings of sexual insufficiency in both parents. It also serves as a mechanism for revenge by the daughter against the mother for her lack of nurturance. It reduces separation anxiety for participants and maintains the facade of rôle competence for both parents. The sexual rôle of the daughter appears part of a more general rôle reversal between the mother and the daughter. "It is an idiosyncratic solution to tensions within a dysfunctional family which is unable to successfully employ culturally normative patterns of gratification."<sup>1</sup>

The preservation of the family group is the central function of incest to the group. This arrangement serves as an adequate defense for the family only so long as its members, especially the mother, are able to maintain a facade of rôle competence. In our cases it was when the mother's facade of competence as an adult female was threatened that the incestuous situation was disrupted and came to our attention.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Sibling Incest<sup>3</sup>

Karpman states that brother-sister relationships are the most common of the unreported incidents of incest.<sup>4</sup> Since very little data were

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<sup>1</sup>

Lustig, et al., "Incest: A Family Group Survival Pattern", pp. 11-13.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>

For definition, (see supra, p. 26).

<sup>4</sup>

Karpman, The Sexual Offender and His Offenses, pp. 102-3.

found on this type of incest, the individual family members will not be described separately as in the section on father-daughter incest. The writer did not find any research studies on brother-brother or sister-sister relationships.

Masters and Johnson<sup>1</sup> perceive brother-sister incest as the type professionals encounter most frequently. They suggest that it appears to be the least damaging and commonly is a manifestation of sexual experimentation. With reference to a particular case, they propose that it is more damaging when an older sister seduces a younger brother. In this situation the father was absent, the mother worked outside the home and the boy was seduced by a sister.<sup>2</sup> Writers who have described instances of sibling incest have stressed the unconcerned attitudes of the parents, particularly the mother. Sloane and Karpinski describe the case of a girl who reported to her mother that her brother had attacked her. The mother laughed and told her to fight him off.<sup>3</sup> Dorshay, in his study of thirteen cases, found the parents to have contributed to the incest through lack of supervision and guidance of their children.<sup>4</sup>

Santiago describes the dynamics as follows:

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Article based on past working experience with sexually dysfunctional men and women and on general studies done by others about the sexual traumas that can result from incestuous relationships. (We do not know which studies they used). Masters and Johnson, "Sexual Taboo", pp. 54-58.

2

Ibid., p. 57.

3

Sloane and Karpinski, "Effects on Participants", p. 670.

4

Weiner, "Incest Survey", pp. 150-51.

When either or both parents are not available physically or emotionally, the siblings, lacking an object for rivalry may turn to each other instead to meet their dependency and erotic demands. What initially seems to be the 'second best' love object may turn out to be 'even better' than the original. The absence of authority and the greater chances of concealment (out of mutual need and fear) enhances the eventual perpetuation of the sexual relation.<sup>1</sup>

In his report he briefly describes the family members in a case of brother-sister incest.<sup>2</sup> The father was a chronic alcoholic who was rigid, punitive and over-critical towards the family and as a result the family was afraid to talk in his presence. The mother was very nervous but pleasant, considerate and martyr-like. Since her husband was an alcoholic, she was the breadwinner and worked outside the home. The sister was very nervous and the brother was unsettled, introverted and had almost no interpersonal relationships outside the family.

Friedlander suggests that for the incestuous sister, the elder brother may represent a substitute for the father, and her oedipal desires may be displaced onto him.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Weiner states that a boy may seek an incestuous relationship with an older sister as a displacement of his oedipal attraction to his mother, and the sister may in turn respond out of her needs to fill a maternal rôle.<sup>4</sup>

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1

Luciano P.R. Santiago, The Children of Oedipus (New York: Libra Publishers, Inc., 1973), p. 7.

2

Ibid., pp. 157-58.

3

Kate Friedlander, The Psychoanalytic Approach to Juvenile Delinquency (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1947), pp. 173-77.

4

Weiner, "Incest Survey", p. 151.

The only systematic research effort concerning sibling incest was done by Fox.<sup>1</sup> He adduces intracultural evidence to test various hypotheses about the motivations underlying sibling incest. His major conclusion is that the likelihood of sexual engagement between siblings after puberty is an inverse function of their degree of propinquity and sexual activity before puberty. Incestuous temptation in adolescence is thus apparently less if the siblings have been raised together and indulged in pre-adolescent sex play.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Mother-Son Incest

The majority of studies report that mother-son incest is the rarest form and the type least commonly discussed in professional publications. According to the survey reported by Weiner in 1964, there have been fewer than a dozen published cases, and of these, not more than six have been discussed in any detail.<sup>3</sup> The researcher found only one other study, of three cases of consummated maternal incest.<sup>4</sup> Masters and Johnson, in their article on the incest taboo, list mother-son as the most traumatic form of incest.<sup>5</sup>

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1

J. R. Fox, "Sibling Incest", British Journal of Sociology, XIII, (1962), pp. 128-50.

2

Ibid., p. 147.

3

Weiner, "Incest Survey", pp. 149-50.

4

J. Robertson Unwin, "Consummated Maternal Incest" (paper presented at the International Conference on Criminology, Montreal, 1966).

5

Masters and Johnson, "Sexual Taboo", p. 57.

A. The mother

Unwin describes the mothers as being hysterical, superficial, unreliable and demanding. He reports that they seduced their sons. This was at least their second marriage and in one case the mother had been absent during the formative years.<sup>1</sup>

Wahl, in his study of two cases of consummated maternal incest, reports that the parents were separated. He describes the mothers as being alcoholic, promiscuous, absent during the formative years, and having lost maternal control. They also seduced their sons.<sup>2</sup>

B. The father

Unwin states that the fathers are passive, ineffectual males, dominated by women and ambivalent towards their sons. They are inadequate identification and disciplinary figures for the boys.<sup>3</sup> Wahl comments that the fathers are either absent or weak and passive.<sup>4</sup>

C. The son

Unwin reports that of the few cases reported on maternal incest, most describe the sons as being schizophrenic, either at the time of the

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Unwin, "Consummated Maternal Incest", p. 3.

2

Charles W. Wahl, "The Psychodynamics of Consummated Maternal Incest", Archives of General Psychiatry, III (August 1960), pp. 99-100.

3

Unwin, "Consummated Maternal Incest", p. 3.

4

Wahl, "Psychodynamics of Maternal Incest", p. 99.

relationship or following it. The three boys in his study ranged in age from sixteen to seventeen years, were of average intelligence, but showed emotional ill health. This was their first sexual experience.<sup>1</sup> Wahl's study also describes the sons as being schizophrenic.<sup>2</sup>

D. The family dynamics

Unwin describes the following dynamics: the parents are immature and fail to set up normal social controls. There is a deficiency in the quality and quantity of maternal attention during the formative years and the son has only partial identification with the father, who is inadequate as both father and husband. The mother probably sees her son as a chance to obtain a more satisfactory husband figure and as a way to regain an idealised relationship with her own father.<sup>3</sup>

4. Homosexual Incest

Although the term homosexual incest does not appear in the criminal code, some clinicians approach homosexual relations in the family as incest.<sup>4</sup> The researcher is using the term to refer to sexual activity between a parent and a child of the same sex. Homosexual incest has

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<sup>1</sup>

Unwin, "Consummated Maternal Incest", pp. 1-15.

<sup>2</sup>

Wahl, "Psychodynamics of Maternal Incest", p. 192.

<sup>3</sup>

Unwin, "Consummated Maternal Incest", pp. 13-15.

<sup>4</sup>

Supra, p. 25.

received scant attention in the literature and this is possibly because it carries a double taboo and is rarely overt.<sup>1</sup> Although the literature refers to a few cases of mother-daughter incest, these are not described and the only studies were on father-son incest.

#### Father-Son Incest

##### A. The father

Langsley, Schwartz and Fairbairn describe the case of a father, Mr. S., who initiated sexual relations with his twelve-year-old son which continued for one and a half years.<sup>2</sup> Mr. S. had had a very distant relationship with his own father, whom he described as being quiet and withdrawn. His mother had been very domineering and had made him a special confidante. For example, he helped with the housework, chose her clothing, and was told by his mother of her sexual dissatisfactions. When he was twelve years old, he was seduced by his nineteen-year-old uncle. During his mid-teens, he fell in love with an eight-year-old boy called Dave. When he was twenty-five, he experienced mutual masturbation with his cousin. Later, he married and had a son whom he called Dave, after his first lover.

Raybin, in a case study of homosexual incest involving three generations of a family, describes the father as having had previous homosexual

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1

Rhinehart, "Genesis of Overt Incest", p. 338.

2

Donald G. Langsley, Michael N. Schwartz and Robert H. Fairbairn, "Father-Son Incest", Comprehensive Psychiatry, IX, 3 (1968), pp. 218-26.

activity with his own father, his brother and a cousin.<sup>1</sup>

The patient's homosexual incestuous activity may be viewed as a defensive maneuver to block out the incestuous wish for the mother. In the patient's attempt to resolve his oedipal conflict he may have identified with his father as a homosexual and, therefore, renounced mature genital heterosexuality. On the other hand, he may have identified with his mother to become the love object of his father as a defense against a more threatening feeling of competing with his father for his mother.<sup>2</sup>

#### B. The mother

Langsley, et al. describe the mother as being castrating. She allows male members of the family to wear a facade of masculinity while she holds a good deal of the power through her passive-aggressive maneuvering and pseudo-fragility. She does not abdicate her rôles as sexual partner and wife.<sup>3</sup>

Raybin describes the mother as covertly participating in the family's distorted behaviour. She denies the occurrence of incest even after being confronted with overwhelming evidence.<sup>4</sup> This is similar to findings in father-daughter incest.

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James B. Raybin, "Homosexual Incest", The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, CXLVIII, 2 (1969), pp. 105-110.

2

Ibid., p. 109.

3

Langsley, et al., "Father-Son Incest", p. 223.

4

Raybin, "Homosexual Incest", pp. 107-9.

C. The sons

There has been very little written on the sons in these relationships. Langsley, et al. report the past incestuous relationship was revealed when the son, now twenty years of age, was admitted to hospital in a psychotic state, having taken LSD.<sup>1</sup> In Raybin's study also, the son had a psychotic break at the age of twenty, having taken LSD.<sup>2</sup>

D. The family dynamics

Langsley, et al. state that family interaction is not as important in father-son incest as it is in father-daughter incest. Sexual contacts between father and son are clearly an acting out by the father of his own sexual conflicts. Even in a marriage where he is finding regular sexual satisfaction, he lives out with his son the sexual trauma and conflicts of his teen-age years. Stimulus for the incest is not found in the family as much as it is in the father's own background. The identification with his son as well as the narcissistic object choice is a re-enactment of the father's own adolescence.<sup>3</sup>

Raybin asserts that father-son incest, like father-daughter incest, provides key family secrets which cement and perpetuate certain family bonds. The father and son join forces against the wife/mother whom they

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<sup>1</sup> Langsley, et al., "Father-Son Incest", pp. 219-20.

<sup>2</sup> Raybin, "Homosexual Incest", pp. 105-6.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that the above conclusion is based on only one case. Langsley, et al., "Father-Son Incest", pp. 108-9.

see as an obese, greedy and oral person. The wife/mother allows the incestuous homosexual behaviour to continue by denying its existence.<sup>1</sup>

In their case studies, Cormier and Cooper also describe evidence of the collusion of the wife in homosexual relationships and they comment that the family dynamics involved in this type of relationship are very similar to the dynamics of father-daughter incest relationships.<sup>2</sup>

### Treatment

In the past, incest has been condemned and harshly punished. In the Roman Empire, first century B.C., punishment was death by being thrown off a cliff, and later death by hanging.<sup>3</sup> Today the Canadian Criminal Code classifies incest as an indictable offence for which the maximum sentence is imprisonment for fourteen years.<sup>4</sup> However, with the change in focus, as revealed in the literature, from isolated causes (alcohol, poverty) to psycho-social causes (family dynamics), there seems also to have been a change in the way society handles it.<sup>5</sup> The focus is under-

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This is in contrast to the case described by Langsley. Raybin, "Homosexual Incest", p. 109.

2

Cormier and Cooper, "Homosexual Incest", pp. 10-15.

3

Supra, p. 5

4

Supra, p. 15.

5

This has not been researched by the writer, but from discussions with various agencies there appears to have been a change. It seems that more incest cases are being dealt with in the social welfare court, which is more treatment-oriented than in the criminal court, which is punitive.

going a gradual process of shifting from punishment to treatment and from the offender to the wider dimension of the family.

Families in which incest occurs are usually disturbed before it starts. To this extent incest is not the cause but one symptom of a disturbed family. The best defence against it therefore is an intact family order, and not special incriminations with massive threats of punishments. An intact family unit would strike at the very roots of incest, and at the same time afford a means of protecting the family unit.<sup>1</sup>

Although some other studies<sup>2</sup> recommend treating incest in the context of the family, Kennedy and Cormier's study<sup>3</sup> is the only one which actually deals with treatment and proposes a plan for intervention. The following is a description of their plan:

When an incest case is referred by the court for assessment, immediate action is recommended. In doing the assessment, the father, mother and daughter should be seen, and sometimes other family members and collaterals. At the beginning, family members are seen both individually and together, that is, mother and daughter, husband and wife. The assessment should deal with such matter as:

- should the father be arrested or should he return to the community and under what conditions;

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Maisch, Incest, p. 217.

2

V. Magal and H.Z. Winnik, "Rôle of Incest in Family Structure", Israel Annals of Psychiatry and Related Disciplines, VI, 2 (1968), 173-89; Nancy B. Greene, "A View of Family Pathology", pp. 1-22; Chaneles, "Child Victims", pp. 52-56; Masters and Johnson, "Sexual Taboo", pp. 54-58; Santiago, Oedipus.

3

Kennedy and Cormier, "Treatment", pp. 946-50.

- should the daughter leave the home;
- can the family remain safely united.<sup>1</sup>

Following assessment, a plan is suggested to the family and to the court to deal with the immediate situation. This plan is subject to much revision in the course of time. The responses and needs of the individual members and the family as a whole are taken into consideration in the plan.<sup>2</sup>

Where a treatment plan has been carried out, the families have functioned at a better level, and where separation occurred it was generally planned.<sup>3</sup>

#### Summary of Literature Findings

These findings, although not necessarily conclusions, have been expressed in the majority of reports on incest.

#### Father-Daughter Incest

1. This is the most commonly reported and detected type of incest.
2. Age-old beliefs relating causality to isolated phenomena, such as lower class living, have been discarded and the present tendency is to look at incest in terms of psycho-social causes or family dynamics.

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<sup>1</sup> Kennedy and Cormier, "Treatment", p. 948.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 949.

3. It is symptomatic of family dysfunction and is made possible by the collusion of all the family members, particularly the wife.

4. The father-daughter relationships tend to be protracted rather than episodic. The average duration of such relationships is 24.5 months.

5. There are sexual problems between the husband and wife.

6. There is a rôle reversal between the mother and the daughter.

7. Fathers tend to choose the eldest daughter first and may afterwards try to initiate incest with other accessible daughters.

8. The daughter is an active partner.

9. The majority of studies describe the father as being approximately forty years of age.

10. The fathers tend to be non-psychotic and non-criminal.

11. The mother and daughter are unlikely to report the incest because of their own rôle in the incest and their fondness for the father/husband.

12. Guilt is pervasive for the mother, the daughter and the father.

13. Legal proceedings evoke deep feelings of shame and guilt in the child.

14. Psychological damage to the daughter is greater when incest begins in adolescence than it is with pre-adolescent onset.

15. Recidivism is rare after disclosure.

#### Sibling Incest

16. This is the most common of the unreported incidents of incest.
17. It is the least damaging type and is commonly a manifestation of sexual experimentation.
18. There is a lack of supervision on the part of the parents.

#### Mother-Son Incest

19. This is the rarest form of incest and the type least commonly discussed in the literature.
20. The sons tend to be schizophrenic.

#### Homosexual Incest

21. This carries a double taboo and is rarely overt.
22. Fathers are involved in previous homosexual activity.
23. Some of the dynamics are similar to those of father-daughter incest.

#### Treatment

24. The focus has shifted from punishment to treatment and from concentration on the offender to the wider dimension of the family.
25. Treatment of incest in the context of the family is recommended.
26. There is only one study which describes an actual treatment plan - assessment, treatment and results.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF AGENCY SURVEY

These findings will be presented so as to provide the reader with a picture of how individual involvement in incest situations is handled. Whenever possible this information will be discussed in relation to findings from the literature review, since a comparison of the two with the goal of formulating treating procedures has been a major purpose of this paper. Treatment implications from the literature are compared to actual treatment interventions.

The agency study focused on four main aspects - number of cases, referral source, treatment interventions and knowledge of the literature. The findings will be presented and discussed under these headings, preceded by a section on the attitude of agencies toward the research.

#### Attitude of Agencies

A major impression of the researcher is that the responses were often given in a vague and evasive manner. The majority of agencies were willing to have office interviews with the researcher, but there was a general lack of co-operation from most of them. This lack of co-operation has already been pointed out as a limitation of the study. Although the nature of the researcher's study had initially been explained to the agency and the agency had been asked to choose the most informed worker to be

interviewed by the researcher, most of them were unprepared. The majority of workers who were interviewed could speak only for themselves and of the general agency approach but found it difficult to generalize for the other workers to whom they had obviously not spoken. Besides being unprepared, some agencies were reluctant or very cautious in giving information. One worker said: "Leave your telephone number so individual workers can call you anonymously." "We do not have much information, you should call ...". This was a very common response. Although the majority of agencies expressed friendly attitudes, a few were not congenial. The following are examples of such responses: "I'm too busy." "The workers are really not interested in that kind of thing."

This lack of co-operation could indicate a number of points:

(1) methodology and approach taken by researcher,<sup>1</sup> (2) lack of record-keeping of the number and kinds of cases, (3) over work load, (4) lack of interest in research, (5) lack of knowledge on the subject, and (6) workers' and agencies' uncertainty and insecurity of what they were doing with incest cases.

Only three of the agencies permitted the writer to see charts. A fourth offered but as it would have taken a week or longer to look them up, the researcher was unable to take up the offer because of lack of time. The issue of confidentiality was pointed out by some agencies as a reason for not showing the charts to the writer. However, this could also

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Because the agencies were initially contacted by the research adviser, who worked at the Forensic Clinic, it is possible that they associated the researcher with the Forensic Clinic. Since the Clinic has done research on incest, the agencies probably felt that the researcher had much more information than they could provide.

indicate, as pointed out previously, a lack of record-keeping on the part of the agency. Another possible explanation could be that they did not want to expose their work.

A final point to be mentioned is the length of the interviews. The telephone calls were less than five minutes. The office interviews ranged from fifteen minutes to one hour, depending on the amount of information available to the workers and their readiness to impart it. The majority of the workers were friendly, but seemed to be embarrassed by the researcher's questions.<sup>1</sup> "I really do not know", was a general response which made the discussion difficult. The workers usually apologized at several points for not having more information, and although the researcher tried to reassure them that they were being helpful, the interviews were usually terminated by the workers, who would say, "Well, I'm sorry but I cannot tell you anything else. If I get any more information, I'll call you." This finding could be indicative of the other points already mentioned in this section.

#### Number of Cases

The replies received from the majority of the agencies were quite vague with regard to the number of incest cases they were treating. The general response of most agencies ranged from "some" to "a few" cases.

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This is an entirely subjective interpretation but is offered because it may be indicative of problems in this area which warrant further research and has implications for social work.

Three workers who were dealing with incest cases quoted the following numbers from their own working experience: (1) "Two cases in three years," (2) "One actual case <sup>1</sup> in eight years," and (3) "Six cases in two years."

Only two agencies were specific. One of these agencies, which began about one year ago, has dealt with five incest cases. A second agency stated that it treated about five cases annually and has charts on approximately fifty cases. This agency consisted of only two workers.

It is important to note that all of the agencies contacted (correctional, family and children) had incest cases which suggests that the incest problem is widespread and not specific to any one field of practice. Although the actual number of cases is very vague, it is likely that if one worker in an agency has dealt with six incest cases in two years, then the other twenty or thirty workers have also had contact with some cases. This seems to indicate that the incest problem appears frequently in social agencies.

Most of the agencies were unable to provide information on the number of incest cases they were treating. This indicates the agencies' failure to keep adequate records of the number, kinds and results of cases. It is also indicative perhaps of a lack of concern in research and an inability to undertake any meaningful type of research. This seems to be an unclear policy and is connotative of a need for change in the whole area and will be dealt with further in implications for social work.

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By actual case, the subject was referring to a case where incest was proved in court.

Three of the agencies' initial response to the researcher was that they had a lot to contribute on the topic. However, when interviewed, they actually had very little information - recalling only a few cases and apologizing for not having more knowledge. One possible explanation for this is that perhaps they saw incest cases as being pathological and, therefore, they stood out in their minds.

Father-daughter was usually the only type of incest mentioned. One worker stated that she vaguely remembered a couple of mother-son cases and another worker stated that he had suspected mother-son incest in some families with whom he had worked. Homosexual incest was reported by only one agency. These findings correspond to the literature findings, namely, that father-daughter is the most common type of incest,<sup>1</sup> mother-son is the least common<sup>2</sup> and homosexual incest, because of its double taboo, is rarely overt.<sup>3</sup> There was no mention of sibling incest, but according to Masters and Johnson, this is the type professionals encounter the most frequently.<sup>4</sup> Most other literature suggests that although common, it is usually unreported.<sup>5</sup>

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Supra, p. 61.

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Supra, p. 63.

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Supra, p. 63.

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Masters and Johnson, "Sexual Taboo", p. 54.

5

Rhinehart, "Overt Incest", p. 338.

### Source of Referral

Two of the ten agencies will not be included in this section. A lack of co-operation on the part of one made the gathering of information impossible <sup>1</sup> and the nature of a second agency warranted it not being included here. <sup>2</sup>

Out of the remaining eight agencies, only one reported that it did not receive court referrals. The worker in this agency stated that she had worked with six cases and most of these were referred by the school, although incest was not the initial reason for referral. <sup>3</sup> She also reported a voluntary case. <sup>4</sup> Two other agencies also mentioned that they had a voluntary case.

Four agencies stated that they received the majority of their incest case referrals from the court under Article 15 of the Youth Protection Act and others by virtue of Article 33 of the Juvenile Delinquents Act. <sup>5</sup> However, in most of these cases, incest had not been proved and in some

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This was a brief telephone interview.

2

This was a judge operating in one of the Montreal Courts.

3

The family was referred because of problems the school was having with the child - difficult to discipline, doing poorly academically, playing truant, and often drug involvement. During the course of treatment, incest was revealed.

4

One of the family members revealed the situation and asked for help.

5

These articles have been dealt with in the definition (see supra, pp. 22, 23).

cases under Article 15, incest was not even suspected at the time of the referral. Another agency reported incest being revealed in a case which had been charged with sexual assault. Four agencies had received referrals where incest had been proved. One of these came from a legal aid lawyer. Another of these agencies reported that most of its incest cases were referred specifically for incest. The referrals came from the court and from several social agencies, including most of the other agencies in this study.

It appears that at least a few cases are seeking help voluntarily. Some possible reasons for the low number are as follows: (1) incest is a criminal offence and people are afraid of the consequences; (2) because of the taboo, there is a lot of guilt involved; and (3) the sexual component makes it very embarrassing. As already mentioned, some countries do not consider incest to be a criminal offence<sup>1</sup> and a special committee in Sweden is presently trying to have it removed from their criminal code.<sup>2</sup> Such a move in Canada would probably open the way for more people to seek help voluntarily since they would not have to be so fearful of the legal consequences. Also, if the criminal component was removed, agencies might feel more comfortable in treating incest cases. Social workers today are perhaps in a dilemma when incest is revealed in relation to another problem because there is no written policy concerning it. It is not clear what happens in these cases: do agencies treat

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Supra, p. 24.

2

Supra, p. 6.

them, refer them to the court, or ignore the incest? It is not certain whether this is posing a problem, but the writer is aware of a case in Ontario where the worker advised the family not to report it to the court and, as a consequence, was sued by another agency. The removal of incest from the criminal code would help agencies to clarify their policies.

It is important to note that in the majority of cases, incest had not been proved and was not even suspected in many of them at the time of the referral, being revealed only during the course of therapy. This supports the literature findings that legal statistics are inconclusive and that social workers know of far more cases than ever get prosecuted.<sup>1</sup>

#### Treatment Interventions

Since the main focus of this paper is treatment, the material will be presented according to each agency.

##### Agency One

This agency was involved only in the treatment of the daughter or victim in an incestuous relationship. In the majority of cases the girls were removed from the home. The social worker's recommendations on one of the charts<sup>2</sup> seen by the researcher were as follows:

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Supra, p.14 and p. 16.

2

The researcher saw two charts in this agency. She is not aware of the reasons why these two particular charts were chosen to be exposed.

1. Treat the family at the McGill Clinic in Forensic Psychiatry.
2. Remove the daughter from the home for at least six months.
3. Father should not see eldest daughter.<sup>1</sup>

#### Agency Two

The purpose of this agency was to work with the adult offender. Only one case was recalled and the writer was permitted to see the chart. The case had been referred by a legal aid lawyer for a presentence report - incest had been proved. This agency saw the offender at Parthenais Detention Centre to do the assessment but referred the remainder of the family to the McGill Clinic in Forensic Psychiatry. On release, the offender was also referred to this Clinic.

#### Agency Three

The main focus of this agency was the treatment of the family. The worker who was interviewed reported that she had two incest cases. In one, she attempted to treat the family, but they dropped out of therapy. The second case was a young woman who had separated from her family but had come voluntarily for treatment. She was seen in individual therapy.

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There was no specific time limit given.

#### Agency Four

There seemed to be some confusion with regard to the treatment policy of this agency. At the time of the interview, the researcher was told that this agency treated the family. A few weeks later, she became aware of an incest case which was being referred by this agency because their policy was not to treat the family.<sup>1</sup> In most of the cases they had treated, the daughter had been removed from the home. The agency also reported difficulty in getting the family to co-operate.

#### Agency Five

The worker who was interviewed was not dealing with incest cases but he felt that only the offender would be seen since it was the offender and not the family that was referred.

#### Agency Six

The main focus of this agency was the treatment of the family. The worker stated that her orientation in all family problems was to treat the family dynamics. She saw incest in the context of the family, no different from any other family problem. However, this worker suggested that other workers in the agency might not use the same approach and she mentioned one who had an individual orientation. She stated that approximately 50 per cent of incestuous families dropped out of therapy.

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This confusion could be due to the fact that this is a new agency and is undergoing policy changes.

### Agency Seven

This was a judge who felt that the whole family should be treated. He stated that since all the family members, especially the mother and the child, play rôles in bringing about the incestuous relationship, the father should not be given a criminal record. "Besides you cannot always take a child's word." In cases where incest was suspected, he usually used Article 15 of the Youth Protection Act. He would refer the family to a social agency for treatment for a specified period of time. At the end of this period, if the family situation had improved, the case was closed.<sup>1</sup> He also stated that his decision depended heavily on the psychiatric evaluation. Two agencies commented that the judge placed more weight on the psychiatrist's opinion than on that of a social worker.

### Agency Eight

Since this was a brief telephone interview, the information obtained was sparse:

There is usually emergency placement of the child  
... sometimes a homemaker is brought in ... we try to  
work with the families but they are very inadequate ...  
there is no general approach, we deal with them, case  
by case...

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The judge did not mention any cases where the family was brought back to court.

#### Agency Nine

This was also a very brief telephone interview. The worker stated that they were involved in the treatment of only one case. They have referred the other incest cases to the McGill Forensic Clinic.<sup>1</sup> A French worker was dealing with this case and because of the language barrier an interview could not be arranged.

#### Agency Ten

This agency reported that it saw incest in terms of the family. It had a clear treatment plan.<sup>2</sup> During the assessment, the family members are seen, both individually and together, that is, mother and daughter, husband and wife.<sup>3</sup> Various forms of treatment are used, depending on the case. The main intervention is individual therapy with the offender. Other members of the family may also be seen in individual counselling. As adjunctive to this, the couple may be seen together and also there may be family sessions to discuss selected problems other than the incest relationship. The worker reported that generally there was no major problem in involving the families in the treatment programmes.

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It was not clear why that particular case was not referred.

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This plan has already been described in the section on Treatment (see supra, p. 60 and 61.)

3

It was considered of no therapeutic value to discuss the incest situation with all members present and to do so could be damaging.

As already pointed out, the maximum prison sentence for incest offenders is fourteen years.<sup>1</sup> From the agency study it seems that the present judicial tendency is not to imprison the offender, either under the terms of the juvenile or criminal code, but to refer him to agencies for treatment. It seems that more cases are being dealt with in the social welfare court than in the criminal court when treatment is a viable alternative. This coincides with the literature findings, which discard punishment of the offender and recommend treatment. However, the recent literature recommends treatment of the family - "an intact family order"<sup>2</sup> while current judicial orders often do not include the family. For example, if a father is placed on probation, the family is not obligated to participate. Obligation does not make people more receptive to treatment; what is important is to see that treatment is offered and available to all the family members. This suggests a need for the recognition of the rôles played by the various family members and the effects of the incestuous relationship upon them. For example, let us consider the mother, once the incest situation is brought into the open:

The mothers, who can no longer deny what has happened, are faced with a many-sided anger: against themselves, against the husband, and often against the daughter. Their self-esteem is greatly shaken, inasmuch as they have been blind, and they tend to evade this by thinking of themselves as victims. As such, they do not see their responsibility. The sooner they recognize it and show sufficient ego strength to accept it, the more positive the outcome is for the whole

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Supra, p. 21.

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Supra, p. 60.

family. What<sup>1</sup> usually suffices then is a supportive relationship.

Although the literature recommends treating incest in terms of the family, the current treatment interventions vary from agency to agency and even from worker to worker in an agency. As already stated, the current treatment seems to be based on individual style or agency approach rather than on an analytic orientation to the problem based on knowledge. It seems that the purpose of some agencies is to treat the offender, while others treat only the victim. This often creates a vacuum. For example, if a man is charged with incest in the social welfare court, juvenile probation seems to deal only with the victim. Since adult probation does not deal with the offender in cases tried in the social welfare court, it can be speculated that some of these individuals are lost because of agency policy. Some workers reported that they were working with the family. However, the majority reported difficulty in involving the family in treatment. The Forensic Clinic reported no major difficulty in this area.

A possible explanation for this could be the Clinic's consistent treatment plan which entails a clear client contract. It seems that this was the only agency with such a knowledgable treatment approach.<sup>2</sup> Also, since the Clinic has so much information on the problem, it is less likely that it is as judgmental as agencies who do not have much knowledge of the

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Kennedy and Cormier, "Treatment of the Family", p. 949.

2

The Clinic has published an article dealing with treatment of the incestuous family (Kennedy and Cormier, supra).

subject. It is not certain whether agencies are judgmental, but this explanation is offered because it may be indicative of a problem in this area which warrants further research and has implications for social work. It should also be pointed out as another possible explanation that many of the Clinic's incest cases come voluntarily as part of their probation. It is not certain whether an involuntary approach interferes with the incestuous family's involvement in treatment but this may have implications for further research.

It was generally stated that the judge usually sent the father in incestuous relationships to Institut Philippe Pinel or to the Forensic Clinic for assessment. The daughter was usually assessed at the Miriam Kennedy Child and Family Clinic. It was also the view of a minority of agencies that the judge placed more weight on the psychiatrist's opinion than on that of a social worker. This would suggest that from certain perspectives incest is viewed as a psychiatric problem and social workers are seen as not competent to deal with the problem. The competence or lack of it of social workers will not be discussed at this point. Incest, however, is a problem which does appear in social agencies and social workers have to deal with it.

Most of the social agencies which were interviewed were referring incest cases to the Forensic Clinic and this may indicate feelings of lack of competence concerning their own ability to deal with the problem. Because the Clinic is so small <sup>1</sup> and the problem so extensive, it may be

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The professional staff consists of a psychiatrist and two social workers.

more practical to use this special agency for consultation as well as treatment.<sup>1</sup> It has already been used by a few agencies for consultation purposes and as a result of this paper, another agency has asked someone from the Clinic to speak to their agency on incest. It can also be questioned whether all agencies know of the Clinic and the necessary steps should be taken to make it known.

Another point for discussion is the removal of the victim from the home. It is unclear why the agencies took this step. Was it selective, based on assessment of the case, or was it done as general policy? There has been no real backing for this in the literature so the therapeutic benefits of it are still inconclusive and therefore warrant further research. Kennedy and Cormier state that under certain circumstances the child should be removed. For example, "sometimes the hostility between mother and daughter is such that the daughter is the one who must go."<sup>2</sup> Magal and Winnik comment on a negative result of placement:

The removal of the daughter, causing a breakdown of the family structure, could provide a breeding ground for anti-social activities on the part of the remaining members, who thus give expression to their feelings of guilt for the family's decline.<sup>3</sup>

One agency stated that as a result of being removed, the victim felt that she was being punished. It seems that the removal could rein-

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The policy of this agency is never to be used solely as a consultant but also to be involved in treating the problem in order to stay in touch with it.

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Kennedy and Cormier, "Treatment of the Family", p. 948.

3

Magal and Winnik, "Incest in Family Structure", p. 188.

force the child's feelings of guilt about the relationship and its disclosure. She must also suffer feelings of loss - loss of the close relationship with her father and also of loss of her family. It can be questioned whether the child should be removed since treatment of incestuous families involves changing the rôle structure. However, if the victim is to be removed, there should be a clear treatment plan. Although the literature has not dealt with such a plan, it seems that there should be a clear assessment of the case, the abovementioned feelings of the daughter should be dealt with and the case should be reviewed continuously.

The agency study revealed that when the daughter was removed, she was usually placed in a foster or group home. The writer is not aware of the reasons for this particular placement. Probably this alternative was being used because of the availability of such homes, an unwillingness by relatives to become involved, or perhaps the quality of such a placement has proved superior. In Greene's study she found that some of the victims were placed with the maternal grandmother. She comments on the negative aspect of such a placement: "Since these maternal grandmothers had done a questionable job of parenting their own daughters numerous years prior, the wisdom of placing the molested victim in this environment appeared questionable."<sup>1</sup> This issue is very important to social work practice and is an implication for further research.

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Greene, "Family Pathology", p. 7.

Knowledge of Literature

Nine of the ten agencies were questioned as to whether they were familiar with any of the literature on incest.<sup>1</sup> Four had read nothing on the subject. A fifth worker had read only one article. Out of the remaining four who reported they were familiar with some literature on incest, only one could suggest books and articles.<sup>2</sup>

One of the workers who said she had read literature on incest suggested that the researcher could use their agency library. However, after checking the library the worker called the researcher and stated that she was very surprised to find there was, in fact, no material in their library on this subject. Another worker who stated that he had read literature on incest checked his office but found nothing.

The above findings show that many of the workers involved with incest cases have read nothing or very little on the subject. This indicates that the workers are learning through experience and the varieties of treatment are based on individual style or general approach and not on theoretical information. It can be suggested that a worker's skill is enhanced if it is based on other people's more extensive experience and knowledge as well as on their own. This implies that social workers should read about the various kinds of problems which they encounter in their caseloads.

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Again, one will not be included because of a lack of co-operation.

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This is understandable since this agency has handled quite a number of incest cases and has also done a considerable amount of research on the subject.

An indication of their lack of up-to-date information on the subject was the fact that some workers reiterated age-old beliefs as causes of incest. For example, one stated that poor housing, poverty, alcoholism, and country living such as in the Gaspé caused incest. Immigration was suggested as a cause by another worker. The literature review in this paper reveals that such age-old beliefs have been discarded as major factors in the causality of incest. The present trend is to look at the psycho-social factors or family dynamics as the vital determinants.<sup>1</sup>

Other agencies, in the minority, pointed out some of the dynamics but in most cases the knowledge was partial and not linked to a general theory. For example, two workers told of how the mothers took their husbands' part and blamed their daughters for telling lies, but these workers were surprised when the writer talked about the collusive rôle often played by the mother in an incest situation.<sup>2</sup>

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Supra, pp. 9-12.

2

For information on the mother's rôle (see supra, pp. 40-43).

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS

At this point the reader should be reminded of the main purposes of the present research, namely, (1) to review the literature on the psychosocial causes of incest and its effects on the family, with emphasis on treatment suggestions, and (2) to study a small sample of Montreal agencies to see what treatment interventions are currently being used and if these interventions are based on the literature findings. The small sample which afforded the data for the study does not, by any means, constitute a representative sample.

This chapter will include three sections: a summary of treatment implications, research questions, and implications for social work.

#### Summary of Treatment Implications

The literature review revealed the following:

1. Incest is not caused by isolated factors, as was thought previously, but by psychosocial causes.
2. Incest generally occurs in a family setting - the mother, the father and the child playing a rôle.
3. Incest is a family secret which serves to maintain the integrity of the family unit.

4. When incest is discovered there is a breakdown in the family structure and a new equilibrium must be established. Recidivism after disclosure is very rare.

5. All family members are affected.

6. Treating incest in the context of the family is recommended.

The agency study revealed the following:

1. A small number of the agencies use treatment interventions that are family-oriented while the majority treat only the offender or the victim. Some individuals do not get treated.

2. Workers are unfamiliar with the literature.

3. Most agencies reported difficulty in getting families involved in treatment.

4. Treatment interventions are based on individual style and agency approach and not on theoretical knowledge.

#### Implications for Further Research

Although the findings of this study are inconclusive in themselves, they suggest interesting and apparently unexplored areas for future work. First of all, it is important to note that there has been very little written on mother-son, sibling and homosexual incest, so research on any aspect of these relationships would be useful.

The following questions for future research emerge from the findings of this study:

1. How are incest cases disclosed and to whom?
2. How many incest cases are dealt with in the criminal court as compared with the social welfare court? What factors determine this?
3. What are the discernible results of incest cases handled in the criminal court as compared to those dealt with in the social welfare court? Some areas to look into are the effects on the family and the rates of recidivism.
4. How many cases are treated in agencies? What are the sources of referral? What are the results of treatment? This would involve a long-term follow-up on family members who have received treatment.
5. What are the characteristics of incestuous families who seek help voluntarily?
6. In court referrals, who in the family is referred and where? Who is left out?
7. How long are incest families maintained in treatment? What are the factors involved in termination?
8. What are the effects on the child and on the family when the child is removed from the home? Where are the victims placed and why?
9. Besides the rôles of the mother, father and daughter, what rôles are played by other family members? How are these individuals affected by the incest that occurs in the family?
10. What are social workers' attitudes toward incest? Is it seen as delinquency or as a form of psychopathology?

11. How do workers react when the incest problem is revealed in relation to another problem? What do they do with it?

#### Implications for Social Work Practice

Since incest appears quite frequently in many different fields of social work practice, it warrants consideration and social workers in all fields should be equipped to deal with the problem. In order to explain possible treatment interventions that could be used by social workers when dealing with incest cases, the literature was reviewed. Although most recent articles perceived or analyzed the family dynamics in incest situations, only one article actually delineated and described a treatment plan.<sup>1</sup>

A small agency survey was undertaken to see what treatment interventions are currently being used by social workers and to determine if they are based on the literature findings. The majority of the social workers in this study did not seem to have much knowledge about the family dynamics of incestuous relationships. The knowledge of those who indicated some understanding of the family dynamics was isolated and piecemeal and not based on any concise theory. Treatment interventions were based on individual style and agency approach rather than on literature findings on incest.

It would seem that if social workers are to deal effectively with the incest problem, up-to-date knowledge on the subject is a necessity. It is feasible to suggest that staff development committees in agencies

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Supra, p. 60.

undertake this task and strive, by suggesting reading and bringing in knowledgeable people, to educate their workers. Another possible means of expanding the knowledge base, as is already occurring in isolated cases, would be to utilize the Forensic Clinic for consultation as well as for treatment. In this way the workers could gain competence in the area and provide a better service. The workers would be more alert to the existing problem and more apt to spot potential incest situations and deal with them before the acting out occurs. Prevention is a rôle for social workers.

The unavailability of information on the number of cases, kinds of treatment and treatment results seem to indicate a lack of record-keeping in social agencies. If social workers are to improve their techniques and thus function more effectively, they must ensure that research and evaluations of their programmes are possible.

In order to deal more effectively with the incestuous family, research must be undertaken. Since it is likely that social workers, as compared with other agents in society, come into contact with more incest cases, they are in an excellent position to engage in meaningful research on the subject.

Incest is a criminal offence and it is probable that this acts as a deterrent against treatment for incest cases who wish to seek help voluntarily. An agency which has dealt with some voluntary cases reported that one of the first concerns of the family members was whether they should report the situation to the court. This issue must also create some confusion for the social worker since there seems to be no clear policy relating to it. The confusion could also be related to possible

judgmental aspects of the worker's perception of the problem, which is likely if one is not knowledgeable about a subject.

The response to the above concern could vary from worker to worker and this is not fair to the cases involved. Social workers should determine among themselves a policy on this issue if they are to offer a professional service. This policy should be made known so that people who wish to seek help would know what is available and the consequences of seeking help. This would probably enlarge the base of the services as well as improve the quality.

The issues of court orders and correctional agency focus should also be considered. Since incest, as revealed in recent findings, is a family problem, it follows that it should be treated in that context. Yet, it appears from the small sample that correctional agencies are not family focused - adult probation deals with the adult offender, while juvenile probation deals with the victim. Court orders are usually individually oriented also - the offender is placed on probation and there is no jurisdiction over the other family members. It is left to the agencies to deal with treatment. Only a few use the family approach and with the exception of one agency, the others have not been very successful.

There seems to be a lack of coherence between the agencies. As already mentioned, if an adult is tried in the juvenile court, juvenile probation at the moment appears only to handle the victim. Juvenile probation services are undergoing a process of change and there is no clear policy. Adult probation does not pick up cases from the juvenile

court so a possible vacuum is created and cases are probably being lost. It was stated that adult probation did not follow up such cases because of its lack of workers. It seems that if the problem is not being handled because of a lack of workers, and if, in fact, cases are being lost as a result, a possible rôle for social workers in this area would be as advocates of change. Social workers should press to have agencies set up which could work together and make treatment available to all family members.

In summary, social workers should have a conscious awareness of the incest problem and they should develop policies and techniques on how to deal with it effectively. This will include education and research, as well as an advocacy for change.

## CHAPTER VII

### SUMMARY

This research project focused on the treatment of the incestuous family. The main purposes were to find out: (1) if there is a theoretical body of knowledge concerning the problem of incest, and (2) if this knowledge is being utilized in intervention techniques with the individuals involved in an incest situation. In doing this, the possible rôle of social workers in this area was studied. In addition, the study may be seen as preliminary to further research.

The design of the study was exploratory descriptive. It consisted of two parts. The major section was a literature review of the psychosocial causes of incest and its effects on the family, with a focus on suggested modes of intervention. The review consisted of all current psychological and sociological material since 1900 available at the McGill libraries. The second and minor part of the project consisted of a survey of ten agencies in Montreal which were expected to be in contact with incest cases, with the purpose of finding out what therapeutic approach is taken. The agencies consisted of correctional, family and children services. They were studied in terms of four aspects - number of cases, referral source, treatment interventions and knowledge of the literature.

The literature findings describe incest as generally occurring in a family setting with all the members playing a rôle. Treatment of the

family, as individuals or in various groupings, is recommended. The findings of the agency survey, although inconclusive in themselves, indicate that the workers are not familiar with the literature on incest and current treatment interventions are based on individual style and agency approach rather than on theoretical knowledge.

Research questions based on the findings were formulated. Points of relevance for social work practice were also discussed. It was suggested that social workers should have a more theoretical knowledge of the incest problem and should develop policies and techniques to deal with it.

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