

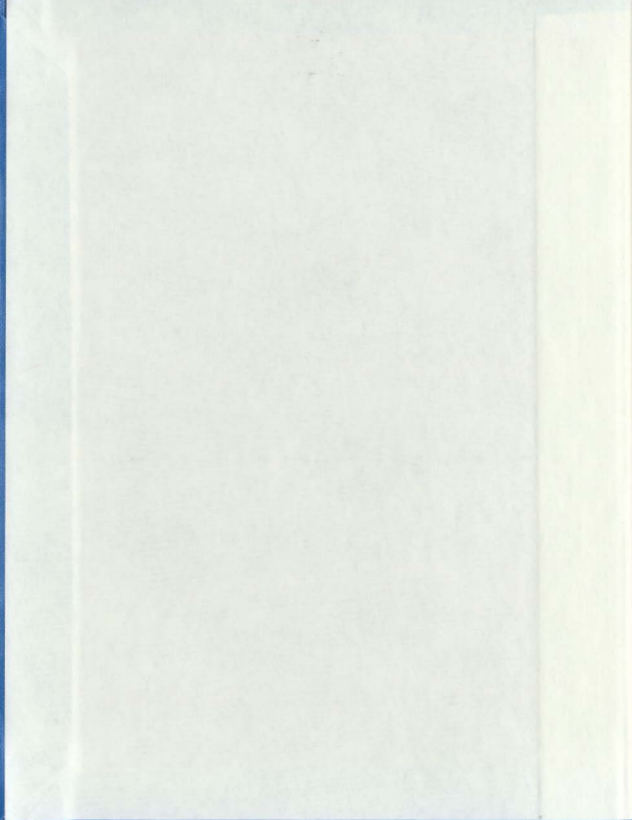
INCEST, SEXUALITY AND CATHOLIC FAMILY CULTURE

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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PATRICIA PRYDE LANGLOIS



INCEST, SEXUALITY AND CATHOLIC FAMILY CULTURE

by

Patricia Pryde Langlois

A thesis submitted to the
School of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the
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Abstract

"Incest, Sexuality and Catholic Family Culture"

Much scholarly activity has centred around sexual abuse of children perpetrated by Catholic clergy. However, comparatively little work has focused on sexual abuse of children within Catholic family contexts. This thesis explores the social construction of sexuality and gender relations within Catholic families in which incest has occurred. Particular attention is paid to: first, the significance of the gendered division of labour endorsed by Catholic ideology; second, Catholic ideology's rigid regulation of sexuality; and third, the importance of Catholic identity in the construction of gender and sexual identities.

The theoretical framework assumes that women's experiences of oppression within a dominant patriarchal order provide an epistemically advantageous starting point for sociological research. Starting from the standpoint of women incest survivors, the thesis tracks the "points of rupture" along an emergent "line of fault" between Catholic ideology and the women's actual experiences within Catholic families (Smith, 1987; 1990).

A feminist, qualitative, participatory action methodology is employed. The methods include a process of multiple, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions designed to encourage interaction and feedback among the participants and researcher, and textual analysis of official writings on Catholic marriage, family life and sexuality.

Study findings suggest that a variety of practices reinforced Catholic family and sexual ideology. A gendered division of labour in families contributed to the disempowerment of women and children. Shame about sexuality, combined with the silence about and fear of sexuality in these families, contributed to the onset and continuation of incest. The thesis concludes by drawing upon the incest survivors' reconstructed gender, sexual and, in some cases, Catholic identities to generate a vision of gender and sexual relations which are more empowering for women and children.

For my family of origin and my family to come.

Preface/Acknowledgments

I began developing my critique of the Catholic church from a gendered perspective about eight years ago. During those years I worked hard to develop a (still evolving) feminist consciousness. Looking back I think that I, having been so heavily influenced by Catholicism, channelled a lot of my (justifiable) feminist anger at "Father Church," perhaps as some women channel their anger at "the state" or "the patriarchy" in general. However, alongside my negative childhood experience of Catholicism was my equally positive formation as a teenager and young adult in the Catholic social justice tradition. I think of this thesis as a sort of "child" from the "marriage" of these two realities.

This thesis was completed during my time as a research student in England at London Guildhall University (formerly known as the City of London Polytechnic). As I neared completion of my Master of Women's Studies programme it occurred to me that I have at times been somewhat like the proverbial tortoise who, slowly but steadily, finishes the race. Anyone who has written a thesis knows the "aloneness" of the writing process. I was able to keep at it because I was fortunate enough not to lose interest in my thesis topic. My commitment to feminism and the principles of social justice were the fuel I needed to keep this tortoise moving.

First and foremost I would like to thank the women who so generously shared their life stories with me. Their honesty and candour enabled me to produce a thesis which, in my view, powerfully establishes links between incest and Catholic family culture. Their cooperation and support also eased the research process considerably.

I was also very fortunate to have the complete support of my two supervisors, Dr. Barbara Neis and Dr. Joan Pennell. They were available when I needed them and gave me encouragement to "stay in the race." They are role models for me not only because they are fine academics but also because they are compassionate, feminist-minded women.

I would like to thank the members of the Women's Studies Graduate Committee (past and present) who provided unfailing support throughout my programme. I am thankful especially for the encouragement of Dr. Marilyn Porter and Dr. Rosonna Tite.

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Patricia Langlois
London Guildhall University
March 1996

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Chapter One

Incest, Sexuality and Catholic Family Culture

I.i Introduction:

When we think of Catholicism, especially here in Newfoundland, sexual abuse is often not far from our minds. A host of writings related to the Mount Cashel crisis have forced public attention on the need for change. Canadian bishops responded to the Mount Cashel crisis by establishing a working committee on clergy abuse of children. In their report entitled From Pain to Hope (1992), they state that "child sexual abuse flourishes in a society that is based on competition and power and which is undermined by sexual exploitation and violence against women" (p. 41). Newfoundland's Working Group on Child Sexual Abuse (1989) suggested that "power that is not open to challenge is...dangerous and yet it is unchallenged power which the clergy in Newfoundland have enjoyed. And it is the issue of power and control over others which is central to an understanding of sexual abuse- whether it occurs in nuclear families, the family of the church, or in non-family relationships" (p. 1).

Much scholarly activity has centred around sexual abuse among Catholic clergy, however, comparatively little work has focused on incest, that is, sexual abuse in Catholic family

contexts.¹ While the Catholic church's official position promotes the equal dignity and value of human beings, the practical reality of social relations within the church and Catholic families reveals a long history of misogyny and abuse (Daly, 1973, 1979; Radford Ruether, 1989; Zieget Silberman, 1983). Many feminists consider Catholic teachings and practices to be examples of patriarchal ideology (Daly, 1973, 1979; Radford Ruether, 1989; Smith, 1987). The list of social factors relevant to incest and Catholic ideology is extensive: the denigration of women's sexuality in historical, theological writings (Daly, 1973; Radford Ruether, 1989; Ranke Heinemann, 1990; Redmond, 1989); a theology of ownership which has historically protected men's proprietorship over women and children, including the right to violate their physical, sexual and emotional boundaries (Bohn, 1989; Rush, 1982); projection of social evils onto secular society because it rejects traditional values (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992); and Catholicism's emphasis on suffering and self-sacrifice (Redmond, 1989). Collectively, we are learning

¹ My use of the term "incest" refers to "incestuous sexual abuse" and is not intended to refer to sexual activity between mutually consenting relatives, as, for instance, in the case of marriage between first cousins. For simplicity's sake I use the term "incest" rather than "incestuous sexual abuse" throughout the thesis.

that relationships which rely on the "rule of the father" foster a profound lack of mutuality among women and children who live with men. We also know that religious beliefs and practices are central to the formation of culture.

Incest is arguably the most acute form of sexual oppression, first, because it involves a physical and sexual violation, and, second, because it occurs within families where we "normally" look for protection from violation. Though research on incest is abundant, the role and impact of religion within incestuous relations has rarely been considered. To the extent that religion and religious values are not included in this domain of social inquiry many relevant factors are excluded. I have chosen to focus on the specific nuances of Catholic family culture since there is much evidence to support the claim that Catholics promote, and take pride in, a unique and exclusive culture. Thus, the specific character of Catholic families constitutes an appropriate (and, I believe, sorely needed) domain of feminist inquiry. Interviews with survivors of incestuous sexual abuse are a way of exploring gender relations and sexuality in Catholic families. If feminist standpoint theory (explained in detail in later chapters) is accurate in its foundational assumption that oppression, and its concomitant struggles, allow oppressed people to give less distorted accounts of

social reality, it makes sense to examine gender relations and sexuality through the eyes of Catholic incest survivors. In other words, an exploration of incest can provide a clear critique of gender and sexual relations which are oppressive to women.

I.ii Point of departure:

In October of 1993, having just arrived in Newfoundland, I visited St. John the Baptist Basilica on Military Road. I was obviously a newcomer, and a white-haired nun approached me and invited me to tea at the Mercy convent next door. I think I may look like potential convent material- I have been approached by nuns on a number of occasions. Several nuns, mostly older women, joined us, and I happily entertained their questions about my family and studies at the university. I told them I intended to write a thesis about incest. It was clearly a difficult topic for them, but being somewhat foolhardy I took the opportunity to examine their assumptions about how and why incest occurs. I argued that incest occurs in families where there is an imbalance of power among women and men, where there is shame about sexuality, where women are economically vulnerable (characteristics commonly found in Catholic families). "Oh, no, no, no, dear! That's just not so," they replied in unison. I left the convent profoundly struck by their collective belief that no truly Catholic man

would abuse a female relative: a man who sexually abuses a female relative is simply not respectful enough, not good enough, in short, not **Catholic** enough. After our meeting I wondered if they would think about what I had said and became even more determined to examine the roots of incest in families. In the months following our meeting I thus undertook an inquiry into how "the family", as it is formally defined by the Catholic church, was experienced by women incest survivors who grew up in Catholic homes.

The beliefs about incest expressed by the Mercy sisters may be widely shared among Roman Catholics. I discovered this one day shortly after giving a CBC interview on my research-in-progress. An article published in Newfoundland's Catholic journal, The Monitor (February, 1995), outlined one man's opposition to CBC's decision to air this interview. He described the interview as an "abuse of journalistic privilege" (p. 2). What especially intrigued me about his opposition to my research was his belief that among Catholic family members who have an inclination toward incest "it is precisely their Catholic faith which prevents them from sinning" (p. 2). His statement had an effect on me similar to my meeting with the Mercy sisters: it spurred my determination to explore the relationship between Catholicism, sexuality and abusive gender relations.

One day in the spring of 1994 I awoke from a dream reciting to myself this mantra: "My research is grounded in my experiences of the divine." I did not know what it meant at the time but I knew it was important. At that point in the history of my two year program I was wrestling with how to integrate equally strong commitments to feminism, to spirituality, to my family, and to the man who was at that time my partner. I felt that my research was inextricably linked with my personal life because I grew up in a Catholic home. As I reflect on the dream mantra today, I am keenly aware of the tension between, on the one hand, criticizing Catholicism for its potentially disempowering effects, and on the other hand, valuing what I learned from my upbringing as the best of Catholicism: belief in a divine creator who wants the best for her/his creatures; a recognition that people are more valuable than things or material wealth; the formal (if not always actual) commitment to sharing the earth's resources for the common good; the value of common worship and ritual; the power of forgiveness; a sense that although the world is often a brutal and conflict-filled place, the principles of social justice call us to strive to transform it.

I first learned about social justice from my parents. Their social activism was solidly grounded in a faith context, notably the social teachings of the Catholic church. This

tradition of social teaching has emphasized the need to transform not only individuals, but also unjust structures and institutions within which individuals are created and within which they act (Ryan, 1990). For my parents, social justice was (at least from my view looking back at their work) a set of principles informed by faith, demanding action to change an unjust world. Their activism primarily took the form of work among rural people, promoting and fostering land stewardship and solidarity among farmers and farming families. They formed political lobbies to fight for fairer prices for farm commodities and for marketing systems that would guarantee farming families a just return for their labour. I valued and respected the work they did. Today I am proud to say that my introduction to political activism and critical thinking started in my teenage years with access to such revolutionary texts as Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970). I learned that justice requires the fostering of human dignity and personal empowerment, and a responsiveness among individuals to work toward a common good. I also learned that justice demands that we challenge oppressive societal structures. Fostering dignity and personal empowerment, along with challenging oppressive structures, are key objectives for women. Growing up during the height of the second wave of feminism it was, therefore, fitting that I would apply what I

learned about justice and political activism to my work among women.

While I was profoundly influenced by my parents' commitment to faith-centred social activism I was also profoundly influenced by their beliefs about and practices relating to sexuality. As far as I can tell, my parents lived their lives by the rules they learned as children and young adults in the pre Vatican II era (a time prior to the mid 1960s when Catholicism was characterized by rigorous moral codes, especially regarding sexuality). Because of this, as children and teenagers it was a struggle for us to express our sexuality. We were constrained by the fact that any expression of sexuality outside of the safe and "proper" context of marriage was deemed immoral and inappropriate or, at the very least, made everyone very uncomfortable. Thus, we were inadvertently and unintentionally taught to fear sexuality. I do not blame my parents for this. They were brought up in an era of "erotophobia" (a fear of sexuality which Catholicism seems to embellish or encourage) as were their parents, and so on down the previous generations. In selecting my thesis topic I decided to apply the dictum of the second wave of feminist activism, "the personal is political," which has politicized sexual and gender relations within the so-called private sphere, to an analysis of Catholicism's

official (i.e., theologically approved) doctrine on marriage, family life and sexuality. I did so because, first, I perceived a gap between Catholic teaching on social justice and Catholic teaching on "the family." Second, I suspected that Catholic social teaching which takes seriously into account a feminist analysis of gender and sexual relations would have obvious, necessary and deep ramifications for Catholic teaching on family life.

There is, therefore, a vital, creative tension at work in me. It is a tension between, on the one hand, respecting and valuing Catholicism's commitment to social justice, and on the other hand, questioning Catholic teachings on "the family" and sexuality. When the best of Catholicism, that is, the requirement that we create a society which fosters the dignity of all its members, is applied to what we know about sexual abuse (or abusive sex) this brings us to ask whether traditional Catholic family values make this possible. This thesis, then, is about how sexuality and gender relations were socially constructed in Catholic families (between the 1940s and 1970s), the extent to which Catholic family values and teachings influenced these social constructions, and, in turn, how these gender and sexual constructions contributed to histories of incest. More specifically, in this thesis I seek to uncover what the **standpoint of women** incest survivors can

reveal about the social construction of gender relations and sexuality in Catholic homes. I also explore some of the differences between the pre Vatican II period and post Vatican II period (a time of dramatic change in the Catholic church).

The findings of this thesis, as will be shown, support the findings of previous feminist research linking Catholic teaching and practices to sexual abuse (Rush, 1982; Imbens & Jonker, 1992; Holderread Heggen, 1993). Practices endorsed by Catholic family and sexual ideology, notably a gendered division of labour in families and a rigid regulation of sexuality, contributed to the disempowerment of women and children and, in turn, to the onset and continuation of incest.

Although I did not set out to explore this, I was also pushed by the interview data to incorporate the ways in which some of the women have creatively renegotiated their Catholic identities in accord with their reconstructed gender and sexual identities. These new Catholic identities place the women at odds with "official" church positions, yet the women remain self-identified Catholics in ways that allow for their own empowerment and desire to participate in Catholic family and community life.

I.iii Theoretical framework and methodology:

Throughout the thesis I will be guided by a socialist

feminist analysis which places importance on the material conditions of families within a capitalist society, especially the socio-economic status of women in families. My critique of gender and sexual relations endorsed by Catholic ideology sets up an exploration of how family life and sexuality might become more empowering for women and children in Catholic families. Unlike some socialist feminist writers, however, my analysis has been guided by insights from feminist standpoint theorists, especially Sandra Harding (1991; 1993) and Dorothy Smith (1987; 1990).

Sandra Harding and Dorothy Smith argue that women's experiences of marginalization and exclusion make their lives epistemologically privileged starting points for conducting sociological research. Smith argues that much of what is perceived as knowledge (or truth) in our society is actually the ideology of a ruling group. The ruling group in our patriarchal, capitalist society is composed primarily of men, and, thus, ruling ideology reflects their interests. As Catholicism is a male dominated institution, the set of ideas, symbols and practices promoted by the Catholic church stands as an example of society's larger, patriarchal ideology. Its ideological character becomes visible through an exploration of the "line of fault" between, on one side of the fault line, Catholic texts and practices, and, on the other side of the

fault line, women's experience. Thus, I explore the contrast between idealized Catholic family life as depicted in official Catholic writings and Catholic families as they were actually experienced by incest survivors.

I employed a qualitative, participatory action methodology as a way of conducting feminist research that begins from the standpoint of women. Participatory action methodologies are different from traditional methodologies in which the researcher is the "expert" and attempts to maintain an "objective" position vis-a-vis the research subjects. Participatory action methodologies are "participatory" in that participants are central, not peripheral, actors in the discovery process. The local women's centre in the town in which I conducted the research assisted me in identifying participants. Eight women volunteered and, over a nine month period, I met with them individually, and twice as a group. My methodology was action-oriented as we were motivated to explore ways in which social relations might be changed in order to become more empowering for women and children.

I hope my theoretical framework and methodology enabled me to write a thesis that honours the lives and intentions of the women who so generously shared their life stories with me. This was my intent.

I.iv A "road-map" through the thesis:

Chapter two sets out my theoretical framework, paying particular attention to the methodological implications associated with constructing a feminist sociology of Catholic family life from the standpoint of women. I situate this framework within the socialist feminist tradition.

The third chapter consists of an overall review of literature relevant to the various components of my thesis: definitions of incest and sexual abuse; positivist and empirical research on incest and sexual abuse, including dominant theories explaining such abuses; and, drawing on the works of several feminist scholars, an historical and contemporary exploration of Catholic ideology and its significance for the social construction of gender and sexual relations.

In the fourth chapter I begin by justifying my use of a qualitative, participatory action methodology. Next I lay out my research design, explaining and justifying the methodology within my theoretical framework. I then explore the ethical dimensions of conducting this kind of research. In the final sections I introduce the participants and their reflections on the research process, and delineate my data collection and analysis procedures.

The fifth chapter introduces the combined interview and

textual analysis. I provide an overview of Dorothy Smith's (1987; 1990) "line of fault" argument as it relates to the interviews and textual analysis. I also use Smith's historical materialist framework to begin my analysis of the interview data. In chapter six I focus on Catholic family ideology, paying particular attention to its emphasis on patriarchal authority and male privilege in families. I explore how such privilege encouraged incest, inspired a fear of male authority among the survivors, and made it difficult, if not impossible, for the incest survivors to challenge abusers.

In chapter seven I expand my analysis of Catholic family ideology by exploring the role of mothering in these Catholic families. A substantial part of this discussion explores the social construction of mothering by contextualizing the vulnerabilities of and conflicting demands placed upon these Catholic wives and mothers.

Chapter eight explores the practices and mechanisms of Catholic sexual ideology which influenced the social construction of sexuality in these Catholic homes. Drawing upon the interviews, I establish several links between the social construction of Catholic sexual ideology and the incest histories.

In the final chapter I discuss the reconstruction of the

women's gender, sexual and (in several cases) Catholic identities. These reconstructed identities provide a groundwork for a vision for family living which is more empowering for women and children.

I.v An invitation:

For readers familiar with Catholicism, this thesis will undoubtedly inspire a range of emotions and opinions. For women readers, I hope the thesis somehow resonates with your experiences as women in a capitalist, patriarchal society. For those readers who are incest survivors, I hope the thesis provides some measure of support and hope. And for those readers for whom all three realities converge, I hope this thesis is especially thought-provoking and affirming. To these, and any other readers, I extend an invitation to explore with me the complex realities of incest and Catholic family culture.

Chapter Two**Constructing a Body of Feminist Theory****II.i Theoretical point of departure:**

In this chapter I outline the feminist theoretical framework that informs my analysis. In the process of generating my thesis, my theoretical framework and methodology evolved: feminist praxis, the dynamic interplay between theory and practice, is, after all, a process (Stanley, 1990). However, my framework and methodology have been fixed to the extent that they have firmly emanated from, and been grounded in, the standpoint of women.

The complexities of women's oppression defy simple explanation. While there are few definitive answers, I find some sets of theoretical assumptions more compelling than others. In this chapter I delineate my theoretical framework by outlining the process by which I fashioned several strands of feminist theorizing into a conceptual web. Harding's (1991; 1993) and Smith's (1987; 1990) versions of standpoint theory are the primary strands and form the axes of the web. Drawing on Smith's definition of ideology, I explain my use of the term "Catholic ideology" as it appears throughout the thesis. I then justify my reasons for adopting standpoint theory as a framework. I conclude by outlining additional theoretical strands in my conceptual web, all of which are

situated within the socialist feminist tradition. Two of these secondary strands include works by Alison Jaggar (1983) and Adrienne Rich (1980). As I analysed the interview data and the Catholic texts, I sought additional theoretical support to explain, first, the centrality of Catholic practices in the construction of the Catholic gender and sexual identities, and, second, a recognition that women are **actors** rather than victims. Thus, I added Sally Cole's (1991) and Gillian Walker's (1990) works to my theoretical web. This web has been the means of supporting and giving shape to the interview and textual data.

II.ii Conducting feminist sociology from the standpoint of women:

My theoretical framework and methodology are grounded in versions of feminist standpoint theory articulated by Sandra Harding (1991; 1993) and Dorothy Smith (1987; 1990). Harding's standpoint is constituted out of the epistemological advantage afforded by women's **struggle against oppression**. Smith's work is perhaps more accurately described as providing guidelines for creating a sociology from women's standpoint, a standpoint which emerges and is negotiated by "virtue" of women's exclusion from the creation of and participation in ruling relations. In other words, the standpoint of women Smith describes is constituted out of women's **exclusion** from

the creation of culture and intellectual discourse. Although debate and controversy surround the status and character of their (covertly) competing standpoint theories (expressed, for instance, in Liz Stanley's (1990) Feminist Praxis), I have chosen to hold the tension between them by honouring their differences and integrating their common strands. The main similarity is their shared assumption that the details of women's everyday lives can generate a much-needed critique of dominant, male-centred claims about social realities.

II.ii.a Feminist standpoint theory: Sandra Harding's version

Insofar as women and men are assigned different kinds of activities, they lead lives that have significantly different contours and patterns. Starting thought from the historical details of women's lives in order to evaluate critically the dominant knowledge claims that have been generated primarily from the lives of men...can decrease the partialities and distortions in the pictures of nature and social life that are provided by the natural and social sciences (Harding, 1991, p. 141).

Sandra Harding is a philosopher of science who has had a tremendous impact upon emerging feminist methodologies. Among her recent writings are two articles on standpoint theory. The first, "Starting Thought From Women's Lives: Eight Points for Maximizing Objectivity" (1991), outlines reasons why women's lives provide less partial and more accurate starting points for scientific and social scientific research. In the second, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is 'Strong Objectivity'?" (1993), Harding clarifies some of the points

made in the first article.

Harding argues that women's lives, by "virtue" of their struggles against oppression in a capitalist, patriarchal culture, are "valuable as beginning points for scientific and scholarly projects" (1991, p. 140). The notion of women's "standpoint" is derived from Hegel's master-slave dialectic, later borrowed by Marx to establish the proletarian standpoint. The crucial component is the hypothesis that the condition of oppression, paradoxically, places oppressed persons in an epistemically privileged position. It does so because of the well-developed notion that the oppressed have vision while the oppressor does not.² Oppressed and marginalized people have less interest in ignorance because they have less interest in maintaining the status quo (Harding, 1991). Women have less to lose by distancing themselves from dominant social relations; thus, perspectives from their lives can more easily generate fresh and critical analyses (1991).

Harding's articulation of standpoint theory suggests that knowledge and objectivity can and need to be redefined from the starting point that knowledge is **socially constructed**.

Knowledge claims are always socially situated, and the

² Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) develops this extensively in Pedagogy of the Oppressed.

failure by dominant groups to critically and systematically interrogate their advantaged social situation and the effect of such advantages on their beliefs leaves their social situation a scientifically and epistemologically disadvantaged one for generating knowledge (Harding, 1993, p. 54).

Standpoint theorists argue that human activity not only structures our knowledge but also sets "limits on our understanding. What we do shapes and constrains what we can know" (Harding, 1991, pp. 140-141). Harding (1993) cites Nancy Hartsock (1983) who suggests there are some groups from whose perspectives, **however well-intentioned they may be**, the real relations of humans with each other and with the natural world are not visible. Because women and men are assigned different kinds of activities they have different experiences, and, therefore, different knowledge.

Harding cautions, however, that to begin our research simply from women's experiences could well lead us to the faulty, male-centred conclusions of traditional research, for women too hold sexist, classist and racist beliefs. She argues that "knowledge emerges for the oppressed through the **struggles** they wage against their oppressors...Thus a feminist standpoint is not something that anyone can have simply by claiming it. It is an achievement" (1991, p. 144). Out of our struggle to end oppression we come to see, for instance, incest as profoundly oppressive rather than simply a "normal"

way for human beings to relate to one another.

A standpoint theorist, according to Harding, would not necessarily say that her position is the best one simply because she is a woman. For instance, a black lesbian woman is in a better position than a white heterosexual woman to describe the character of homophobia and racism. Standpoint theorists respond to objections of ethnocentrism by reminding us that starting thought from women's lives is not the same as saying that our own lives (if we are women) are the best places to begin our research. Standpoint theory does not endorse, nor is it doomed to, relativism (Harding, 1992). It argues against the idea that all social situations provide equally useful resources for learning about the world, and also against the idea that they set equally strong limits on knowledge (Harding, 1993). Rather, the positions of the most marginalized are the best places from which to generate questions and criticisms about the social world.

Objectivity remains the goal of standpoint theory. In this sense it remains within an objectivity-seeking philosophical project. However, objectivity is redefined. Since all knowledge reflects the social position of the holder and creator of knowledge, there is no such thing as timeless, universal objectivity. Objectivity means gaining as full and accurate an account of reality as possible and this is

Harding's definition of "strong objectivity" (1993). Proponents of "strong objectivity" place greater trust in the knowledge claims of marginalized people than the knowledge claims of privileged, dominant groups which have been allowed to stand as universally applicable accounts of social reality (Harding, 1993).

In relation to my thesis, then, standpoint theory would hold that lofty, "expert" assessments of incest are going to be less accurate than those grounded in the actual experiences of incest survivors. Harding reminds us, however, that not all women are willing to struggle against patriarchal, capitalist oppression. "Women have less to lose, but not nothing to lose; gaining a feminist consciousness is a painful process for many women" (1991, p. 145). Not all incest survivors, then, have an unequivocal interest in knowing about their abuse. Years of repressed memories among survivors attest to the fact that not remembering abuse is often the safest way for survivors to navigate their lives. However, incest survivors who have acknowledged their abuse and struggled against a dominant order which allowed them to be abused occupy the most epistemologically privileged position when it comes to explaining and asking critical questions about the dominant order in which incest occurs.

II.ii.b Dorothy Smith: Sociology from the standpoint of women

Dorothy Smith's Everyday World as Problematic (1987) and The Conceptual Practices of Power (1990) provide guidelines for conducting feminist sociology from the standpoint of women. She advocates a method which preserves the presence of subjects as knowers and actors (Smith, 1987). Her sociology assumes that women, as a group (and many other groups, such as native people, men of colour and homosexual women and men), are generally excluded from the making of culture and intellectual discourse (Smith, 1987). Women's standpoint is constituted precisely as a result of women's consciousness of and struggle against this exclusion, and the everyday experiences of women offer an understanding of how our social relations are organized from outside the dominant culture (also called the dominant order) or relations of ruling (also called ruling apparatus). In The Conceptual Practices of Power (1990) Smith defines the relations of ruling as "something more general than the notion of government as political organization. I refer rather to that total complex of activities, differentiated in many spheres, by which our kind of society is ruled, managed and administered" (p. 14).

Smith's sociology addresses social relations by beginning with the everyday experiences of women who function as outsiders within the dominant order and who have limited roles

in its creation and organization. The consciousness arising out of women's alienation creates a point of rupture, or a line of fault, between, on the one hand, actual experiences and women's subsequent consciousness, and, on the other hand, the experiences and consciousness of the creators and beneficiaries of ruling relations. Women's history of consciousness-raising shows "that this rupture in experience... [is] located in a relation of power between women and men, in which men dominate women" (Smith, 1987, p. 51).

Smith (1987) reminds us that all women are not equally marginalized within relations of ruling. While women as a whole are not the producers and definers of social reality, women academics function within the intelligentsia and male-dominated institutions of learning. They function as outsiders within discourses not created by them but they still occupy positions of social privilege. This insight resonates with Harding's (1991) claim that all women are not equidistant from the centre of the dominant order. Social class, racial inequalities, differences in sexual orientation, physical ability and age (among others) affect a woman's standpoint. However, here an opportunity to "honour the differences" between Harding and Smith may present itself. Smith believes that "as women members of an intelligentsia and therefore trained in the modes of thinking, acting and the craft of

working with words, symbols, and concepts, we have both a special responsibility and a special possibility of awareness at this point of rupture" (1987, p. 49). Harding, however, would probably hold that the accounts of social reality given by women academics, who occupy positions of social privilege, will be less accurate than those given by more marginalized women. A question remains, therefore, for feminist academics who uphold the tenets of feminist standpoint theory. Is there, as Smith suggests, a "special possibility" for feminist academics or will their academic contributions be inherently limited on account of their positions of social privilege? Perhaps we need to keep holding the tension between Smith's and Harding's position and let the answer to this question emerge over time.

II.iii.a Ideology:

In my use of the term "ideology" I draw heavily on Smith's (1987; 1990) discussion of ideology which is firmly rooted in Marx and Engels' use of the term as presented in The German Ideology (1846/1970). Smith defines ideology as

those ideas and images through which the class that rules the society by virtue of its domination of the means of production orders, organizes and sanctions the social relations that sustain its domination...[T]he concept of ideology...directs us to examine who produces what for whom, where the social forms of consciousness come from (1987, p. 54).

Smith has adopted Marx and Engels' definition of ideology to

explain the rupture between, on the one hand, women's experiences and subsequent consciousness, and, on the other hand, ideological practices. The rupture between women's experience and ideological practices exists because men create, organize and sanction social relations which sustain their domination over women. The rupture occurs when women realize that the categories defined by men "become a forced set of categories into which we must stuff the awkward and resistant actualities of our world" (Smith, 1987, p. 55). As an historical materialist, Smith (1990) emphasizes that this rupture in women's experience emerges when the historical and material conditions support such an emergence.³

The main result of women's exclusion from the creation and organization of ruling relations is alienation which "compels women to think their world in the concepts and terms in which men think theirs...The established social forms of consciousness alienate women from their own experience" (Smith, 1990, p. 13). Women's alienation, as long as it remains unidentified and unchallenged, plays a pivotal role in

³ A parallel is found in Paulo Freire's (1970) words: "One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge men's [sic] consciousness. Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 36).

maintaining ruling relations. Smith (1990) has taken Marx's formulation of alienation and modified it: "The simplest formulation of alienation posits a relation between the work individuals do and an external order oppressing them in which their work contributes to the strength of the order that oppresses them" (p. 19). Smith (1987) argues that the central motivation behind the women's movement is the critique of societal institutions that alienate women from their experience. Such institutions include the media, educational systems, accounts of history which ignore the activity of women, and theological and religious institutions. For both Smith and Harding, then, feminist research which begins from women's standpoint represents knowledge, not ideology, about the social world, knowledge which counters the hegemony of patriarchal ideology (Harding, 1991, 1993; Smith, 1990; Walker, 1990).

II.iii.b Catholic ideology:

Catholic ideology becomes those ideas, images and practices through which the Catholic church organizes and sanctions the social relations that sustain the domination of men over women and children. Within the Catholic church members of the ruling apparatus (that is, those who create and organize relations of ruling) include the Pope, the hierarchy of clergy and theologians, and, **most pervasively**, husbands,

fathers and other male relatives into whose hands the church has delivered a "natural" and "divinely ordained" power. In Catholic families, then, men's experiences of power are grounded in and reinforced both by Catholic ideological practices and society's larger set of ideological practices. According to Harding and Smith, the feminist knowledge created in this thesis would not have been produced had I begun from the standpoint of men in Catholic families. Fathers, brothers, male cousins, uncles and grandfathers represent the ruling apparatus in Catholic families. Hence, their epistemic positions would prevent them from viewing social relations in a way that **critically** examines gender and social relations.

Constructing a feminist sociology of Catholic families from the standpoint of women allows us to identify the line of fault for women in Catholic families as they recount their everyday/everynight experiences within the dominant Catholic family order.

II.iv Justifying feminist standpoint theory:

I justify my use feminist standpoint theory in the following ways. First, and most importantly, I use standpoint theory because I believe it is a valuable way of conducting feminist research, research which reveals the oppressive character of our capitalist, patriarchal society's ruling relations.

Second, feminist standpoint theory, as a framework, accommodates my desire to do interdisciplinary research. Women's Studies is characterized by its interdisciplinary approach to feminist research. Standpoint theory accommodates my desire to reclaim my background in philosophy⁴ and, at the same time, conduct sociological research. Philosophy has traditionally separated ideas and the material world, and fostered disdain for the murky and indistinct world of the sociologist. Standpoint theory renegotiates the traditional boundary between philosophy and sociology. By arguing that knowledge is socially constructed, feminist standpoint theorists, and others, are thus creating vast cracks in the bedrock of philosophy. As a feminist interested in philosophy, but one who cannot accept the notion that ideas are separate from material existence, standpoint theory has offered me an attractive alternative.

Third, standpoint theory's epistemological focus on oppression and alienation in the lives of women easily

⁴ I use the word "reclaim" because I am now aware that my work in the Philosophy department during my undergraduate years was minimized when I chose to explore feminist philosophy. My work was tolerated but the head of the department did little to encourage or promote it. I graduated with a feeling that I did not deserve an honours degree in Philosophy. While many feminists are happy to work outside of a masculinist discipline such as Philosophy I feel it is of vital importance that feminist theoretical contributions not be regarded as inferior to those of "pure" philosophers.

accommodates my interest in incest because incest is an acute form of oppression and alienation. To my knowledge, there has not yet been an attempt to apply feminist standpoint theory to childhood sexual abuse or incest. Thus, I hope to fill an academic gap by doing so. While one of the central tenets of standpoint theory is that we need to look to actual experiences of oppression for descriptions and prescriptions about the social world, the literature remains, ironically, quite theoretical.⁵ One challenge to standpoint theorists is to apply such alternative feminist epistemologies to the everyday world. This will be achieved in part by conducting a feminist sociology of Catholic families which begins with the lives and experiences of women.

II.v Weaving the theoretical web:

While Smith and Harding provide the primary axes, I have strengthened my conceptual web by incorporating four additional theoretical strands. These strands are works by Alison Jaggar (1983), Adrienne Rich (1980), Sally Cole (1991) and Gillian Walker (1990). Each strand reflects the contributions of feminists in the socialist tradition who focus on women's roles in families as central to the

⁵ Gillian Walker's (1990) Family violence and the women's movement: The conceptual politics of struggle is a clear exception.

maintenance of capitalism and patriarchal control. Socialist feminists have combined the best of **materialist** critiques (also known as political economy critiques) and **radical** feminist critiques of the family by emphasizing not only class issues (for instance, alienated male labour as an explanation for domestic abuse) and the significance of women's economic powerlessness, but also the complex cluster of forces known as patriarchy (Rich, 1980). In other words, socialist feminists advocate a theoretical position which does not give primacy to the analysis of either gender or class.⁶

Alison Jaggar's (1983) concise delineation of feminist theoretical frameworks, especially socialist feminism, has been helpful to me. Jaggar's "Political Philosophies of Women's Liberation" articulates the socialist feminist position in relation to a capitalist, patriarchal family model.

Marxists...argue that women's oppression is not a creation of capitalism...but they do argue that the

⁶ Tensions emerged as I constructed my conceptual web. An illustration of a tension is the following: If we examine Catholic ideology from a socialist feminist perspective we may reveal how such ideology helps to sustain capitalist relations and patriarchal power. However, an examination of Catholic ideology will be limited by a strict socialist feminist analysis because of the classical socialist disdain for religion (Marx & Engels, 1848/1967). My theoretical framework necessarily stretches beyond the usual boundaries of socialist feminism and is informed by theorists whose class and gender analyses are at least compatible with Christianity.

advent of capitalism intensified the degradation of women...[One way that capitalism and male supremacy reinforce one another is by allocating to women] such socially necessary but unprofitable tasks as food preparation, domestic maintenance and the care of children, the sick and the old...[Thus,] women's liberation requires that the economic functions performed by the family [i.e. women] would be undertaken by the state...[M]arriage will continue, but it will no longer resemble an economic contract... [It] will be based solely on "mutual inclination" between a woman and a man who are now in reality, and not just formally, free and equal (pp. 324-325).

Further, Jaggar (1983) writes, "Since it is clearly impossible under capitalism to bring all women into public production, [women]...should be paid a wage for domestic work" (p. 328).

Adrienne Rich's (1980) stand against the institution of compulsory heterosexuality has been of critical importance to my emerging critique of Catholic families.⁷ A cornerstone of the institution of compulsory heterosexuality is a gendered division of labour which socialist feminists argue is strongly linked to women's oppression in a capitalist, patriarchal society. Adrienne Rich (1980) presents a convincing and provocative case for the institution of heterosexuality as the mechanism at the heart of women's oppression. For instance,

⁷ During my 1989-90 academic year at the University of Toronto I read Adrienne Rich's (1980) work on the institution of compulsory heterosexuality. I remember being simultaneously shocked and delighted by her insights. Her critique of heterosexuality played a central role in the formation of my critique of Catholic families.

she reminds us that women have historically been forced to marry in order to survive economically and to maintain a level of respectability for themselves and their children. Rich believes that the institution of compulsory heterosexuality is the primary manifestation of, and common thread running through, patriarchal ideology.

[When we look at patriarchy] what surely impresses itself is the fact that we are confronting not a simple maintenance of inequality and property possessions, but a pervasive cluster of forces, ranging from physical brutality to control of consciousness, which suggests that an enormous potential counterforce is having to be restrained (p. 640).

Rich's (1980) description of the character of patriarchal ideology is strikingly reminiscent of Smith's (1987; 1990) position on patriarchal ideology. Like Smith, Rich describes the interaction of a complex cluster of forces maintaining patriarchal privilege, but takes the argument further by suggesting that the institution of compulsory heterosexuality is the lifeblood of patriarchal ideology. In my own work, the convergence of their positions has allowed me to examine gender relations within Catholic families as vehicles of patriarchal and heterosexist oppression.

Sally Cole's (1991) anthropological research on gender relations within a predominantly Catholic community helped me make connections between Catholic identity and the social construction of gender and sexuality. Cole (1991) is a

feminist anthropologist who takes seriously the material and socio-economic conditions of women's lives. Thus, she shares many of Smith's (1987; 1990) historical materialist assumptions. Cole's work is also firmly grounded in the actualities of women's lives, and, thus, is in accord with Smith's requirement that feminist research begin with the everyday lives of women. Although Cole does not explicitly adopt Smith's theoretical assumptions, she readily admits that patriarchal practices play crucial roles in the construction of gender and sexual identities.

Cole's (1991) primary theoretical contribution to my research is her insistence on viewing women as actors, not passive victims, in the social construction of gender and sexual identities. Her work provides a refreshing reminder that women are not simply victims of the patriarchal ideological relations Smith (1987; 1990) describes. Cole writes,

The social construction of gender is not only a process of constructing ideals about gender roles and relations but also a process of manipulating those ideals- a process of negotiation. Socioeconomic conditions, including circumstances of rapid social and economic change, only define limits within which the construction of gender identity takes place; they do not predetermine gender roles and relations. On the other hand, gender ideals are not constructed independently of material conditions and, once constructed, are not immutable...Gender, then, is a historical and social construct, malleable and subject to change. It is actively constructed at different, often antagonistic,

levels of society- the individual, the household, the community, and the state, for example- resulting in contradiction and in layered systems of social and cultural meaning (p. 149).

Similarly, Gillian Walker (1990) is concerned that we do "a disservice to women and to our understanding of the structuring, ordering, and ruling of society...to regard ourselves as having been merely passive victims of historical processes controlled by a conspiracy of men" (p. 10). Walker's (1990) study of the battered women's movement in Canada explicitly adopts Dorothy Smith's conceptual framework. Her insights into wife battering are useful to me as I, too, adopt Smith's framework in my analysis of another form of family violence. Walker (1990) emphasizes that ideological procedures structure our society in ways that promote family violence, specifically male violence against women. She writes,

Society as we know it is not random but organized, ordered, and governed, with varying degrees of efficiency perhaps, but nonetheless structured...Under such a regime, as opposed to overtly totalitarian ones, we are not ruled on a day-to-day basis by terror but ideological procedures - ways of thinking, understanding and acting - that enlist us in our own ordering. Ideological procedures are a feature of the way our society is governed. They form part of the work of a ruling apparatus comprising a complex of relations, including the state, the managerial and administrative processes, education, the professions, the media, and so on, that organize and control contemporary capitalist society (p. 8).

Patriarchal religious institutions, as Smith (1987)

suggests, can be included among this complex of relations, and their ideological procedures play a role (more or less strongly, given a variety of historical and social considerations) in the way society as a whole is governed. Catholic ideology, then, might be thought of as just one "finger" among the many hands which create and organize the mechanisms of patriarchal relations.

II.vi Conclusion:

In this chapter I established the strands of my uniquely constructed web of theory. I outlined the two versions of feminist standpoint theory, articulated by Sandra Harding (1991; 1993) and Dorothy Smith (1987; 1990), which represent the central axes of my conceptual web. I then defined "ideology" and "Catholic ideology" as they are used throughout the thesis, and justified my use of feminist standpoint theory. I concluded by highlighting the work of four theorists whose contributions represent secondary strands on my theoretical web. I have foreshadowed the importance of women's traditional roles in families for my later analysis by drawing on Alison Jaggar (1983) and Adrienne Rich (1980). I credited Sally Cole (1991) with providing a groundwork for my analysis of the social construction of gender and sexuality in Catholic families, and for emphasizing that women are actors, not passive victims, in these social constructions. Finally,

I included Gillian Walker's (1990) work as a strand in my theoretical web because Walker uses Smith's conceptual framework to analyse wife battering, one important dimension of family violence. In the following chapter I explore in greater detail another dimension of family violence, incestuous sexual abuse.

Chapter Three

Review of Literature Related to Sexual Abuse, Incest, Family Violence and Catholic Family Culture

III.1 Introduction:

This chapter reflects my grounding in both socialist feminism and the standpoint of women. I believe that if we are to understand how and why incest occurs in families we need to understand how our social, economic and political structures first, chronically deny women power, and second, grant men power over others. In keeping with feminist standpoint theory, I believe we need to look to women's everyday/everynight lives within families to understand how women and children are influenced by complex, multi-layered, patriarchal relations of ruling.

In this chapter I review several literatures. First, I explore various definitions of incest and sexual abuse, including my own. Second, I document the findings of empirical research on incest and sexual abuse, providing a feminist standpoint analysis of these findings. Third, I outline three theories which have sought to explain sexual abuse and incest as social phenomena. These include maternal collusion theory, pathology theory, and feminist theory. Fourth, I extend my feminist theoretical understanding of incest by establishing the gendered division of labour in

families as a central context for an analysis of family violence. In the fifth section I shift my review of the literature from sexual abuse and incest to a discussion of Catholic ideology, highlighting both historical and contemporary feminist critiques. Finally, I join these two bodies of literature by outlining research which makes connections between sexual abuse and the Christian religious tradition.

III.i Prevalence and definitions of sexual abuse and incest :

Rix Rogers' (1990) recent report on child sexual abuse suggests that researchers have had difficulty compiling accurate statistics on the prevalence of incest and sexual abuse. A Canadian National Populations survey, however, cited in the Badgley Report (Canada, 1984), reported that in a random sample of over 2000 adults over one-half of the women and about one-third of the men had been forcibly involved in at least one unwanted sexual act. Four-fifths of these unwanted sexual acts occurred before adulthood.

The 1980s witnessed a dramatic increase in awareness of and number of reported cases of child sexual abuse in Canada (Rogers, 1990). Alongside increased reports of sexual abuse, feminist analyses of family violence have recognized sexual abuse as a social phenomenon whose roots are embedded in a patriarchal society (Callahan, 1993; Finkelhor, Hotaling,

Lewis & Smith, 1990; Homer, Leonard & Taylor, 1985; Rogers, 1990; Rush, 1982). Incest and sexual abuse are identified as manifestations of eroticized violence occurring within families and throughout society (Rogers, 1990; Rush, 1982; Valverde, 1985). However, such an understanding of incest and sexual abuse is not the only one found in the literature. In section III.iv I explore theories which differ from this feminist understanding.

Rogers (1990) admonishes Canadians that sexual abuse is a problem which threatens to erode the fabric of Canadian society. He suggests that we are at a crucial time in history, a time when the rights of children, including their right to freedom from abuse, are recognized by the United Nations. He states that a "long-term and effective response to sexual abuse of children demands that we address deeply rooted contributing factors in our society. We must challenge patriarchal values that allow the more powerful to exploit the less powerful" (p. 17).

In 1986, Chris Bagley suggested that

sexual abuse of children takes many forms, and is certainly not confined to the intercourse defined by the incest statute. Sexual abuse can range from the sexualization of children for commercial purposes...to the exploitation of children through pornography; to various kinds of sexual assault ranging from exposure and manual interference to the grossest forms of sexual assault (p. 31).

Rogers (1990), citing the Badgley Report (Canada, 1984), defines sexual abuse as "the misuse of power by someone who is in authority over a child for the purposes of exploiting a child for sexual gratification. It includes incest, sexual molestation, sexual assault and the exploitation of the child for pornography or prostitution" (p. 19).

Annie Imbens and Ineke Jonker, authors of Christianity and Incest (1992), define incest in this way.

"Sexual abuse within the extended family" refers to sexual contacts initiated by adults (father, stepfather, uncle, grandfather, a friend of the family, older brother), in which the wishes and feelings of the child with whom the acts are committed are not taken into account (pp. 3-4).

Rogers (1990) cites Heather-jane Robertson, a member of the Canadian Teachers' Federation, who stated,

The sexual abuse of children is perpetuated by ignoring the prevalence of patriarchy in our society. Specifically, we must address the eroticization of powerlessness, and those forces which encourage many men to believe that they have the right, by virtue of being male, to sexual gratification with or without consent (p. 43).

The terms incest and sexual abuse are sometimes used interchangeably. For instance, Florence Rush's (1982) study provides an historical account of the development of child sexual abuse. She examines marriage laws in the Hebrew and Christian traditions to make links with present day incest practices. But she reminds us that patriarchal ownership of

women and children was and is not necessarily confined within families. Indeed, a patriarchal culture allows men to violate the boundaries of women and children both within and beyond family contexts. Similarly, Sandra Butler (1978) does not limit her definition of incest to sexual intercourse between family members. She defines it as "any sexual activity or experience imposed on a child which results in emotional, physical or sexual trauma" (p. 5).

Some studies highlight the differences between sexual abuse and incest. There are similarities between incest and sexual abuse committed by a person outside of the family (notably, the fact that every case of sexual abuse represents an abuse of social power). However, dynamics which make incest a unique form of sexual abuse include the fact that an incest survivor is often dealing with a betrayal of trust by someone on whom they depend for survival, usually a person they love. Loyalties can become fiercely divided as family members respond to both the perpetrator and the survivor. Not surprisingly, these family environments are often filled with fear, hostility and instability (Bass & Davis, 1988).

Incest, as I define it, includes a continuum of acts and behaviours which violate the sexual boundaries of vulnerable family members. There is, in my view, such a thing as an incestuous family environment which might be considered

"poisonous" for certain family members in an way analogous to a working or educational environment that is considered poisonous for employees or students who are being sexually harassed. Such an atmosphere disempowers certain family members and makes them feel shame about themselves as sexual creatures. I assume that incest, as a form of oppression, co-exists alongside, and often overlaps with, other forms of oppression. Thus, I do not view incest as different in kind from other gender-based abuses such as wife battering and sexual assault.

III.iii Empirical findings on sexual abuse and incest:

In this section I discuss the findings of a variety of studies about sexual abuse and incest. I include findings about the gender of offenders and the long-term effects of sexual abuse. All research cited in this section is "empirical" because it is based on experience rather than speculation. Harding (1991) distinguishes between two empirically-based theories of knowledge: feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory. Feminist empiricists apply the existing methodological norms of positivist research in a more rigorous fashion so as to eliminate biases in the findings. In accord with a positivist approach, they strive to be "objective" and "value-neutral" by distancing themselves from research subjects. I cite research findings of feminist

empiricists because they contribute to our knowledge about the prevalence, characteristics and effects of incest and sexual abuse.

Bass and Davis' (1988) guide for sexual abuse survivors stands as a good example of a feminist standpoint approach to research on sexual abuse. It is empirically-based but the authors do not work within a positivist framework. As researchers, they are mutually identified with the women they interview, which means they do not maintain a hierarchical relationship with the research participants. They are also politically motivated, which means they make value judgments about a society in which female children and women are more vulnerable to sexual abuse than male children and men. One main difference between positivist research (i.e., feminist empiricism) and feminist standpoint research on sexual abuse is the latter's emphatic use of the term **survivor** rather than **victim** of sexual abuse.

III.iii.a Offenders:

Empirical research on sexual abuse and incest indicates that the vast majority of offenders are male. The Badgley Report found that when the findings of several national surveys were aggregated the surveys confirmed the belief that most sexual assaults committed against children are committed by males: 98.8% of the offenders were male (Canada, 1984).

Finkelhor et al. (1990), in a national American survey of adult women and men sexual abuse survivors, found that 98% of perpetrators were male. Further, they found that of those perpetrators, 49% were authority figures in relation to their victims (Finkelhor et al., 1990). Findings such as these point to the importance of feminist, gender-based analyses of sexual abuse and incest.

III.iii.b Impact:

Many empirical studies have investigated the long-term impact of sexual abuse in survivors' lives. Positivist researchers have documented extensively the long-term effects of sexual abuse. Davenport, Browne and Palmer (1994) report that at least a quarter of child sexual abuse carries a legacy of serious long-term psychological harm to survivors. Stevens-Simon and McAnarney (1994) show that childhood sexual abuse is a common antecedent of adolescent pregnancy. Peters and Range (1995) found a strong correlation between those who experienced sexual abuse which involved touching and rates of suicidality. They found that sexually abused adults are more suicidal and have fewer cognitive deterrents to suicide than adults who have not been abused, regardless of whether they are women or men or whether they were abused by peers or adults.

Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis and Smith (1990) found that

one of the best predictors of sexual abuse occurring (whether inside or outside families) is the lack of a positive family environment. Fox and Gilbert (1994) found that women with histories of multiple childhood traumas (i.e., incest, physical abuse and/or parental alcoholism) indicated higher levels of problematic outcomes such as depression, low self-esteem, sexual assault in adulthood, and involvement with a chemically dependent partner. Moeller and Bachman (1993) found that women who are survivors of physical, sexual and emotional abuse were also found to have lower ratings of overall health, more hospitalizations for illnesses and a greater number of physical and psychological problems than women who were not abused. Hotte and Rafman (1992) found that incest survivors also have significantly lower self-esteem and more sexualized attitudes and behaviours than comparison groups of girls.

Intergenerational patterns of sexual abuse have also been widely documented. These are patterns of abuse which occur among and over several generations. Examples of intergenerational abuse include survivors of abuse who become perpetrators as adults, survivors of abuse who mother survivors of abuse, and perpetrators of abuse from whom the next generation learns how to become abusers. Chaffin's (1992) study of treatment completion and progress among incest

survivors suggests that incest victims tend to be repeatedly abused by other sexual offenders after the initial period of incest is over. Leifer, Shapiro and Kassem (1993) found that in 68 cases of sexual abuse over 50 percent of the nonoffending mothers' childhood histories included abuse. This statistic is significantly higher than that reported for women in the general population. Moreover, more than half of the women in their study reported negative relationships with their parents. Their research findings, however, are congruent with other research showing that intergenerational transmission of abuse is not inevitable.

Gregory-Bills and Rhodeback (1995) are critical of empirical research which fails to emphasize familial circumstances surrounding abuse and disclosures of abuse. "Familial circumstances are frequently neglected and in many studies, the source of victimization itself (e.g., family member or nonrelative/stranger) is not distinguished...The key experiential difference may manifest in distinguishable psychological impairment and trauma" (p. 178). Bass and Davis (1988) emphasize that incest survivors who disclose to family members in the aftermath of incest usually encounter tremendous resistance. Family patterns of sexual abuse have deep generational roots and are not easily changed simply because abuse has been identified. Bass and Davis' (1988)

analysis of the long term effects of incest is firmly grounded in a feminist critique of gender and power relations which grant privilege to men in our society. Overall, sexual abuse has been found to profoundly damage women's self-esteem and sense of personal power. Sexual abuse damages women's relationships with their own bodies and negatively influences future intimate and sexual relationships. Chemical addictions, suicidal and self-mutilating tendencies, and eating disorders and are common long-terms effects for sexual abuse survivors (Bass & Davis, 1988).

Young (1992) cites evidence to suggest that the most serious long-term effects of sexual abuse result from abuse that is violent, involves oral, anal or vaginal penetration, is intrafamilial (especially if the perpetrator is a parent or parent figure), and which takes place over long periods of time. A review of the literature on long-term effects of sexual abuse conducted by Beitchman (1992) through Toronto's Clarke Institute of Psychiatry concluded that "abuse by a parent involves greater betrayal and loss of trust than abuse by others" (p. 111).

Young (1992) also states that dissociation, commonly known as the sine qua non of severe sexual abuse, initially involves an involuntary, physical experience of separating from one's body during traumatic incidents. In post-trauma

periods, dissociation becomes a means of maintaining a formulation of personal identity which excludes initial traumatic experiences. Bass and Davis (1988) use an alternative term for dissociation called "splitting." They use it in two ways.

Clinically, "splitting" refers to the tendency to view people or events as all good or all bad. It is a way of coping that allows a person to hold opposite, unintegrated views..."Splitting" also describes the feeling the survivor has when she separates her consciousness from her body, or "leaves" her body (p. 42).

Body memories are a common way for women to recall repressed or dissociated memories. Often the body remembers what the mind chooses to forget. Bass and Davis (1988) suggest, for instance, that the experience of mothering often recalls repressed memories as children live through the years in which the mothers were abused. Bass and Davis suggest that memories become repressed when the pain of recognizing the abuse is too great. Dissociation is a primary way for survivors to deal with irreconcilable realities. On one hand, survivors wish to view their families as supportive and loving. Indeed, they are often told this explicitly and/or depend upon the person who is abusing them for economic and emotional support. On the other hand, however, experiences of incest convey a strong message that the family is failing them in a fundamental way. Dissociation, then, should be seen as

a manifestation of women's alienation from their own experience (Smith, 1987; 1990), and an illustration of the way women learn to cope with the rupture between their experience and the established forms of consciousness in families.

III.iv Theories Explaining Incest

III.iv.a Maternal collusion theory:

"Maternal collusion theory" and "mother blaming" have been popular ways of explaining incest. Manifestations of maternal collusion theory include the belief that a mother's failure to assume an appropriate wifely role leads her to supplant this role onto her daughter, along with the belief that a mother's absence tempts a father to look to his daughter for sexual gratification. Herbert Maisch's (1972) study on incest provides a case in point.

Disturbed contact before the [incest] act between the male partner and his wife, and a negative to openly hostile relationship on the part of the victim towards her mother belong to the essential characteristics of that disharmony which is symptomatic of family disorganisation....A wife who is seriously ill, confined to bed for a lengthy period, or perhaps even has to go to the hospital, a mother who is having a baby, the fact that the couple go to work at different times..all [provide] opportunities which, under certain conditions, many give rise to situations of temptation (pp. 170-176).

Feminist theorists are critical of such explanations of incest. Instead, feminists look to the wider socio-economic contexts in which incest occurs. Tyler Johnson's (1992) study with mothers of incest survivors explores the social and

economic factors which can make it difficult for mothers to opt for the welfare of their daughters since the women's own welfare is often dependent upon maintaining a relationship with their husbands. DeYoung's (1994) study on mothers in paternally incestuous families is critical of maternal collusion theory. She suggests that mothers, when confronted with disclosures of incest, experience profound conflict between their roles as mothers and wives. Their loyalty to both husbands and children is the primary source of conflict. Feminists, do not, however, turn a blind eye to the fact that many mothers respond inadequately in the aftermath of incest (Bass & Davis, 1988). I explore the context of mothering in incest families in greater detail in section III.v.

III.iv.b Pathology theory:

"Pathology theory" privatizes abuse by assuming that society is neutral in its treatment of individuals. This theory, therefore, looks to the individual or family for the source of "dysfunction." A great deal of positivist literature on sexual abuse and incest fits within "pathology theory." According to this theory, the perpetrator is thought to be committing a deviant, anti-social act, an act that most normal, strong-willed people will not commit. Second, the fact that most of the perpetrators are men, and most of the victims are girls or women, does not always form a central

part of the analysis. The act is often viewed as an isolated social event and abuse is considered a problem which can be dealt with through individual measures (for instance, private therapy for the perpetrator). The individual is usually held primarily, if not completely, responsible for his actions. Additionally, the victims (or survivors) of abuse are often themselves "psychopathologized".

In many studies, families which deviate from a traditional family model are viewed as "dysfunctional," and therefore more likely to foster abusive relationships. Margrit Eichler (1988) and Mary Power (1993) identify "monolithic" and "conservative" biases in family literature. The monolithic bias assumes that families have a uniformity of structure and experience which conforms to a traditional family model, and that families which deviate from this structure are deviant or even pathological. The conservative bias assumes that families which employ a traditional gendered division of labour, first, ought to be our standard for family life, and, second, offer family members the best chances of finding happiness and escaping abuse. The conservative bias tends to view as atypical deviations the ugly aspects of familial interactions such as violence and neglect (Eichler, 1988). Eichler (1988), however, has suggested that emotional stress and violence are normal and predictable occurrences in

families which conform to a traditional model. In 1978 Sandra Butler foreshadowed the feminist critique of monolithic and conservative biases in the incest literature. "Were it possible to provide a more realistic profile of a typical family in which incestuous abuse occurs, it would more likely be a middle-class family composed of husband, wife and children living together in a nuclear situation" (p. 11).

III.iv.c Feminist theory:

As noted above, a feminist theoretical framework encourages us to look beyond the individual acts of sexual abuse. The goal is to uncover or reveal, from the standpoint of women and female children, the impact of (often subtle, sometimes barely perceptible) patriarchal, capitalist relations of ruling which engender family violence. Feminists define incest as a gross misuse of power (Bass and Davis, 1988; Callahan, 1993). Some argue that our socially constructed gender relations give primacy to the needs and desires of men and boys, creating a complex web of power imbalances. These imbalances take expression at the individual and family levels as well as the level of societal institutions. Sexual abuse is not, they argue, the result of isolated, sick acts by individuals. Rather, it is a profoundly destructive, but predictable outcome of social, economic and political disparity between men and women, and

adults and children.

A feminist analysis of incest provides a foil to beliefs that mothers collude in or enable incest, and that incest is committed on a random basis by pathological individuals. First, feminists look to social and economic conditions to explain women's lack of support for daughters during and after incest. In addition, feminists criticize societal patterns of mother-blaming (or woman-blaming) which are grounded in the fact that, in a patriarchal society, women are less threatening than men (Bass & Davis, 1988; Callahan, 1993).

Second, feminists reject pathology theory because they consider sexual abuse a normal, predictable outcome in a culture which encourages power over, instead of power with, one another (Desroches, 1994). Gender is among the most relevant factors to be considered as a feminist analysis takes seriously the ubiquitous character of male violence against children, women and other marginalized people (Brookes, 1992; Callahan, 1993; Canada, 1984; Harding, 1991). Sexual abuse is not viewed as an isolated act by one individual over another but rather as intimately connected to the complex cluster of forces which promote compulsory heterosexuality, economic dependence and powerlessness for women, and the expression of sexuality as an act of dominance and aggression (Bartky, 1990; Valverde, 1985). Finally, while it is important to hold

individual abusers accountable, feminists assert that it may be too easy to blame individuals without viewing the social context in which individuals are shaped, and the sexist institutions in which we participate.

In response to critiques of "traditional" (i.e., patriarchal, capitalist) families, feminists emphasize that trends in family demographics have been moving away from such a model over past decades (Eichler, 1988). Feminists promote **alternative family arrangements** to a "traditional" family model. Examples of alternative family arrangements include mothers who work full-time outside the home, fathers who occupy positions as house-husbands, and single parent families. Feminists do not idealize all alternative family arrangements, however. Increasing poverty levels among families composed of single women with children, for instance, is a primary factor in the feminization of poverty in Canada (Callahan, 1993; Gunderson, Muszynski & Keck, 1990). The feminization of poverty is strongly linked to women's continued responsibility for unpaid domestic labour and childrearing (Gunderson et al., 1990). In a capitalist society, then, in which women continue to be responsible for unpaid, reproductive labour, most family arrangements provide less support for women than they do for men. Thus, many feminists challenge the fundamental underpinning of a

traditional family model: women's unpaid domestic and reproductive labour.

III.iv.d Feminist critique of pathology theory: A case study

In "Working with Perpetrators" (1991) Judith Becker, a professor of clinical Psychology, director of the Sexual Behaviour Clinic at the New York Psychiatric Institute and prominent expert on the subject of sexual abuse, outlines the results of a longitudinal study conducted with perpetrators of sexual abuse. Her research is based on extensive interviews with over 500 perpetrators. In part, the purpose of Becker's article is to meet the demands of members of the psychiatric community and those appealing to the psychiatric community for explanations of sexual abuse so that further abuse can be prevented.

I examine this article in depth in order to illustrate my feminist critique of pathology theory. Becker, in my view, makes some dangerous assumptions about sexual abuse: that it is committed largely by psychologically unstable men; that their deviant behaviour is the result of cognitive maladjustment; and that sexual abuse may best be explained by factors such as abnormally high testosterone levels.

Becker seems blind to gendered power relations which enable and sustain abuse. In her opening paragraph she admits that little is known about the characteristics of abusers:

"Indeed the majority of sex offenders can be characterized by only two common features **other than** their gender as males. First, they all have committed a deviant social act and, second, they have beliefs which permit or support their behaviour" (Becker, 1991, p. 157). Yet Becker fails to highlight the fact that these acts are committed by men. She consistently fails to ask questions such as: Why are men more likely to sexually abuse than women? Why do men feel justified in their actions and continuously deny that they have done anything wrong? The answers to these questions might lie in a gendered critique of social structures which condition and enable men to achieve power over others, and to feel justified in doing what they like with whomever "belongs to them."

Becker (1991) defines incest and sexual abuse as deviant behaviours. As suggested, however, feminist researchers have found incest and sexual abuse to be so wide-spread that they ought to be considered more normative than deviant. A feminist standpoint analysis assumes that we are all participants in and products of abusive power relations. By dropping the deviant label in our analysis of sexual abuse we expose incest and sexual abuse as predictable, destructive parts of our everyday social relations.

As an illustration of the claim that incest may not be so

much deviant in our society as profoundly regrettable in its predictability, I cite a 1991 study which explores family and individual profiles following father-daughter incest. Dadds, Smith and Webber (1991) reported the striking finding that, overall, very few differences were found between incestuous families and comparison families in which incest had not occurred. They concluded that incestuous families are not marked by obvious psychopathology. Notably, they found that the personality characteristics of offending fathers in incestuous families (father-daughter incest) differed very little from comparison fathers. Dadds et al. (1991) did find, however, that incest families had more strongly defined family roles and responsibilities. They were more rule bound than comparison families, and incest fathers saw their families as more organized and structured than comparison fathers. Further, offending fathers were found to be more conservative and traditional than comparison fathers. Since traditionalism and conservatism are linked with a patriarchal family model, their study may point to further connections between patriarchal privilege in families and incest.

III.v Incest: Attending to family context

A cluster of societal institutions and structures support

capitalist, patriarchal family arrangements.⁸ Indirectly, these family arrangements have been found to enable incest (sexual abuse occurring in families) by promoting women's and girls' powerlessness relative to men and boys (Bohn, 1989; Holderread Heggen, 1993; Imbens & Jonker, 1992; Rich, 1980). Certainly, patriarchal family arrangements are not the only link with incest, and such arrangements do not guarantee that incest will occur in a family. Feminist researchers are, however, interested in uncovering the social supports for this type of abuse.

Many feminist theorists have set about documenting links between women's oppression in families and child abuse. The gendered division of labour in patriarchal families provides the context for many feminist analyses of sexual abuse in these families. Specifically, feminists are cognizant of the fact that women's roles in the domestic or informal economy are related to childrearing, housekeeping and care of family members. Despite their contributions to the Canadian economy (estimates suggest that women's unpaid labour contributes 32% to 59% of the Gross National Product in Canada), women's domestic labour continues to be unpaid and undervalued (Gunderson et al., 1990). Feminists link violence, poverty

⁸ The lack of a federally funded national day-care program in Canada is one example.

and economic powerlessness to women's primary responsibility for the care of children and domestic labour because this unpaid labour hinders women's efforts to support and protect themselves and their children (Callahan, 1993; Gunderson et al., 1990).

A Statistics Canada (1993) publication revealed that violence against women is a widespread social problem. It reported that almost one-half of the women surveyed reported violence by men known to them. One-in-six currently married women reported domestic violence, and more than one-in-ten of those women who reported domestic violence felt, at some point, that their lives had been in danger. A Canadian Ministry of Health and Welfare (Canada, 1990) publication cites evidence to suggest that the abuse of women in families affects women's personal strength and courage, causes profound physical and psychological damage, and affects children who witness this violence. In short, women who are abused are not in positions to provide the best kind of safety and protection for their children.

Homer, Leonard and Taylor (1985) explored the impact of women's economic dependence on a group of abused women who took refuge at a women's shelter. Theorizing from the experiences of these women, the authors reported that "the control of financial resources is an important indicator of

the distribution of power within families. This may be particularly significant when economic power is accompanied by physical violence" (p. 72). Further, their research suggests that poverty, or impending poverty following a breakup with a man on whom a woman is economically dependent, is a significant part of women's oppression because it often preserves violent relationships. "Economic dependency, combined with acceptance of responsibilities of children, can become an intolerable burden for women" (pp. 91-92). Bowker, Arbitell and McFerron (1988) reviewed literature on the relationship between wife assault and child abuse. They concluded that "wife beating and child abuse may be related to the power inequality between husband and wife as well as that between parents and children" (p. 159).

Canadian social theorist and child welfare critic, Marilyn Callahan (1993) writes on behalf of Canadian women. She convincingly argues that Canada's social welfare system does little to address the roots of child abuse. She suggests that the unequal economic status of women leaves children vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse because their mothers cannot protect them from likely offenders, usually the men with whom they live. This view is not intended to place further blame on women. Rather, it is intended to redefine women's inability to protect children by linking it to

economic and social powerlessness rather than pathology, incompetency or inadequacy (Callahan, 1993). The burden of women's unpaid domestic and child-care labour is linked to patterns of astounding poverty and abuse among Canadian women.

A decade earlier Carolyn Kott Washburne (1983) foreshadowed Callahan's position. She lamented the lack of a systematic examination of child abuse from a feminist perspective. Congruent with feminist standpoint positions to come, she argued that women, and particularly feminist women, have a better understanding than child welfare professionals of the causes and consequences of violence in families. "Feminist analysis recognizes abuse as rooted in unequal power relationships in the family and speaks of how women and children are victims of those relationships" (p. 290). Further, she argued that if we are truly concerned about child abuse we must begin discussing alternatives to the traditional family model, alternatives which stress equality among all family members and which therefore reduce child abuse.

A qualitative study with mothers of incest survivors points to a possible link between economic dependence in families and incest. Tyler Johnson (1992) writes about women

whose husbands sexually abused their daughters.⁹ She found common traits among the six mothers.

[All of the] mothers shared the traditional world of women before they came into the research situation. They all began their marriages young (the average age was 19)...They were all economically dependent upon their husbands and in some cases emotionally and socially dependent as well. They all came from traditional families of origin where the models of male-female and husband-wife hierarchical relationships reinforced and supported their economic dependency. Mothers stayed home, and if they had ever worked, they returned to the home after marrying, and those who returned to work outside the home usually encountered a great deal of resistance from their husbands (p. 15).

Of further interest is Tyler-Johnson's (1992) report that in each of the six cases the incest occurred within a culture of violence.

All the mothers experienced some form of psychological and/or physical abuse at some time during their marriages before the disclosure of the incest event...and all but [one] were realistically afraid of their husbands. In this sense, the incest occurred within the context of family violence (p. 113).

Several empirical studies identify a strong link between the responses of mothers to incest survivors' disclosures, and the incest survivors' subsequent coping patterns. A Quebec study (Hotte & Rafman, 1992) found that incest survivors reported more troubled relationships with their mothers than girls who grew up in "equally dysfunctional families" but who

⁹ The author, a clinical social worker, found only six mothers who agreed to be interviewed. Initially, she planned to interview twenty.

did not experience incest (p. 273). Kinzl and Biebl's (1992) study on the long-term effects of incest suggests that, especially in cases where mothers are unsupportive, sexual abuse predisposes survivors to feelings of anxiety, helplessness and powerlessness, and makes them more vulnerable to separations in adult life and subsequent mental disorders. In a study on incest survivors' coping patterns, Johnson and Kenkl (1991) found that mothers' negative reactions to disclosures of incest were highly significant predictors of survivors' distress. This finding builds upon previous findings which indicate that familial support, or the lack of it, are salient factors in a survivor's recovery from sexual abuse. Everill and Waller (1995) found that among the subjects in their study, every reported adverse response to the disclosure of sexual abuse came from family members. This adverse response was linked to higher levels of self-denigration and higher levels of dissociative experiences among the participants.

These findings indicate that a comprehensive response to incest would demand that we address the reasons for women's (notably mothers') inability to support incest survivors. The traditional gendered division of labour provides an important context for the above discussion, given evidence which suggests that a traditional gendered division of labour

hinders women's ability to protect and care for children. For instance, a feminist analysis would highlight a finding such as the one described by Wolfner and Gelles (1993), who found that, in a national American survey of family violence, the lowest rates of severe family violence were found in families in which mothers were employed full-time. Wolfner and Gelles (1993), however, simply charted this statistic without commenting on its possible significance.

Two British Marxist feminists argue that a restructuring of the gendered division of labour is fundamental to women's ability to make authentic choices. They view this ability as a prerequisite for women's empowerment in a socialist system. Structural economic changes, such as socialized daycare and meaningful full-time employment for women, would give greater meaning to the notion of women's choice. Michele Barrett and Mary McIntosh (1982) state,

As long as we live in a system where the wage is the main way in which people's needs are met, wages should be large enough to support those who work for them. This means that women and young people should be able to earn a wage that does not assume they live as a dependent in someone else's household...[Men] will lose some privileges; they will also gain the opportunity to take a period off paid work for child-care, or to work shorter hours so that they can shop and cook, without spoiling their career (pp. 148-150).

While feminists view the gendered division of labour and women's traditional place in families as problematic, Meg

Luxton's (1990) study of the gendered division of labour suggests that the social supports that would permit a restructuring of the division of labour within the household are not presently in place in Canada. Luxton (1990) writes about women in a working-class Manitoba town, and although working-class women may constitute a particularly vulnerable group, Luxton's findings probably resonate with the experiences of other working and non-working class Canadian women.

Despite the obvious interest...women have in redistributing domestic labour, and despite their motivating anger, there are numerous forces operating which make it difficult...Because inequalities in the division of labour are based on male power, when women demand equalization they are challenging that power. Economic dependency makes it more difficult to challenge men in the household (p. 46).

The findings by theorists such as Luxton (1990), Gunderson et al. (1990) and Callahan (1993) suggest that the recent feminist movement still has a long way to go to change a fundamental tenet of patriarchal ideology: the traditional gendered division of labour. Feminist research on child sexual abuse and family violence also suggests that a necessary (albeit insufficient) condition for rooting out sexual violence is a radical change in women's socio-economic status in families and in society.

III.vi Catholic ideology, families and incest:

The image of Father God, spawned in the human imagination and sustained as plausible by patriarchy, has in turn rendered service to this type of society by making its mechanisms for the oppression of women appear right and fitting. If God in "his" heaven is a father ruling "his" people, then it is the "nature" of things and according to divine plan and the order of the universe that society be male dominated (Daly, 1979, p. 54).

In this section I shift my focus from the literature on incest, sexual abuse and family violence to a focus on feminist critiques of the Christian religious tradition, and more specifically, Catholic ideology. We do not have to look long at Catholic theology and teaching to find evidence of patriarchal practices. Many feminist theorists (historians, anthropologists and theologians to name a few) have set about re-viewing Catholic practices, beliefs and activities from the standpoint of women (Anderson, 1991; Bohn, 1989; Daly, 1973; Holderread Heggen, 1993; Ranke Heinemann, 1990; Zieget Silberman, 1983). This feminist theorizing, whether implicitly or explicitly conducted in the name of a feminist sociology, begins with women's experiences. It counters the claim by the Catholic church that the church has been the liberator of women (Pius XI, 1930/1978) and has a history which is a "luminous testimony to the dignity of women" (John Paul II, 1981, p. 28).

I introduce feminist critiques of Catholic ideology

(explained in greater detail in later chapters) to demonstrate that the church's treatment of women has promoted women's vulnerability, not women's emancipation, liberation and advancement, as various Catholic popes have suggested.

III.vi.a Historical roots of Catholic ideology:

Catholic theology is firmly rooted in a masculinist philosophical tradition. Two medieval philosophers, Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, who wrote during the fourth and thirteenth centuries respectively, were enormously influential in the philosophical formation of Catholic theology (Maurer, 1962; Ranke Heinemann, 1990). Augustine's and Aquinas' philosophical positions were guided by two different Greek philosophical traditions, Platonism and Aristotelianism respectively. Platonism was characterized by a radically dualistic vision of the world and human nature. Augustine's writings therefore accentuated a disdain for material, earthly realities, especially sexuality, while idealizing spiritual and intellectual values (Maurer, 1962; Ranke Heinemann, 1990). Ranke-Heinemann (1990) states that

To speak of sexual hostility...is to speak of Augustine. He was the theological thinker who blazed a trail for the ensuing millennium-and-a-half. The history of the Christian sexual ethic was shaped by him. The binding nature of Augustine's pronouncements was accepted by the great theologians of the Middle Ages, notably Thomas Aquinas (p. 62).

Aquinas, influenced by a resurgent interest in Aristotelian

philosophy in the thirteenth century, incorporated into Catholic dogma Aristotle's belief that women are misbegotten males (Ranke Heinemann, 1990).

The Catholic tradition also promoted the belief that women are untrustworthy and morally inferior to men (Ranke Heinemann, 1990). One of Aquinas' teachers, Albertus Magnus, for instance, explicitly linked women's supposed tendency toward sexual infidelity with women's moral inferiority.

Woman is a stranger to fidelity. Believe me, if you put faith in her you will be disappointed. Believe an experienced teacher. Prudent husbands, therefore, apprise their wives of their plans and doings least of all. Woman is an imperfect man and possesses, compared to him, a defective and deficient nature. She is therefore insecure in herself. That which she herself cannot receive she endeavors to obtain by mendacity and devilish tricks. In short, therefore, one must beware of every woman as one would of a poisonous serpent and the horned devil... Woman is not more intelligent than man, properly speaking, but more cunning. Intelligence has a good ring, cunning an evil one. Thus, woman is cleverer, that is to say, more cunning, than man in evil and perverse dealings (cited in Ranke Heinemann, 1990, p. 157).

Catholic ideology has historically placed great emphasis on virginity and celibacy, in addition to sexual fidelity within marriage. Daly (1973) devotes attention to the significance of Catholic Marian symbolism, symbolism which venerates Mary as the virgin mother of Jesus. She argues that "Catholicism has offered women compensatory and reflected glory through identification with Mary. [But t]he inimitability of the

Virgin mother model...has left all women essentially identified with Eve" (p. 82). In other words, Mary's virginity is an ideal that no real women, perhaps least of all Catholic mothers, could achieve.

Similarly, Uta Ranke-Heinemann (1990) argues that Catholic ideology's devotion to Mary as the virgin mother of God

has become a kind of anti-Mariology in that it claims to emphasize a woman's greatness and dignity and paint them in glowing theological colours while crudely destroying all that constitutes feminine dignity in Mary the human being in particular and in all women in general...Everything connected with female sexuality, all that betokens the natural generation and bearing of children, have been denied her...She was thus transformed into a kind of sexless creature, a mere semblance of a wife and mother restricted to her role in the redemptive process (p. 311).

Daly (1973) and Ranke Heinemann (1990), therefore, argue that Catholic ideology has historically justified women's punishment and exclusion, and fostered the myth of women's moral inferiority. Daly (1973) states,

Patriarchal religion adds to the problem by intensifying the process through which women internalize the consciousness of their oppressor. The males' judgment having been metamorphosed into God's judgment, it becomes the religious duty of women to accept the burden of guilt...What is more, the process does not stop with religion's demanding that women internalize such images. It happens that those conditioned to see themselves as "bad" or "sick" in a real sense become such (p. 49).

During the medieval period the Catholic church led the persecution of women. The official impetus for witch-hunting

came from the Lateran council decree of 1215 that all heretics should be punished with death (Hale, 1990b). Malleus Maleficarum (translated as The Hammer of Witches), was written in 1486 by two inquisitors belonging to the Catholic Dominican order. It was the official witch hunting manual. Women who displayed signs of autonomy (especially sexual autonomy) were targeted, as were women who practised midwifery and the healing arts. These women posed a threat to the patriarchal order. The witch hunts were justified because of woman's "naturally demonic nature, her greater tendencies to lust, and her inability to control her sinful disposition due to both her inferior moral nature and her greater corruption by sin" (Radford Ruether, 1989, p. 36).

Another dimension to feminist critiques of Catholic ideology includes a challenge to the notion that "the family," as historically described by Catholic ideology, is an immutable, godly ordained institution. Feminists have demonstrated that Catholic church history has been one of imposing its ideology through a variety of coercive mechanisms. The Catholic Jesuit order, for instance, imposed Catholic ideology through its missionary activity in many parts of the world, including Canada (Leacock, 1991; Anderson, 1991). As their main resource, both Eleanor Leacock (1991) and Karen Anderson (1991) have used correspondence

written during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries between Jesuit missionaries and their superiors in France. Leacock's and Anderson's research testifies to the brutal imposition of a Catholic vision of family and sexual relations among native populations in Canada. Leacock (1991) writes, "Essential to Le Jeune's program was the introduction of European family structure, with male authority, female fidelity, and the elimination of the right to divorce...The independence of Montagnais women posed continual problems for the Jesuits" (p. 15). Similarly, Anderson (1991) tells us,

In seeking to transform both the Huron and Montagnais societies, the Jesuits acted from a body of knowledge (Christian Theology) which viewed the proper ordering of relations between people as decidedly hierarchical, and which attributed specific and different natures and capabilities to men and women...In carrying out their missions the Jesuits sought to put that body of knowledge into practice by convincing the native peoples of New France that Christianity embodied the true expression of the nature of men and women (pp. 97-98).

Both Leacock's and Anderson's research provide compelling evidence for the **social construction** of Catholicism's celebrated "divine plan" for marriage and family life (Leo XIII, 1880/1978). Jesuits were appalled by such practices as pacifist approaches to conflict resolution, a tolerance for polygamy (mostly polygyny), sexual relations outside of marital arrangements, and divorce which could as easily be initiated by the woman as the man (Leacock, 1991). The

Jesuits' ethnocentric and imperialist practices, therefore, imposed "God's plan" for marriage and the family as it had developed among French Catholics, and used coercive measures to plant the seeds of patriarchal Catholic ideology among the Huron and Montagnais bands.

III.vi.b Contemporary feminist critiques of Catholic ideology:

Contemporary feminist critiques of patriarchal Christian ideology are abundant (Bohn, 1989; Daly, 1973, 1979; Hale, 1990b; Heyward, 1989; Holderread Heggen, 1993; Radford Ruether, 1989; Ranke Heinemann, 1990). Canadian Sociologist Sylvia Hale (1990b) argues that while Christian churches are today no longer taking as overt measures as were taken in the past to enforce patriarchal domination, "the basic structure of male dominance within churches remains largely unchallenged" (p. 175).

Feminists identify the recent emergence of the Christian pro-family movement as among the strongest threats to feminist activism and female autonomy because the pro-family movement's reactionary agenda advocates a return to patriarchal family values. Among Catholics this movement includes the anti-abortion campaign called "Right to Life." Rosemary Radford Ruether (1989) identifies the patriarchal ideology at the core of the Right-to-Life campaign. She writes,

The very name by which this group refers to itself- "Right to Life"- is misleading, since these groups have very little concern for "life" in the broader sense. They happily support capital punishment and war, and they show little interest in the economic survival of children after birth...It is not ignorance but patriarchal ideology that decrees that women should not use contraceptives or seek abortion and should accept whatever pregnancies "God" and males impose on them...[One of the] fundamental expressions [of the Right-to-Life movement] has been the assertion of control over women's procreative power...Thus, the Right to Life movement must be seen primarily as a reaction against female autonomy (pp. 38-39).

Interestingly, Margrit Eichler's (1985) research also suggests that the family model promoted by the pro-family movement is patriarchal.

In this family, the children will receive no sex education through the schools, there will be no contraceptives used, men will have first crack at the available jobs, women...will not have access to day care, unless there is "need"...When the marriage is unhappy, the couple should stay together anyhow, no matter what the tensions may be. Wife battering, incest, child abuse, and other problems, which have increased due to the pernicious feminist influence in our society...will presumably disappear (pp. 24-25).

Eichler (1988) has found that the traditional family model is no longer viewed as desirable by the majority of Canadians.

Sally Cole (1991) has explored the impact of Catholic ideology in the lives of women. Cole (1991) investigated the social construction of sexuality and gender relations in her ethnography of a Portuguese coastal community. Cole's (1991) research suggests that despite the long tradition of anticlericalism in Portugal which has mitigated the efficacy

of Catholic ideology, the Catholic church continues to be central to Portuguese culture, and has, therefore, significantly influenced gendered family arrangements. She asserts that Catholic ideology is one factor among a complex, inter-related set of factors which influences the social construction of gender and sexuality. Cole emphasizes, however, that women are not simply victims of Catholic ideological practices. On the contrary, she found that women actively negotiate and manipulate their gender and sexual identities, even as these identities are shaped by powerful patriarchal influences.

III.vi.c The Christian religious tradition and incest:

Several recent works have explicitly investigated connections between the Christian religious tradition and incest. Imbens and Jonker (1992) have examined the lives of twenty women's experiences of incest.¹⁰ Their analysis is consistently feminist and provides an examination of the trauma experienced by the survivors, focusing particularly on Christian influences in the incest histories. Among the connections between incest and Christianity they identify are a theology of ownership which underpins Christian family ideology, obedience to patriarchal authority emphasized in

¹⁰ All of the women grew up in Christian families; half came from Catholic homes.

Christian homes, and denial and fear of sexuality. Imbens and Jonker (1992), however, often emphasize the impact of Christian beliefs to the exclusion of other social factors, such as women's economic dependence within families.

Holderread Heggen (1993) similarly focuses on Christian beliefs. She asserts that Christianity supports the view that God intends for men to dominate and women and children to submit, and that women, by their role in the "fall of man," are morally inferior to men. She thus emphasizes the psychological impact of Christian beliefs which provide an environment in which would-be abusers can justify their behaviour through distortion or extension of those beliefs. Holderread Heggen admits the existence of other factors which compound the impact of Christian beliefs, such as women's economic disadvantage in families. Although she does not adopt a socialist or materialist framework, Holderread Heggen suggests that the sexual abuse of children will continue as long as patriarchy is supported and male dominance is considered the appropriate model for human relationships. Thus, she believes it is impossible both to stop the sexual abuse of children and promote a patriarchal family model.

The authors of a recent Canadian Catholic church response to clergy abuse of children view sexual abuse as a weak-willed enactment of sexual fantasies instead of an act of abusive

power (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992). The committee, appointed by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops in the wake of the Newfoundland crisis in the late 1980s, fails to recognize our culture's eroticization of male violence against vulnerable people, such as children and women (Valverde, 1985; Rogers, 1990). Echoing Catholic social teaching which demands the transformation of individuals and unjust institutions, the authors (1992) suggest that

the church is on the side of openness and truth... on the side of transforming individuals and institutions... Child sexual abuse flourishes in a society that is based on competition and power and which is undermined by sexual exploitation and violence against women. Contemporary society has shown itself quick to reject traditional values, to be unable to offer new ones, and to be unfair to women and children. The challenge to transform society becomes enormous when we begin to realize the terrible social cost when child abuse is tolerated (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1992, pp. 40-41).

The authors, however, fail to explore the ways in which the church's own traditions have been unfair to women and children (Zieget Silberman, 1983; Bohn, 1989). Thus, they conveniently project the responsibility for sexual abuse onto a secular culture which has rejected traditional values. While they are certainly correct to identify the exploitation of women and vulnerable people in society in general, it is surely ironic that they failed to see the church's own role in the exploitation of women, and to examine the impact of

traditional values. In my view, if the church is truly on the side of openness and truth it will begin to examine this history and the benefits to men of compulsory heterosexuality and a division of labour which translates into vulnerability for women and children. In addition, from a feminist standpoint perspective, the document is weakened because it has been written by powerful theologians and clergy members purporting to understand the dynamics of sexual abuse, not by survivors themselves. Thus, while the document is earnest and well-intentioned, the authors' saturation in patriarchal, hierarchical relations probably makes it difficult for them to see the full range of causes of abuse, and to see how their own participation in a stratified system may be part of the problem.

III.vii Conclusion:

In this chapter I began by defining incest and sexual abuse. I discussed the prevalence and long-term impact of sexual abuse and incest. I then identified theories explaining sexual abuse, including maternal collusion theory, pathology theory and feminist theory. Next I linked the literature to historical and contemporary feminist critiques of Catholic ideology. Congruent with my feminist standpoint framework, I have drawn on feminist research that is grounded in women's experience. In the following chapter, keeping in

mind the theoretical web constructed in chapter two and the literature discussed in chapter three, I lay out my research design.

Chapter Four

Research Design and Methodology

IV.i Research objectives:

I designed my research with several objectives in mind. I wanted to explore, from the standpoint of women, the social construction of gender relations and sexuality in Catholic homes by interviewing incest survivors. I was particularly interested in exploring the significance of Catholic ideology's emphasis on a traditional gendered division of labour which, first, grants social privilege to men in Catholic families, and, second, places mothers in positions of social and economic vulnerability. I was also interested in exploring the sexual culture in Catholic families, and its significance to histories of incest. As I designed and implemented the research project, I was intent on uncovering ways that families might become more empowering for women and children. As Harding (1991; 1993) and Smith (1987; 1990) suggest, women's everyday experiences, especially experiences of oppression, provide an epistemologically beneficial starting point for a feminist sociology. In my feminist analysis of Catholic families, therefore, I chose to employ a feminist, qualitative, participatory action methodology. The primary methods included individual interviews, focus group interviews and textual analysis of Catholic documents on

marriage, family life and sexuality.

IV.ii.a Qualitative research:

Qualitative research enables the researcher to explore complex social phenomena, facilitates the discovery of cultural nuances and enables the researcher to document social phenomena in rich and meaningful ways. It also has great utility in uncovering the subjective side of social processes (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Qualitative research contrasts with quantitative research which is often considered more scientifically sound than qualitative research, although theorists such as Sandra Harding (1993) contest this claim. Qualitative research is strongly criticized for its limited generalizability. This criticism is countered by the claim that quantitative methodologies cannot adequately explain complex and often contradictory realities of social life. In addition, the goals of qualitative research are more suited to **constructing knowledge** than quantitative research which seeks to uncover pre-existing, indisputable facts about the natural and social worlds. My project was politically motivated from its inception and guided by my theoretical assumption that women's lives are epistemically beneficial places from which to begin social research. Thus, my project was not suited to a quantitative approach which would purport to be objective and value-neutral.

IV.ii.b Participatory action research:

For decades, social scientists, and especially feminist social scientists, have been working out research methodologies which are more participatory, inclusive, and emancipatory than traditional, mainstream methodologies. Kirby and McKenna (1989) promote a feminist methodology which is informed by Dorothy Smith's (1987) work. For them, researching from the margins is a process which begins with women's experiences of marginalization. Kirby and McKenna's methodological position, although this is not explicitly stated, is also similar to Harding's (1991; 1993). Harding's epistemological tenet is that social scientific research is more accurate when it begins with the lives of oppressed and marginalized people. Kirby and McKenna (1989) define "the margins" as

the context in which those who suffer injustice, inequality and exploitation live their lives. People find themselves on the margins not only in terms of the inequality in the distribution of material resources, but also knowledge production is organized so that the views of a small group of people are presented as objective, as "The Truth." ...Focusing on the world from the perspective of the margins allows us to see the world differently and, in many ways, more authentically (p. 33).

Kirby and McKenna promote an approach to research with participants that is emancipatory and inclusive.

Demystifying research skills challenges current social relations in which expertise remains a source of power

for a few rather than a resource available to all. Doing research [collectively] allows us to begin to rename our experience, and thus participate in creating knowledge we can use (p. 170).

According to William Foot Whyte (1991), a well-known exponent of participatory action methodologies, "in the mainstream view, the social researcher should aim at discovering basic scientific facts or relationships and not get directly involved in linking social research to action" (p. 8). Further, the prevailing view assumes that it is up to the researcher, and not those on whom the research is conducted, to make these discoveries. Positivist, mainstream methodologies encourage research "on" rather than research "with" research subjects. In particular, positivist studies on sexual abuse maintain a professional distance which conveys a sense that "the problem lies with victims or these families" rather than "the problem is our society of which I am a member." Participatory action methodologies, however, promote research in which the participants are critical actors, not passive subjects, in the discovery and creation of knowledge about the social world.

Patricia Maguire's (1987) feminist version of participatory action methodology is congruent with a feminist standpoint framework. Maguire (1987) suggests that participatory action research has emerged out of social

movements which envision a society free of domination. It offers a way for researchers to demonstrate solidarity with disempowered groups. The goal of such research is not to merely describe the social world, but to change it. Participatory action research encourages a process of consciousness raising for everyone involved. Participants take ownership in the research process. Thus, participatory action research, according to Maguire (1987), has a "re-humanizing" goal (p. 30). Working within a participatory action methodology has allowed me to speak in solidarity with the women who comprise my research group. I do not pretend to be separate from these women. I am a woman, after all. Therefore, I am a survivor of many forms of oppression and discrimination.

Participatory action methodologies are not the only research methodologies that contribute to social change. And this methodology is not without its difficulties and limitations. First, such a methodology requires a great deal of time and mutual commitment on the part of researcher and participants. Maguire (1987) suggests that "one of the most under-rated limitations on participatory research is simply time" (p. 16). Second, because effective communication is central to the success of the project, everyone must develop a tolerance for conflict within the group and a commitment to

a consensus-oriented process rather than a researcher-directed, unilateral process. For the researcher, then, one challenge is to relinquish unilateral control over the research process (Maguire, 1987).

IV.iii Research design:

The research process was designed to allow me, the researcher, and research participants, over time, to make connections between incest and Catholic family culture. Congruent with both feminist standpoint theory and a participatory action methodology, it was my intent to promote solidarity among the group members and to encourage the research participants to share with me ownership of the research process.

I developed a research design with three main components: individual interviews, focus group interviews and analysis of Catholic texts on marriage, family life and sexuality. I analysed Catholic texts throughout the research period to a) help me prepare interview questions, and b) help me analyse the interview data. Throughout the research process participants were sent reports on the interviews. A preliminary report was sent in October of 1994, after the first set of individual interviews and the first focus group interview. I sent a secondary report in March of 1995, after the second set of individual interviews. The final focus

group discussion was held at the end of March, 1995, after participants had a chance to read the secondary report. (See appendix X for a detailed chronology of the research process).

The reports to participants served several purposes. They allowed me to a) prepare the participants for future visits to the research site, b) provide for the participants a sampling of excerpts, c) summarize the emergent themes from the interviews, and d) give preliminary interpretations of the data. The participants were encouraged and given opportunities to express their agreement or disagreement with my interpretations. I promised to present, in the text of my thesis, any points of difference between my own views and the views of the interviewees. In addition, in the fall of 1994 I delivered two academic papers on my research-in-progress. Writing these papers helped me to synthesize the on-going textual analysis and interview data analysis.

IV.iii.a Sample:

I conducted the research within a women's community of which I was an accepted member. Two factors led me to do this. First, I knew I could count on the support of the women's centre staff who trusted me to deal responsibly with this delicate subject area. Second, I felt that a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition for the success of my participatory action methodology was a pre-existing social

network.

The women's centre staff and board members were extremely supportive when I approached them about my decision to research links between incest and Catholic families. They helped me identify potential interviewees by distributing a summary of research objectives (appendix I) among participants in two active groups for survivors of sexual abuse. I also made the summary available to two feminist counsellors in the town. I sought participants who a) were no longer in crisis over their history of sexual abuse; b) have reflected on this history and had worked with a professional counsellor and/or survivors' group; and c) have grown up in families which were self-identified as Catholic. I gave copies of my research proposal to several potential participants prior to their decision to participate. All but one were immediately enthusiastic about the proposal. Faye, who hesitated briefly, eventually also enthusiastically agreed to participate. She told me,

I can remember when I first read the proposal, feeling a bit shocked. It was almost as if you were attacking my mother, the church...But once I kind of got over that feeling I was really impressed with your proposal and it really started me thinking.

Quite by chance, the group of eight women who volunteered to participate was composed of four women in their forties or early fifties and four women in their twenties or early

thirties. For the first group of women, then, the incest occurred during the period before Vatican II (the 1940s and 1950s), while for the second group the incest occurred during the period following Vatican II (the late 1960s and early 1970s). It is important to note, however, that the parents of the second group were brought up well before Vatican II, thus making difficult a distinct pre and post Vatican II comparison of the data.

The names used in the thesis are not the participants' actual names. The women chose their own aliases, in most cases, names that had meaning for them. The first group consisted of Cherrie, Elizabeth, Faye and Mary. The second group consisted of Content, Courage, Jackie and Maya. In every case but one, the family demographics (at the time that the abuse occurred) corresponded to the Catholic ideal: fathers who acted as sole or primary breadwinners and mothers who were primary care-givers. The smallest family had two children. Four women grew up in families with five children or more. One family had twelve children.

IV.iii.b Individual interviews:

Individual interviews are an immediate, rich source of data. Interviews are a common method for qualitative researchers; they allow the researcher to explore complex social phenomena and have great utility in uncovering the

subjective side of social processes (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Congruent with feminist standpoint theorists, Eichler (1987) cites Ann Oakley (1981) who identifies the use of traditional interviewing practices as morally indefensible. Oakley argues for a relationship between interviewer and interviewee that is non-hierarchical and in which the interviewer is prepared to invest her own personal identity in the relationship. Oakley also suggests that there is no intimacy without reciprocity (Eichler, 1987). To illustrate a similar belief, Reinharz (1992) cites a study about rape in which one of the researchers had herself been raped. The researcher's disclosure put the women participants at ease. The researchers "modelled their interviews on what they called a 'true dialogue' rather than an 'interrogation'. Self-disclosure initiates true dialogue by allowing researchers to become 'co-researchers'" (p. 33).

I conducted two sets of in-depth individual interviews with the participants because, as Reinharz (1992) suggests, "[m]ultiple interviews are likely to be more accurate than single interviews because of the opportunity to ask additional questions and to get corrective feedback on previously obtained information" (p. 37). I used open-ended questions and invited the participants to reflect on aspects of their histories as incest survivors (appendix II). The first set of

individual interviews took place during July and August of 1994. I transcribed the notes from those interviews and returned them to the participants for their approval and feedback.¹¹

The second set of individual interviews was held in December of 1994 (appendix III). Participants received a preliminary report on the summer interviews in October and had two months to think about the interpretations in preparation for a second individual interview. I arrived at the research site later than planned so only six of the eight women were available for second individual interviews. One woman was unavailable due to family commitments, the other to work and holiday commitments.

The interviews were held in places chosen by the participants, usually the participants' own homes or the women's centre. One interview was held in the office of the participant's counsellor where the participant was accustomed to discussing her history of incest.

1V.iii.c Focus groups:

Focus groups are group interviews in which the

¹¹ This first set of interviews was based on notes rather than audio-tapes. Thus, about 20% of interview excerpts that appear in later chapters are based on notes rather than transcriptions. The interview notes were approved by the interviewees. In three cases slight amendments were made before approval was granted.

interviewer asks loosely structured, open-ended questions intended to facilitate interactive dialogue (Morgan, 1988). I chose to conduct focus groups in addition to individual interviews because group dynamics among participants usually produce results that would be unavailable solely through individual interviews. Indeed, the participants told me that hearing the views of the other women reinforced their own positions and also encouraged them to think in new ways. Group reflection on the significance of that shared experience, in my opinion, also fostered a richer analysis. Thus, the use of focus groups within my participatory action methodology supported Morgan's (1988) claim that the hallmark of focus groups is the use of the group interaction to produce data and insights which are difficult to gather outside of a group context. Meeting the other participants provided the women with additional exposure to ideas related to incest and Catholicism. We were constructing knowledge in a communal way during the focus group discussions.

I used focus group discussions two times in the research process to help the participants and myself refine and reconsider the ideas presented in the individual interviews. The first was held in August of 1994 (appendix IV). I took Morgan's (1988) suggestion to prepare participants for focus group discussions by providing them with transcripts of

previous interviews. I planned to provide transcribed notes from each individual interview to each participant prior to the first focus group discussion. However, only seven of the individual interviews had been completed prior to the focus group and, of these, only six sets of notes had been transcribed. Scheduling problems and the time limitations of my own field work prevented me from conducting and transcribing all eight interviews prior to the focus group. Thus, I learned that if in future I plan to return transcripts of individual interviews to participants prior to a focus group discussion, I need to schedule the focus group long enough after the last of the individual interviews to allow time for transcription and other potential delays.

The first focus group discussion was held at the women's centre. Not all participants were comfortable at the women's centre so I was grateful to one of the women who arranged to have the second focus group held at a local college. The second focus group was held at the end of March 1995 (appendix V). Participants received the second report, which included cumulative interpretive comments on and interview excerpts from all previous interviews, in the first week of March.

Qualified counsellors were present during the focus group discussions. They were asked to be available in the event that someone needed a break or felt uncomfortable. During the

first focus group discussion the invited counsellor spoke openly about some negative aspects of her own Catholic upbringing and her history as an incest survivor. While I, the researcher, welcomed her input and felt her contributions enhanced the focus group discussion, one participant felt uncomfortable with her negative views. The other women felt that her input enhanced the group discussion. The dilemma over whether to invite this counsellor again was ultimately moot as for health reasons she was unavailable during the March focus group discussion. In the second focus group one of the participants, a certified psychologist, was available to act as counsellor.

IV.iii.d Textual analysis:

My thesis includes textual analysis of four Catholic texts on marriage, family life and sexuality. As I read the first text, John Paul II's (1981) papal exhortation on marriage and family life, I formulated questions about potential fault lines for women in Catholic families, including: What historical evidence exists to contest the pope's claim that "the family" has been "willed by God in the very act of creation" (p. 23)? What gender arrangements are prescribed for the Catholic family? How did such gender arrangements influence the incest histories? What does the pope say about sexuality? How were these views on sexuality

translated in Catholic families, and, in turn, what significance did these views have for the incest survivors?

As I began to analyse the interviews I returned to this text with "new eyes" and identified other points of disjuncture for women in Catholic families. Additional questions emerged based on the fact that half of the women were abused in the pre Vatican II period. Would my analysis of Catholic ideology in the pre Vatican II period be limited by textual analysis of a document written well after Vatican II? Are there differences between Catholic texts written prior to and after Vatican II? To answer these question I decided to analyse several pre Vatican II documents including Leo XIII's (1880/1978) encyclical letter on Christian Marriage, Arcanum Divinae Sapientiae, Pius XI's (1930/1978) encyclical letter on Christian Marriage, Casti Connubii, and Reverend George A. Kelly's (1958) Catholic Marriage Manual.

I discovered that these official Catholic texts exhibit striking similarities. Their consistency is remarkable given a span of more than one hundred years. Viewed from a traditional sociological standpoint, these texts represent the teachings of one of society's powerful institutions. From the standpoint of women who have grown up in Catholic homes, however, these teachings on Catholic marriage, family life and sexuality represent the ideological vision of the Catholic

ruling order.

IV.iv Ethical considerations:

As I designed my research I kept in mind that in any research undertaking the rights and integrity of human subjects take precedence over the need to conduct research (SSHRC Research Ethics Guide, 1993). Primary research with women survivors of sexual abuse presented me with a number of serious ethical concerns. Indeed, women survivors of sexual abuse are considered a "vulnerable population" because they have been selected on account of their incest histories, and because some or all of the women may be undergoing psychiatric care (MUN School of Social Work Human Subjects Research Committee, Ethical Guidelines, 1993).

The research participants were protected in a number of ways. To ensure that research participants had sufficient access to therapeutic resources throughout the research period, I chose only participants who were active in a group for survivors of sexual abuse and/or who were seeing a counsellor. Only women over the age of eighteen were invited to participate in the study. Prior to signing the consent form (appendix VI) participants were made aware of the possibility that the study may be published. All potential participants were fully informed about the scope and objectives of the study. Their anonymity (beyond the research

group) was respected throughout. I, the researcher, and the participants signed the consent form and a oath of confidentiality (appendix VII) prior to participating in the interviews and the focus group discussions. This helped participants to feel free to speak openly during the focus group discussions. The oath of confidentiality also reinforced that the anonymity of the other research participants was to be protected. Participants were required to sign a form giving consent to have data collected with the aid of auditory devices (tapes and tape recorder) (appendix VIII). The participants signed a consent form to release the research data (appendix IX). The master list which matches the actual names with the names of the given aliases is to be destroyed upon submission of the thesis. The transcripts, however, will not be destroyed until three years after submission of the thesis. This will allow sufficient time to prepare the results for publication in the event that I choose to do so.

IV.v Experiences of the research process:

While a power differential existed between myself and the other participants I attempted, congruent with the principles of feminist standpoint theory and my participatory action methodology, to enter the research process as a sister collaborator. I tried to promote a sense that we were

learning together and that no one has a monopoly on "the truth." Several participants felt this was achieved throughout the research process by my encouragement of interactive feedback.

When I asked the participants to reflect on the research process, Faye told me she felt empowered as a result of participating.

I really liked your approach. Like, I really like the feminist kind of approach where you try and reduce as much as possible the power differential between researcher and subjects...And I like the way you saw it as a collaborative enterprise, where we were really involved and giving feedback and where you took a lot of time obviously, you know, to think about the confidentiality and how to set that up and reassure us...You were doing this as a researcher but there was a solidarity there as a researcher. We weren't just people you were examining in a very objective way...I think it's much more humane than the old way of keeping it kind of objective and non-involved. I think the whole process has really helped me understand more not so much why I was sexually abused but how it could be hidden, how I wouldn't tell and how the sexual abuse was tied up with the Catholic thing.

Maya was appreciative of the care that went into the process of providing participants with a preliminary and secondary report on the interviews.

I feel in general really good about the process. I think it was really care-ful, as in full of care. You know, it was really respectful and there was every opportunity to have input. I feel good about that. If those measures hadn't been taken I probably wouldn't have felt as comfortable with the whole thing. So that's good.

Several others felt the process helped them make links

between Catholicism and their history of incest. Mary, for instance, said that she had never previously given thought to the significance of her Catholic history, yet when I interviewed her she was able to give many richly detailed accounts of ways in which Catholicism played a role in the incest.

I don't think I did think about all this stuff [from a Catholic perspective] until I talked with you. Catholic is all I've ever known. So I wouldn't know any other way to think. If I'd been from some other religion I would have been just as friggin' screwed up, for certain. Because the morals of each church are pretty damn, "This is the way things are and this is what you do." They're [religions] all pretty dogmatic...I'd never analyzed it much from the perspective you're looking at it. I did in that I wondered how we could have been such an anti-Christian church because these are rules someone made and you're so busy living the rules that you miss living.

Mary also pointed out that the periods of time in between the interviews were crucial to her ability to synthesize and make connections.

All that time period [August until December 1994] I've had that time. I needed that and I didn't even know that I needed it. I would've wanted to get it all overwith in one day, overwith and I'd never want to see you or it again in that context. But it was good that it was structured this way. I've changed a lot since October [when the report was sent]. It's just incredible.

During the second focus group, Content reflected that she has been glad to have an additional opportunity to tell her story. "I guess the reason why I wanted to help you with it was probably more for myself, so it would give me an

opportunity to tell my story. So I'm glad I'm here."

Elizabeth said the collective story-telling helped her to synthesize her own experience.

I thought about the [group] interview every so often. I think it opened up a new area of having to look at things...There was a sense of not being alone in it. That's what the group does. The group helped a lot to be able to put this thing together, to kind of synthesize.

Mary was very enthusiastic about her experience of belonging to the group, and being part of a study which may bring about social change.

I'm really looking forward to seeing your work, even if I don't agree with some of it, that'll be fine. I can handle that. And it's a privilege to have taken part in the process. Don't ever think you've taken advantage of any of us. I suspect we all feel this way. It's part of history, and it's a part of history that you're hesitant to share with the world because they might not believe you-- Can this much really have happened to one person? They're all so profound [the stories] in their own way.

Having read your transcription [September, 1994] I just feel it's going to go somewhere. It's going to be part of change. It's not going to be something that'll just collect dust. We will be more empowered by writings like this and someone's got to do it. I'm too busy surviving. If I was only in your youthful shoes I think I would be doing similar work...I can't be the pioneer to do this stuff so you're doing it for us. And I think it's pretty darn exciting.

Cherrie also affirmed the group experience. "I'm finding that the more I talk about [the incest] with people I can trust and with whom I feel safe I feel freed...So, to me, that's a way of becoming empowered."

I was inspired by Mary's comment during the final focus

group which affirmed our collective research methodology. "The Pope's not doing a process, we are. I don't think [members of the all-male Catholic hierarchy] do come through a process. If they did they'd come from a more informed place."

In summary, then, the participants reported several benefits of the participatory action methodology. First, participants felt empowered by their role in the research process. There was a sense of solidarity among the group which was grounded in our common bond as women, as Catholic (or ex-Catholic) women, and women who share a commitment to challenging social relations which foster incest. Second, participants felt they gained insight into their own life histories by listening to the experiences of others. Third, the women had the satisfaction of knowing that they are participating in research which may conceivably help to end the cycle of violence in families. Finally, some of the women described the process as "therapeutic" and an "aid to [their] recovery."

Women's "caring work" is a central component of a carefully conducted feminist participatory action methodology, and such work certainly characterized both the research and writing processes. This caring work allowed me to develop rich and rewarding relationships with the

participants, and, in turn, to act as a catalyst in fostering relationships among the participants themselves. While the work that has gone into developing and maintaining relationships with the participants is largely invisible and does not appear in the text of the thesis, I feel it deserves to be mentioned. My thesis and my own life have been enhanced by my connection and sense of responsibility to the participants.

IV.vi Data analysis process:

The women I interviewed often described strikingly similar family patterns and these patterns aided me in the interpretation and analysis of the data. Because my sample of eight Catholic women was a small, convenient sample, the findings cannot be generalized to the Catholic family population. And because no non-Catholic incest survivors were interviewed, it is impossible to know to what extent Catholicism influences gender and sexual relations in Catholic families as compared with non-Catholic families. To explore this was not the objective of my research. My goal was to use qualitative methods as a way of exploring the dimensions and complexities of incest in Catholic families. I n writing the preliminary report (September, 1994) and secondary report (March, 1995) I analysed the interview data according to themes. The textual analysis of official Catholic writings

on marriage, family life and sexuality, guided my choice of themes. The themes included: a) Catholicism as a general presence in the survivors' families; b) lack of respect for boundaries; c) fear of male authority; d) lack of protection from mothers; e) negative response from family to early sexual experiences; f) physical and/or domestic abuse; g) passive acceptance of the abuse; h) guilt related to expression of sexuality; i) seeking consolation, redemption or forgiveness from the church; and j) rejection of church values.

The analysis process involved a continuous sifting and distilling of the data. An important component in the process was the interplay between my reading of the Catholic texts and my reading of the interview transcripts. The textual analysis helped me to formulate interview questions during the three interview periods (summer 1994, winter 1994 and spring 1995) as well as to analyse the interview data.

The interviews pointed to the social construction of gender roles in families and sexuality as significant to the incest histories. As I reflected both on the Catholic texts and the interviews, and applied Smith's (1987, 1990) analysis of a "line of fault" which emerges out of women's struggles,¹² I discerned two further sub-categories within Catholic

¹² In chapter five I offer an extensive overview of Smith's analysis in relation to the interviews.

ideology: "Catholic family ideology," which defines appropriate gender roles; and "Catholic sexual ideology," which defines the parameters for morally appropriate sexual relations.

Another important dimension to the analysis process was my own extensive journal writing, congruent with Kirby and McKenna's (1989) method of tracking "conceptual baggage." Through my writing I attempted to sort out my own feelings and experience of Catholicism from those presented in the interviews. I noted a significant shift over the course of this thesis-writing from assuming an "I" position vis-a-vis the data to a position which, hopefully, more accurately represents the women's collective standpoint.

IV.vii Conclusion:

In this chapter I outlined my research objectives and justified my choice of a qualitative, participatory action methodology. I gave details of and justification for my choice of three specific methods within my methodology: individual interviews, focus group interviews, and textual analysis. A significant part of the chapter documented the women's reflections on participating in this research project. I concluded the chapter with details of the data analysis process. The remaining chapters, five through nine, are devoted to a full explication of this analysis.

Chapter Five

Charting the "Line of Fault" in Catholic Families

At the fault line along which women's experience breaks away from the discourses mediated by texts that are integral to the relations of ruling in contemporary society, a critical standpoint emerges. We make a new language that gives us speech, ways of knowing, ways of working politically (Dorothy Smith, 1990, p. 11).

V.1 Introduction:

In this chapter I lay the groundwork for my analysis by introducing Dorothy Smith's (1987; 1990) line of fault argument as it applies to the specific cases of eight Catholic families in which incest occurred. I define Catholic family and sexual ideology in relation to my analysis of Catholic texts on marriage, family life and sexuality, and the interview data. I then discuss, within Smith's historical materialist framework, the incest survivors' emergent consciousness of oppression within their families. Next I identify the women's repressed incest memories as an illustration of Smith's line of fault metaphor. I conclude the chapter by charting the three main points of rupture along the line of fault. These points of rupture are analysed in detail in chapters six, seven and eight respectively.

I have chosen the above quotation from Smith (1990) to begin working with Catholic ideology because it brings together two central components in the analysis of my thesis

data. The first component is the identification of texts which are "integral to the relations of ruling." The texts of the Catholic church promote patriarchal relations of ruling; thus, these texts are focal in my/our feminist analysis of the social construction of Catholic ideology and Catholic identity within families.

The second component is the "critical standpoint" created as women's experiences within Catholic families emerge as ruptures and disjunctures within Catholic ideological practices and discourses. As we contrast, on the one hand, the components of Catholic ideology embodied in the official writings with, on the other hand, the voices of Catholic incest survivors, we chart the points of rupture along the fault line. The women's emergent consciousness about the oppression of incest counters society's patriarchal ideology generally, and Catholic ideology more specifically. From women's standpoint, then, we begin to develop new ways of "knowing" about Catholic family life, and thus, new ways of "working politically" to make family life more empowering for women and children.

V.ii Catholic family and sexual ideology in historical context:

Secular society's ideological constructions of gender and sexual relations between the 1940s and 1970s (the period in

which these women were sexually abused) supported compulsory heterosexuality and a gendered division of labour. Among the countless examples of such ideological constructions are the popular 1950s and 1960s television programs "Father Knows Best" and "Leave it to Beaver," and the influential book Fascinating Womanhood (Andelin, 1965), which encouraged selfless expressions of feminine domesticity. Catholic ideology, in significant ways, compounded these ideological constructions of compulsory heterosexuality and traditional family living by adding a moral dimension to them. In other words, by having "God" endorse compulsory heterosexuality, Catholic ideology made such constructions appear divinely ordained and, therefore, unchallengeable (Daly, 1973).

In earlier chapters I suggested that a "traditional" family model, which reflects and fundamentally supports the institution of compulsory heterosexuality, is a central mechanism of patriarchal ideology. For instance, Rich (1980) argues,

When we look hard and clearly at the extent and elaboration of measures designed to keep women within a male sexual purlieu, it becomes an inescapable question whether the issue we have to address as feminists is, not simple "gender inequality," nor the domination of culture by males, nor mere "taboos against homosexuality," but the enforcement of heterosexuality for women as a means of assuring male right of physical, economical and emotional access (p. 647).

Catholic ideology mirror's the "institution of compulsory

heterosexuality" as expounded by Adrienne Rich (1980). Its vision of the family epitomizes the social constraints of compulsory heterosexuality: a permanent and indissoluble marriage bond between a man and woman; sexual expression only within such a bond; a division of labour in which women have primary responsibility for the care of children and home, and in which men earn the family wage; and an openness to new life in every act of sexual intercourse. If patriarchal ideology is the means by which a ruling group sustains its own domination (Smith, 1987; 1990), then Catholic ideology is a sub-set within the larger set of patriarchal relations of ruling. Christian religious ideology, and particularly Catholic ideology, with its monolithic, conservative family bias, is an important part of society's larger relations of ruling.

Catholic family and sexual ideology, as I use it in this thesis, stands for the symbols, images, mechanisms and practices by which the church has sustained its influence in the lives of Catholics. "Catholic family ideology" refers to codes for appropriate gender roles in families. "Catholic sexual ideology" refers to the codes of morally appropriate sexual behaviour. While I divide Catholic ideology into two parts-- Catholic family ideology and Catholic sexual ideology-- these are complementary, not competing, ways of viewing

Catholic ideology. The two ideologies connect in the requirement that sexuality be expressed only between consecrated spouses who, together with their children, constitute a legitimate Catholic "family."

It is important to note that the official Catholic church contests claims about its ideological basis because its vision of family and sexual relations is thought to represent "the truth" (John Paul II, 1981, p. 24). Ideology implies relativism, which the church deplores. Such a position, however, ignores the ways in which Catholicism's "truths" have been socially constructed over time by an unquestionably masculinist ruling apparatus (Anderson, 1991; Daly, 1973; Leacock, 1991; Ranke Heinemann, 1990; Zieget Silberman, 1983).

V.ii.a The second vatican council and Catholic ideology:

Despite vast changes implemented after the second vatican council, Catholic family and sexual ideology has not changed significantly since the late nineteenth century. The second vatican council was established by John XXIII in the early 1960s as a way of revisioning the church, of opening a window where previously all windows and doors had been barred. The revisioning was three-fold. First, the Catholic church sought to reform the liturgy (Rahner & Vorgrimler, 1965). Emphasis was placed on the role of the laity rather than the role of the hierarchy. "The church" came to be defined more as the

collective group of lay persons and less as the clergy within the institutional hierarchy. This emphasis directly challenged previous understandings of church. Radical changes were implemented so that the laity would take greater responsibility for the life of the church and feel less peripheral in sacramental expressions of Catholicism. For instance, priests no longer said mass in Latin but in the vernacular. Lay people, including women, began to take a more active role in mass proceedings. Second, Vatican II challenged the traditional emphasis on the rigid laws of the church and encouraged Catholics to follow the "spirit" of Catholic teachings. Third, the second Vatican Council responded to social movements (such as the peace movement, in the aftermath of the two world wars). Catholics were encouraged to become more tolerant and accepting of other Christian churches and faiths, especially Judaism (Rahner & Vorgrimler, 1965).

Post Vatican II documents such as John Paul II's (1981) papal exhortation display a rhetorical shift in the presentation of Catholic ideology.¹³ While pre Vatican II

¹³ Two examples of this shift in the post-Vatican II language are relevant. First, the pope uses inclusive language in his (1981) exhortation although such inclusive language is limited to discussion of female and male human beings; God imagery remains masculine. Second, the 1981 exhortation, in the spirit of Vatican II, invites the contributions of social

documents uphold an unapologetically patriarchal, hierarchical model of family life in which father is head, mother is subordinate and children are obedient to both, the post Vatican II document (John Paul II, 1981) argues for the formal equality of spouses. The pre and post Vatican II positions correspond to the two basic conservative views as described by Alison Jaggar (1983):

Conservatives either claim that the female role is not inferior to that of men [post-Vatican II position], or they argue that women are inherently better adapted than men to the traditional female sex role [pre-Vatican II position]. The former claim advocates a kind of sexual apartheid, typically described by such phrases as "complementary but equal"; the latter postulates an inherent inequality between the sexes (p. 322).

Thus, pre Vatican II documents represent the classical conservative vision of gender roles in the family while post Vatican II documents endorse a cornerstone of classical liberalism: equality. However, there may be a hollowness in the latter endorsement. Fundamentally, post Vatican II Catholic ideology does not challenge the central tenets of its conservative family model. Catholic ideology continues to

scientific research. However, the qualifying clause renders questionable the value the pope would place on, for instance, this thesis. "The church values sociological and statistical research...when it leads to a better understanding of the truth" (Pope John Paul, 1981, p. 24). Since I challenge the church's position as ideological and socially constructed, this thesis would probably not be considered an enhancement of "the truth."

appeal to a natural gendered division of labour and to fulfilling God's plan for "the family" within society.

V.ii.b Catholic ideology, historical materialism and the rupture in women's experience:

Catholic ideology influenced these Catholic families in complex ways. The interviews suggest that Catholic ideology has especially depended upon Catholic identity as a means of social control. Social expectations of "good" Catholic women and men (and girls and boys) demanded conformity to the tenets of Catholic ideology. Gender and sexual constructions were fundamental components of Catholic identity, and these components were constituted in fundamentally different ways for women and men (and girls and boys). Catholic identity was integral to the efficacy of Catholic ideology because it functioned as an "honour and shame" code in these Catholic families. Cole (1991) reminds us that "'honour and shame' essentially refers to a system of social control characteristic of virtually all face-to-face societies that function as moral communities by evaluating their members by a single set of relatively unambiguous standards" (p. 82). For Catholics, the set of relatively unambiguous standards conformed to the tenets of Catholic family and sexual ideology. The Catholic identities of women and men reflected this set of unambiguous standards, and, therefore, mediated

the social construction of gender and sexuality in significant ways.

The impact of ideological relations of ruling, relations which create and sustain the power of the ruling group, were discernable from the accounts of the women's everyday lives. The women identified numerous points of rupture between their own experiences and their families' "established social forms of consciousness" (Smith, 1990, p. 13). The phrase "established forms of social consciousness" refers to the established ideological practices and discourses of social relations. In Catholic families, therefore, the established forms of consciousness were constructed and mediated by Catholic family and sexual ideology. The accounts of everyday lives in these families suggest that the established forms of consciousness supported neither a critical awareness of the relations which fostered incest, nor, as a consequence, the measures which would have ensured protection against incestuous sexual abuse.

Smith's (1987; 1990) framework helps to explain the silences of women who experienced incest within Catholic families. Smith's (1987) adoption of a critical insight expressed by Marx and Engels' applies to lives and struggles of these Catholic incest survivors. Smith argues that Marx and Engels showed how

the ideas produced by a ruling class may dominate and penetrate the social consciousness of the society in general, and thus may effectively control the social process of consciousness in ways that deny expression to the actual experience people...have of their everyday world...Ideology builds the internal social organization of the ruling class as well as its domination over others. Its overall character, however, depends upon, and takes for granted, the social relations that organize and enforce the silences of those who do not participate in the process, who are outside it (pp. 55-57).

As I reviewed the accounts of the women's lives recorded in the interviews I was constantly reminded that the success and efficacy of Catholic ruling ideology has depended upon and taken for granted the silences of those who do not participate in the organization of ruling relations. Breaking the silence about the incest has exposed the rupture between, on the one hand, the women's experiences and, on the other hand, the dominant established forms of consciousness reflecting Catholic family and sexual ideology. Breaking the silence about incest also acts against those "established social forms of consciousness which alienate[d] women from their own experience" (Smith, 1990, p. 13).

V.ii.c Historical conditions of women's emergent consciousness:

Smith (1990) emphasizes that the rupture or line of fault in women's experience can only emerge when the historical and material conditions support such an emergence. Walker (1990), in her analysis of Canadian women's resistance to family

violence in the battered women's movement, also stresses the historical and materialist conditions which promote the voicing of "counter-hegemonic" ideas. Walker, congruent with Smith, writes:

Although in various ways those who rule strive to maintain what Gramsci has characterized as ideological hegemony, the process by which social reality is constructed results in there being considerable discrepancy and disjunction between the ideological forms provided for us to understand the world and our direct experience of our situation in that world. These gaps and disjunctions have, under particular historic considerations and in certain sites, allowed for the voicing of "counter-hegemonic" ideas and the taking of action by those who feel that they are not being governed by their own best interests (p. 10).

An important piece in my analysis, then, is the fact that the second vatican council occurred contemporaneously with the beginning of the second wave of feminism, a time in which women's consciousness-raising led to awareness of a range of oppressive practices, including incest. A materialist feminist analysis, congruent with Smith (1987; 1990) and Walker (1990), would suggest that the emergence of the women's political awareness about incest was facilitated by an interplay between changing material conditions and women's changing consciousness about family violence.

The four women brought up during the 1940s and 1950s, Cherrie, Elizabeth, Faye and Mary, repressed, or dissociated from, their memories of incest while the four women reared

after Vatican II, Content, Courage, Jackie and Maya, did not repress their memories at all. Dissociation is the sine qua non of severe sexual abuse (Bass & Davis, 1988; Young, 1992). Dissociation, the process by which women repress and deny traumatic episodes, captures the essence of Smith's claim that patriarchal ideological discourses and practices (in other words, established forms of consciousness) alienate women from their own experiences. For the women who repressed their memories several factors seemed to be at work.

First, an important factor among the women who repressed their memories was the fact that they were all sexually abused by their fathers (and, in at least three cases, by other family members as well.) Abuse by a father, or father figure such as a step-father, has been found to be most traumatic and is strongly linked to dissociation (Bass & Davis, 1988; Beitchman et al., 1992; Young, 1992). It would appear, then, that for the women who were sexually abused by their fathers, concealing or repressing the rupture in experience was a way to "live with [the abuser] day-to-day and not go insane." Mary, for instance, suggested that while the repression of her memories alienated her from her experience of incest, it also helped her keep her sanity.

My counsellor and I figured that I'd so thoroughly repressed all this [until my 40s] because he was my father. I couldn't afford to have the memory. So I

forgot every single incident and each occasion would be a brand new incident. And, of course, during recollection I had asthma again [as I did in childhood]...I think that's the difference between it being ordinary sexual abuse and it being a parent, or a close relative like a brother. Because you can't live with them and keep that memory. Putting the memory aside you can still live with them day- to-day and not go insane. I think that's how we very cleverly kept our sanity.

A second important consideration was that, for these four women, the incest occurred during the pre Vatican II period. As Cherrie suggested during our second focus group discussion, pre Vatican II Catholicism's "rigidity and rules [were the] reasons why we suppressed our memories. I think that's the key to it." For the women brought up prior to both the second vatican council and the second wave of feminism, incestuous sexual abuse formed no part of the established social forms of consciousness. Lacking the concepts and language to describe their experience, and the social supports to respond to it adequately, the women were, therefore, profoundly alienated from their experiences of incest.

Interestingly, Cherrie, Elizabeth, Faye and Mary are also the four women who continue to strongly identify with the Catholic church. The four women reared after Vatican II do not strongly identify with the Catholic church or have rejected it outright. This may suggest that the social construction of gender and sexuality among Catholics prior to

the 1960s (which was influenced by rigid Catholic ideological practices and mechanisms, especially in the regulation of sexual expression) helped to maintain a following of self-identified Catholics.

For the younger generation of women, Content, Courage, Jackie and Maya, the rupture or line of fault, emerged earlier in their life histories. Their early self-identification as incest survivors was probably supported by the interplay between women's increased consciousness about family violence in the post Vatican II period and the changing social conditions for women which supported this emergent consciousness.

At various historical moments, then, these women identified themselves as incest survivors. Doing so broke the silence and marked the emergence of a resistance to social forms of consciousness that alienated them from their experiences of incest. Giving a voice to the incestuous sexual abuse, and doing the emotional work that followed, has transformed their experiences of alienation. It has provided

an opening in a discursive fabric through which a range of [experience] hitherto denied, repressed, subordinated, and absent to and lacking language, [could] break out...The opening up of women's experience gives sociologists access to social realities previously unavailable, indeed repressed (Smith, 1990, p. 12).

V.iii Charting the points of rupture along the line of fault:

In the following chapters we listen to the voices of the incest survivors as they describe their families' everyday/everynight lives. From their collective standpoint a central contradiction emerged which begs resolution. Why, when Catholic ideology promised (and continues to promise) the full realization of dignity for every family member within a traditional Catholic family structure, was there so much disempowerment among women and children and so much shame and denial about sexuality? This contradiction constitutes the fault line along which women's experiences broke away from Catholic ideology. I charted three significant points of rupture along this line of fault.

V.iii.a Catholic family ideology and patriarchal privilege:

First, Catholic family ideology assumed that males in families can enact and adopt positions of social privilege without threatening the dignity and empowerment of other family members (notably wives and children). In these Catholic families such an assumption was unfounded. The women strongly linked their incest histories to male social privilege.

V.iii.b Catholic family ideology and women's vulnerability:

Second, Catholic family ideology assumed that families in which women are limited to roles as wives and mothers will

foster the full dignity of every family member. Such was not the case in these Catholic families. On the contrary, the mothers' vulnerable socio-economic status seemed to work in concert with strong Catholic identities to prevent mothers from supporting their daughters. Mothers were forced to choose between, on the one hand, the dictates for "good" Catholic wives and mothers (e.g., placing husband and marriage before all else) and, on the other hand, their own and their daughters' dignity and safety.

V.iii.c Catholic sexual ideology and erotophobia:

Third, Catholic ideology's rigid prescriptions for morally appropriate sexual behaviour, along with the profound repercussions for immoral sexual behaviour, worked against the survivors by creating a culture of erotophobia. Further, the incest constituted a serious breach of Catholic sexual ideology. Thus, the incest compounded the survivors' feelings of unworthiness, guilt and self-blame.

V.iv Conclusion:

In this chapter I laid the groundwork for our feminist sociology of Catholic families by defining Catholic family and sexual ideology in relation to key texts on Catholic marriage, family life and sexuality. Next, I used Smith's (1987; 1990) line of fault argument and historical materialist framework to analyse some of the conditions which supported the women's

emergent identification as incest survivors. I concluded the chapter by laying out the three points of rupture which will be explored in detail in the chapters to come.

Chapter Six

Catholic Family Ideology and Male Privilege

All of man's natural aggressiveness, his masculine brawn, his logical mind, make being head easy for him. What is more, nothing gives a man greater satisfaction than a realized sense of importance. Men want recognition. They thrive on it. And their natural instinct in marriage is to be head...Nothing like this is natural to the woman (Rev. George A. Kelly, The Catholic Marriage Manual, 1958, p. 6).

On Sunday we'd go to church but Saturday night Dad would drink, smash the old lady up, and the next day we'd be in church with the Sunday little white gloves on...It was like the Gong show. -- Courage

I didn't have any boundaries. They didn't have any either...I had no rights-- it wasn't okay to state your needs. There was no sanctity of the person. -- Elizabeth

When he told me to do something I had to do it. He was the adult and I was the child. -- Jackie

VI.i Introduction:

In this chapter I explore the ways in which Catholic family ideology reinforced male privilege, and how this male privilege linked with the incest histories. I do so in order to illustrate that the incestuous abuses were not unpredictable, random acts of violence, but acts strongly influenced by a complex cluster of ideological practices. Therefore, I apply Smith's (1998; 1990) line of fault argument by contrasting official Catholic teaching on "the family," paying particular attention to the prescribed roles for men,

with women's experiences of male privilege within Catholic families.

The main point of rupture which emerged was the fact that these family arrangements supported the violation, not the protection, of children and women. Children's unquestioning obedience to parents, particularly fathers, took precedence over children's need for protection from violation. In these families, male privilege translated into a fear of male authority, which, in turn, impeded attempts to stop the incest. In addition, patriarchal God imagery contributed to women's alienation from their experiences of incest.

VI.ii.a "The family" is divinely ordained:

A central tenet of Catholic ideology is that "the family" is a divinely-ordained institution. This tenet is a thread running through all of the Catholic writings I analysed. Leo XIII (1880/1978) said,

Marriage from its very institution was to be between two only, the husband and the wife, that of two there was to be as it were one flesh; and that the nuptial bond was by the will of God so closely and strongly woven that it cannot be unloosed or broken by any among men (sic) (p. 3).

Pius XI's (1930/1978) encyclical stated, "From God comes the very institution of marriage, the ends for which it was instituted, the laws that govern it, the blessings that flow from it" (p. 26).

John Paul II (1981) expanded on this statement. While in all the writings, Catholics are warned against abominations of marriage, John Paul's recent exhortation admonishes modern society to revert to "traditional" ways in order to combat "sin" which has penetrated the structures of society.¹⁴

Willed by God in the very act of creation, marriage and the family are interiorly ordained to fulfilment in Christ and have need of his graces in order to be healed from the wounds of sin and restored to their "beginning", that is, to full understanding and the full realization of God's plan...Not infrequently ideas and solutions which are very appealing, but which obscure in varying degrees the truth and the dignity of the human person, are offered to men and women of today...To the injustice originating from sin- which has profoundly penetrated the structures of today's world- and often hindering the family's full realization of itself and of its fundamental rights, we must all set ourselves in opposition through a conversion of mind and heart...the institution of marriage is not an undue interference by society or authority, nor the extrinsic imposition of a form. Rather, it is an interior requirement of the covenant of conjugal love which is publicly affirmed as unique and exclusive in order to live in complete fidelity to the plan of God, the creator (pp. 23-25).

Thus, it would seem that, according to Catholic family ideology, alternative family arrangements, such as women earning the primary income outside the home, are not only unexplored, they are presented as morally questionable because

¹⁴ Elsewhere the pope has made explicit reference to "radical feminism" as an obstacle to "the family." A March 21, 1995 news brief in the Evening Telegram stated, "Pope John Paul said Sunday society should place greater value on the role women play in the home and suggested the influence of radical feminism is on the wane."

they counter "God's plan" for family, gender and sexual relations.

VI.ii.b "The family" and gender relations within it are "natural":

Catholic ideology resists recognizing that families are human institutions which come into being in specific periods of time, vary culturally, and are influenced by changing material and socio-economic conditions. The foundation for such a position seems largely based on the assumed "naturalness" of the family. The documents I examined premised family arrangements on a natural gendered division of labour and a natural inclination for men to be "head" of the family (Kelly, 1958, p. 6). Leo XIII (1880/1978) wrote:

The man is the chief of the family, and the head of the woman, who nevertheless, inasmuch as she is flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, should be subject to and obey the man, not as a servant, but as a companion; and so neither honour nor dignity is lost by the rendering of obedience. But let divine charity ever regulate duty both in him who commands and in her who obeys, since both are images, the one of Christ, the other of His Church (p. 6).

Responding to what was already, in the early twentieth century, considered a strong feminist lobby to bolster women's position in the family, Pius XI (1930/1978) warned against changes to established gendered family arrangements:

Many [false teachers] assert that...subjection of one party to the other is unworthy of human dignity, that the rights of husband and wife are equal; wherefore, they boldly proclaim, the emancipation of women has been or ought to be effected. This emancipation in their eyes

must be threefold, in the ruling of the domestic society, in the administration of family affairs and in the rearing of children...This, however, is not the true emancipation of women, nor that rational exalted liberty which belongs to the noble office of a Christian woman and wife, it is rather the debasing of the womanly character and the dignity of motherhood, and indeed of the whole family (p. 47).

Reverend George A. Kelly's Catholic Marriage Manual (1958) was a highly accessible and influential text for Catholics during the late 1950s and 1960s.¹⁵ As quoted at the outset of this chapter, Kelly (1958) reminded Catholics that

All of man's natural aggressiveness, his masculine brawn, his logical mind, make being head easy for him. What is more, nothing gives a man greater satisfaction than a realized sense of importance. Men want recognition. They thrive on it. And their natural instinct in marriage is to be head...Nothing like this is natural to the woman (p. 6).

Kelly (1958) also emphasized that husbands and wives ought to settle domestic quarrels in accordance with these assigned roles.

When you as a husband recognize that your wife needs to express herself emotionally and intuitively, you take a long step toward accepting her for what she is- a woman. When you recognize your husband's need to express himself forcefully and sometimes boisterously, you accept him for what he is- a man. Many troubles encountered by modern couples result from a husband's unwillingness to encourage his wife to be a woman, and from the wife's unwillingness to let her man fulfil the masculine role assigned to him by God (p. 25).

¹⁵ The Catholic Marriage Manual (1958) is stamped with the official declarations 'nihil obstat' and 'imprimatur,' guaranteeing that the book is free of Catholic doctrinal or moral error.

John Paul's (1981) post Vatican II document continues to hold that "[marriage] constitutes the natural setting in which the human person is introduced to the great family of the church" (p. 26).

VI.ii.c Catholic ideology demands that men cherish their wives: Catholic ideology pays great attention to prescribed roles for husbands and fathers. The positive side of patriarchal values are invited in men; they are expected to provide protection and remain loyal to their wives and children. John Paul (1981) also emphasizes the formal equality of spouses.

In his wife he sees the fulfilment of God's intention: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him,"...Authentic conjugal love presupposes and requires that a man have a profound respect for the equal dignity of his wife...As for the Christian, he is called to a new attitude of love, manifesting toward his wife a charity that is both gentle and strong like the love which Christ has for the church...Love for his wife as mother of their children and love for the children themselves are for the man the natural way of understanding and fulfilling his own fatherhood...As experience teaches, the absence of a father causes psychological and moral imbalance and notable difficulties in family relationships, as does, in contrary circumstances, the oppressive presence of a father, especially where there still prevails the phenomenon of "machismo" or a wrong superiority of male prerogatives which humiliates women and inhibits the development of healthy family relationships (p. 29).

John Paul's reference to "the phenomenon of machismo" and the "wrong superiority of male prerogatives" in families is intriguing. A socialist feminist analysis would suggest that

"machismo" and "male prerogatives" are fruits of patriarchy. If, according to this analysis, the roots of patriarchy lie, in part, in women's social and economic vulnerability in families, a more appropriate question would be: How, given such a family model, could "machismo" and the "wrong superiority of male prerogatives" be prevented? In other words, a contradiction seems to emerge in the pope's claim that families be arranged according to a patriarchal model and at the same time not exhibit patriarchal characteristics.

Of further interest is John Paul's (1981) concern for women in contemporary society, which he seems to assume has no connection to women's position of social and economic disadvantage within families.

Unfortunately the Christian message about the dignity of women is contradicted by that persistent mentality which considers the human being not as a person but as a thing, as an object of trade, at the service of selfish interest and mere pleasure: The first victims of this mentality are women. This mentality produces very bitter fruits, such as contempt for women, slavery, oppression of the weak, pornography, prostitution...The synod fathers deplored these and other forms of discrimination as strongly as possible (p. 29).

VI.ii.d Children are to love, respect and obey their parents:

According to the Catholic texts I analysed, written between 1880 and 1981, the prescribed role for children in families has not changed significantly either. Children are to be protected and valued, however, primary importance is

placed on the obedience of children to their parents. Leo XIII (1880/1978) stated: "As regards to children, they are bound to obey and be subject to their parents, and to do them honour for conscience sake; and, on the other hand, every care and forethought should be vigilantly exercised by parents to protect their children" (p. 6).

John Paul's (1981) message, not significantly different from Leo XIII's (1880/1978) message one hundred years previous, also places priority on obedience over the needs and dignity of children.

All members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building day by day the communion of persons, making the family "a school of deeper humanity"...By means of love, respect and obedience to their parents, children offer their specific and irreplaceable contribution to the construction of an authentically human and Christian family (p. 28).

There seems to be a parallel between, on the one hand, the expectation that children will obey and give unquestioning support to parental power, and, on the other hand, the expectation that women will selflessly and unquestioningly defer to male power. A hierarchy of social privilege thus becomes apparent in Catholic family ideology: children defer to parents, women defer to men, and men, as "heads" of the family, need defer to no one.

VI.iii Catholic family ideology, male privilege and the rupture in women's experience:

Catholic ideology reflected and reinforced the prevalent ideological practices between the 1940s and 1970s which supported patriarchal privilege in families. According to these incest survivors, the established forms of consciousness in these families demanded adherence to a gender-based hierarchy of privilege. This collection of Catholic teachings helped to organize and maintain ruling relations. Thus, the interviews reveal official Catholic teaching to be an example of ruling ideology. The women described their experiences of incest as part of a code of male privilege which they found difficult, and often impossible, to challenge.

Overall the gender roles in the families of the incest survivors conformed to the prescriptions of Catholic family ideology. These gender roles were linked with the incest histories in important ways. Seven of the eight women grew up in families in which the family structure corresponded to a traditional Catholic family model. In other words, in seven of eight families fathers acted as the primary or sole breadwinner while mothers were primarily responsible for domestic labour and child-care. Jackie's family, the one exception, consisted of herself, her mother, who worked outside the home, a step-father who also worked outside the

home, and siblings from this second marriage.

Catholic family ideology assumes that a man's appropriate position as "head of the family" will best enable men to protect their family members. However, a fault line emerged when the women suggested that male privilege led to the violation, not the protection, of family members.

Maya's words suggest a strong link between Catholic family ideology and male privilege. Maya, brought up in the late 1960s and 1970s, was reared by parents who strove to emulate and pass on Catholic family values. From her standpoint in the family, her parents never questioned their adherence to the gender roles endorsed by Catholic ideology. Although Catholic ideology supposes that men will love and respect their wives, this was not realized in Maya's family. She is angry about her father's unilateral decisions about the family's welfare and his failure to respect the dreams and goals of his wife.

My parents had different backgrounds but one of the strongest things they had in common was that they were both Catholic. I think the [Catholic] tradition was so ingrained that they wouldn't have even realized they were making decisions based on this. The expected [gender] roles were so taken for granted, like second nature.

Dad didn't respect Mom. I have a lot of anger about the way he treated her. He didn't respect her dreams and her goals and her way of life...She went to work [after having six children] partly because of economic necessity and partly because she felt so unfulfilled living in the country, struggling to be a housewife with this guy who

had impossible standards [of housekeeping]...He definitely saw [domestic labour] as the mother's role.

The most common manifestation of male privilege was the lack of respect for boundaries that pervaded the homes of these women. Social privilege granted to fathers, older brothers, uncles and step-fathers encouraged many forms of family violence, although incest was identified as the most profound violation. Below I document several examples of incest, the first two from the pre Vatican II period, the rest from the post Vatican II period.

Elizabeth told me about the first time she was abused by her father. The abuse occurred some time during the 1950s, and she repressed this memory well into adulthood.

The incest with my Dad happened when we were taking a trip. We stopped overnight although we didn't really have to, it wasn't necessary. I was 13 or 14. He took me to supper and to a movie. I still remember the movie, the actress. When we went back to the hotel, I remember the room, it was small and crowded-- it had a sink but no toilet. The window beside the bed faced the street. I still remember the pyjamas I was wearing. There was a double bed. I don't think I even questioned it at the time, I don't remember feeling odd about it at all. The fact that I didn't means he probably had never done anything like this to me before. He locked the door behind him and told me he was going downstairs for a while. I knew he was going down to the bar. He locked the door so I'd be safe. I was really scared all alone in the hotel room because I wasn't used to being alone in strange places. I don't know what time he came up but I knew he'd been drinking. I didn't want to talk with him, it always used to bother me a lot when he was drinking. He undressed and probably kept his underwear on. He came right up to me. I remember him fondling my breasts and ejaculating on my lower back-- No wonder I have lower

back pain today. I pretended I was asleep. I stayed there 'til I fell asleep. I didn't dare move. The next morning was as if nothing had happened. [Months] after that he started slapping me and pinching my boobs. And after a while my girlfriends stopped coming over because he was so touchy-feely. But we didn't know it was abuse then, we just knew we didn't like it.

Faye's incest experiences provide another example of profound boundary violations.

I was physically afraid of my father, I mean, I was afraid of the "Bad One." He was very physically cruel in some ways. I was afraid that he'd hurt me-- he had hurt me, lots of times. I thought I had too much to lose with my father. On one hand I adored him-- on the other hand, I knew I was too afraid of him to get angry because there was this bad man there who could hurt me and did hurt me...It's amazing our ability to split...The last time [the incest happened] he just left and he never approached me again...But there were consequences to me putting a stop to it. He was my only close relationship. And when he stopped [sexually abusing] he also withdrew from me emotionally. That was terribly painful, and I felt very much alone then.

Maya told me about her father's lack of respect for her physical boundaries.

Not just [Dad's] physical punishments but even his signs of affection would often take me by surprise and it felt like a boundary crossing. Like he'd come up behind me and put his hand on my neck and to this day I can't stand anyone putting their hand on my neck. [It felt] possessive and abrupt and it was something that didn't feel good, like it wasn't gentle. Also, his confused attempts to be affectionate often had sexual overtones and they made me really uncomfortable--talking about my appearance all the time. Whether [the comments] were positive or negative they were intrusive and unwelcome, sort of none of his business, but he made it his business.

Content was sexually abused by one of her older brothers

during the 1970s.

I can remember two or three times, but I know there were more. It wasn't violent-- he'd just come into my room at night. I would pretend I was asleep. I tried not to move. I can't remember if he would leave me alone when I pretended to be asleep or if I'd get tired of him pestering me and say to myself, "Oh, just let him get it over with." I'd pretend I was just waking up, and I'd let him do what he had to do and forget about it until the next time....I never told anybody because I thought, "Well, he isn't hurting me, physically anyway." Emotionally, ya, but you don't realize that 'til you're older. Then you're really screwed up.

Content's words also provide an obvious illustration of the way in which her family's adherence to a gender-based hierarchy of privilege discouraged her from stopping the incest. She told me her "brother wasn't mean about it. Well, see, I thought that because he was older and I was younger maybe I thought I had to do it, if that makes sense."

Courage, in her struggle to overcome a childhood of abuse, has concluded that the many forms of family violence were linked to a lack of respect for her boundaries, and the boundaries of those who occupied a "one-down" position on the family hierarchy of privilege. She told me, "I now understand that not having any boundaries when I was little [was the reason] so much stuff happened to me."

VI.iii.a Catholic family ideology, obedience and incest:

Catholic family ideology's established forms of consciousness demanded that children give unquestioning

respect and obedience to parents. While Catholic family ideology assumes that a demand for obedience from children will provide the groundwork for an authentically human Christian family (John Paul II, 1981), the standpoints of these women suggest that unquestioning obedience fostered the incest. Thus, unquestioning obedience was identified as a wide point of rupture along the fault line for women in these Catholic families.

Mary's pre Vatican II Catholic instruction demanded that she obey her parents and other authority figures such as priests and nuns. She believes this helped her repress and remain silent about the abuse that took place over many years. During our discussion of Catholic family ideology in the second focus group Mary said, "You respect your parents so thoroughly you wouldn't dare tell on your parent. [Parents] represent authority and the church and everything good." Thus, from Mary's standpoint, the established forms of consciousness in her Catholic family linked parental authority with the church, and, in turn, "everything good." There was no allowance for, and no language to identify, parental abuse. The fact that Mary's father had sexual intercourse with her many times over a number of years is an obvious contradiction of the Catholic family belief that parents represent "everything good." Mary's family's belief that parents and

authority figures represent "everything good" was revealed to be even more painfully ironic when Mary told me that her father had himself been incestuously abused in childhood.

I only knew in the last two years that [my Dad] was raped, sodomized by his uncle umpteen times when he was ten years old...And also, his own father is known to have been willing to screw a mink. Dad's father raped his own daughter [my aunt] when she was sixteen, well, maybe she was even younger, too. But when she was sixteen she left home because of it."

This fact provides evidence for the intergenerational pattern of abuse in which survivors become abusers as adults.

Faye was, like Mary, sexually abused by her father during this pre Vatican II period. She told me that obedience to her father was the strongest reason she did not tell anyone about the abuse.

It started so young that by the time I realized it was wrong it had been going on for so long that I felt I couldn't tell about it. I felt responsible for it. My loyalty was to my father; this was our secret and he said they wouldn't understand. Mostly it was loyalty and obedience to my father.

Jackie clearly identified how enforced obedience, which is endorsed by Catholic family ideology, made it impossible for her to stop her step-father from sexually abusing her. "When Dan was doing these things to me I felt I had no right to say no because he was the boss. When he told me to do something I had to do it-- he was the adult and I was the child."

VI.iii.b Catholic family ideology and fear of male authority:

Another rupture along the fault line was the women's fear of men and male authority. Fear was a by-product of established forms of consciousness in which it was not safe to challenge the family's gender-based hierarchy of privilege. Cherrie, brought up in a strict Catholic home during the 1940s and 50s, told me she trusted her father until he violated that trust in a profound way.

Right from the start I was told not to say anything-- he just told me to shut up. My father put the fear of God in me. I had so much trust in that man. I remember one time, he'd taken me down to the park to play on the slide. He would hold me at the top of the slide, then let me drop down and he'd run around and meet me at the bottom. I remember looking at my Dad's face and I was laughing and smiling. Then suddenly he had his fingers inside my panties. I can remember the look on the girl's face. I'm sure I took the blame for that. I left my body, I used to go up above and watch the whole thing happening below me. Before that I trusted him-- after that it was trust absolutely nothing. Nothing. If you could see the look on the girl's face, from smiling and laughing to trusting nobody. Yet I never questioned it-- it was just, "Be a good girl and don't do anything wrong".

Elizabeth said her fear of male authority, established in her 1940s and 50s childhood, remained with her into adulthood. She described the relief she felt when her husband died. While Elizabeth's husband was alive she suppressed her fear of him. Her husband's death permitted the emergent awareness of this unconscious fear.

My husband died recently and it was very interesting. It

helped me to recognize that I lived in fear all the time when I lived with him. I lived in fear and I didn't know it-- suppressed it. Suppressed it. He'd never beaten me but there were times when he was sexually inappropriate. But it wasn't even that fear. There was just a total blanket fear, always waiting for that rage to blow and it was frightening to watch. I remember looking at him [when he was dead] and saying, "I don't ever have to be afraid again. You can never do that to me again." Isn't that amazing?

According to Catholic family ideology, fathers' positions as heads of the family are justified in order to protect family members. Maya's fear of her father, however, overshadowed her desire to seek protection from him when her uncle was abusing her. Thus, her father's position worked against her attempts to stop the incest. In addition, Maya suggested that the hierarchical church structure, reflected in her family's hierarchical structure, prevented her from confiding in a priest about the incest. Thus, this structure emerged as a point of rupture for Maya as she was unable to confide in those people supposedly invested with the responsibility to provide unconditional protection.

Both Cecil and I were really afraid of my Dad-- Cecil because Dad was his older brother, me because he was my father. He was the disciplinarian and he occasionally used physical violence for punishment. We were all just really afraid to cross him. He was a harder disciplinarian than Mom-- concrete threats were pervasive. In terms of my Dad finding out [about the incest], a lot of it was just plain fear of physical punishment and emotional punishment from my Dad. There's a part of me that always wanted to be able to go to Dad so that he'd protect me. But my stronger feeling was fear...I don't think I would have "confessed" to a priest

about Cecil. I don't think I would have trusted a priest enough to tell. The hierarchy in the church is reflected in the family. I think there's a clear parallel between not telling a priest about the incest and not telling my Dad about it.

VI.iii.c Patriarchal God imagery as a point of rupture:

Daly (1973) suggests that patriarchal God imagery reinforces the social power granted to men, and reinforces the mechanisms of patriarchal ideology by making the oppression and subordination of women seem natural and fitting. The impact of patriarchal God imagery was at the centre of one of the debates during the second focus group discussion. Patriarchal God imagery was a central part of the established forms of consciousness in these Catholic families, especially during the pre-Vatican II period, and a point of rupture was identified around patriarchal God imagery. During the first focus group Elizabeth told us that her experience of "God the father" compounded her sense of violation in her family.

My father wasn't the big head of the family...But there was no such thing as privacy. The living conditions were difficult...I didn't have any boundaries. They didn't have any either...I had no rights-- it wasn't okay to state your needs. There was no sanctity of the person. It took me most of my life to recognize that that's how I felt about Catholicism and God. I felt that my boundaries were being stepped on, even by God.

In response to Elizabeth's comment, Faye spoke about the connection between the fear of her own father and the fear of "Father God" which was central to her pre-Vatican II

upbringing. The rupture along the fault line again became clear as Faye described how the imagery inspired terror in her rather than a sense that she was being protected by God, as Catholic ideology presupposed. "I still struggle with my relationship with God the father. Father God to me, that whole image was a horrifying one. And one that I could never relate to very well. Which makes sense, hey, if you've been abused by your father-- it can become a terrifying kind of image."

Cherrie, also brought up in the pre Vatican II era, expressed a different viewpoint on "Father God" imagery. For Cherrie, God was a source of comfort during the time in which she was sexually abused by her father and brothers. She continues to be comfortable with masculine images of the divine. Her personal relationships with God, Jesus and the Blessed Mother provided comfort and unconditional support, a stark contrast to the lack of comfort and support she received from her family members. Notably, Cherrie felt that God encouraged and supported her efforts to heal from the incest.

In dealing with the Catholic thing...it gave a tremendous amount of support, as far as the church goes, and as far as my relationship with our Blessed Mother and with God himself... [It was] because I could depend on them, talk to them, and there'd be no repercussions by talking to them. I felt very protected by them although there was nothing they could do as far as the actual discontinuing, you know, to put a stop to [the incest]. There was nothing they would do, could do, but I certainly felt a

lot of support from the church. And as such I've had some very powerful experiences in my faith. In fact, I would say that in dealing with the incest, when it really all began to surface it was actually God that I turned to first and he gave me the courage to go to people who would support me, and help me get through it and deal with it.

During the second focus group, the women also discussed the ways in which their redefined images of God have supported their healing process. Faye has worked on transforming her relationship with God so that she now views God as her best friend. "Now God is in many ways my best friend...It's a very unconditional love." Cherrie confirmed this. "I think the teaching that sticks out in my mind that is very, very profound, and I don't think I learnt it until I was thirty five or forty years old, is the unconditional love that God has for us no matter what we do."

VI.iv Conclusion:

The standpoint of these women, then, reveals that Catholic family ideology promoted family relations in which men were granted social privilege over women and children. In the families of these incest survivors, this social privilege fostered many forms of family violence, including incest. Thus, the standpoint of these women powerfully suggests that the Catholic family ideological practices which were grounded in and justified in the name of male privilege, prevented, rather than promoted, the development of authentically human

and dignified family relations. In the following chapter I explore another dimension of Catholic family living: the context of Catholic mothering.

Chapter Seven

Catholic Family Ideology, Mothering and Incest

Above all it is important to underline the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men...The history of salvation, in fact, is a continuous and luminous testimony to the dignity of women...The true advancement of women requires that clear recognition be given to the value of their maternal and family role, by comparison with all other public functions (Pope John Paul II, 1981, p. 28).

My mother never came to my protection. None whatsoever. She said nothing. She didn't come to me and say "Daddy was wrong." As far as I was concerned, Dad was much more important than I was to my mother. -- Cherrie

It would have been very difficult for my Mom to leave. Definitely very difficult. She had no where to go to. And what would she do with all these kids? It definitely would have been impossible. -- Content

VII.i Introduction:

In this chapter I explore the role of mothering in the Catholic families of the women who took part in the research process. I apply Smith's (1987; 1990) line of fault argument to the interview and textual analysis, arguing that the experiences of mothers and daughters in these families emerged as a fundamental rupture in Catholic family ideological practices. These practices demanded that mothers choose between living according to patriarchal Catholic family ideology and their own and their daughters' empowerment.

I situate my analysis within a socialist feminist

framework, emphasizing the significance of material conditions in women's lives. I use this framework primarily as a way **not** to place blame on the shoulders of mothers in incest families. I also use this framework as a way of moving beyond an individualistic analysis, and to counter explanations of incest put forward by proponents of maternal collusion theory and pathology theory. My purpose, then, is to highlight the socio-economic contexts that shaped the lives of these women's mothers, and within which they made decisions about their own welfare and the welfare of their children. I also highlight the mothers' Catholic identities, the effects of which reinforced the mothers' socio-economic vulnerability associated with a gendered division of labour, and influenced the mothers' responses (or lack thereof) to incest.

VII.ii Catholic family ideology and the role of women:

Catholic family ideology has consistently emphasized the primacy of women's maternal and domestic roles above all others. Catholic mothers are considered the custodians and guardians of family values, and are expected to provide a unifying presence in the family. In both the pre and post Vatican II periods, Catholic family ideology has emphasized the naturalness of these assigned roles. Pre Vatican II texts refer explicitly to the naturalness of patriarchal authority alongside the naturalness of women's maternal and domestic

roles. Reverend George A. Kelly's (1958) influential handbook on Catholic marriage emphasized that "a woman by nature is generally warm, tender, understanding and loving. These are qualities she should have as mother, homemaker, and custodian of affection and love in the family" (p. 25). Hence, it would have been considered "unnatural" for a Catholic woman to lack these qualities.

John Paul's (1981) post Vatican II papal document devotes special attention to the role of mothers in families. He does not emphasize the naturalness of male authority but implicitly supports patriarchal authority by continuing to advocate the natural suitability of women to domestic, care-giving roles.

Above all it is important to underline the equal dignity and responsibility of women with men...The history of salvation, in fact, is a continuous and luminous testimony to the dignity of women...the true advancement of women requires that clear recognition be given to the value of their maternal and family role, by comparison with all other public functions...This will come about more easily if...a renewed "theology of work" can shed light upon and study in depth the meaning of work in Christian life and determine the fundamental bond between work and the family...Possible discrimination between the different types of work and professions is eliminated at its very root once it is clear that all people...are working with equal rights and responsibilities...This requires that men should truly esteem and love women with total respect for their personal dignity, and that society should create and develop conditions favouring work in the home (p. 28).

John Paul's emphasis on the primary importance of women's

domestic and maternal responsibilities does not, at face value, devalue or degrade women. However, a socialist feminist analysis considers a gendered division of labour a key element in the maintenance of patriarchy. The nominal or formal claim that women and men are equal (and John Paul is very careful to outline the formal equality of women and men) within a gendered division of labour ignores men's de facto social and economic advantage (Callahan, 1993; Daly, 1973; Homer et al., 1985; Luxton, 1990). One problem in John Paul's analysis, then, arises because he ignores social and material conditions which mediate the value and meaning assigned to unpaid domestic labour. Decades of feminist research, along with my interview data, make it clear that women's unpaid domestic and family labour has left women profoundly vulnerable and has done little to promote women's advancement.

VII.iii Catholic mothering and the line of fault:

The practice of mothering in these incestuous families consistently emerged as a theme in my interviews, and was the centre of an important debate during the second focus group discussion. The women identified a fundamental point of rupture between, on the one hand, the socially constructed expectations of Catholic wives and mothers within patriarchal families and, on the other hand, the abilities of these Catholic mothers to protect themselves and their daughters.

From the standpoint of the women I interviewed, the Catholic teaching which conflates women's identity with fertility and unpaid domestic labour was problematic for several interconnected reasons.

First, the material and socio-economic conditions of mothers in these Catholic families left mothers vulnerable to abuse themselves, and, in turn, hampered their ability to support their daughters. The fundamental tenets of Catholic family ideology **required** that "good" Catholic wives and mothers provide precisely the unpaid domestic, maternal and emotional labour which left them vulnerable to abuse, and dramatically limited their life options. For instance, mothers' economic and social vulnerability in the family (a "one-down" position relative to their husbands) was compounded by Catholic family ideology which holds that a "good Catholic woman" must, as Faye's mother did, stand by her husband "through thick and thin."

Second, these mothers were strongly influenced by their identities as Catholic wives and Catholic mothers (which demanded, among other things, unconditional commitment to their marriage vows, a full openness to every possibility of life, and full responsibility for childcare and domestic labour). A supportive response to incest would have, among other things, challenged male power in the family. A

challenge to male power would have been fundamentally at odds with the dictates of the mothers' identities as "good" Catholic wives and mothers. In addition, the realities of their lives as "good" Catholic wives and mothers simply did not make it easy for mothers to respond to incest. For instance, Faye suggested during the second focus group that "part of what preoccupied a lot of mothers was just having one baby after another which is part of the Catholic thing. If you look into the reasons why most of them didn't want to know, most of them had their hands full."

Finally, as Faye and Maya reminded us during the second focus group discussion, many of the mothers had been sexually abused themselves, or at the very least had been negatively influenced by Catholic sexual ideological beliefs and practices (discussed in detail in chapter eight). This seemed to contribute to denial and emotional unavailability on the part of mothers responding (or not responding) to their daughters' incest experiences.

VII.iii.a Mothers' denial and lack of protection:

Three of the women told me their mothers denied obvious signs that the incest was happening and did not support their daughters' efforts to stop the incest. Three other women said their mothers were not attentive to the signs of their distress. Descriptions of the ways in which mothers failed

to support the incest survivors follow. Three excerpts from Faye's, Mary's and Cherrie's individual interviews respectively represent mothering in the pre Vatican II era. The final excerpt, from Jackie's interview, represents the post Vatican II period.

Cherrie's mother, who actually witnessed one episode of the incest, most blatantly exemplifies a mother's lack of support. The event Cherrie described occurred during the late 1940s or early 1950s.

Dad was a big man, six feet tall and 200 lbs-- strong as a bull. So it was normal that you'd do what he told you to. I think the abuse put fear into me right from the beginning. The two flashbacks I have of my Dad I was about the same age. In one I was in Mom and Dad's bedroom and he had my skirt up and his pants down. Mom walked in and saw us but she turned right back around and went out. I never saw such a disgusted look on her face-- I felt she was disgusted with me. Obviously, he told me, he was doing this because I was a bad girl, because I'd done something wrong. I don't know if Dad knew mom walked in. But I think he noticed the look on my face. He got up quickly and put me on the floor. He pulled up his pants, walked out and just left me there sitting on the floor. I just sat there and cried and cried. As far as I was concerned, Dad was much more important than I was to my mother. She wasn't about to kick him out of the house. Why would she kick him out just because of me? As far as the church goes, you're supposed to turn the other cheek, forgive and forget. I'm sure she was afraid of him, too, if she did say something to him.

If we explore what happened to Cherrie within the context of the social conditions in her Catholic family, we must consider a number of factors. First, a woman taking a stand against her own husband would have fundamentally challenged

her husband's power in the home. This male power would have been socially reinforced by the dominant patriarchal ideology, including, of course, Catholic ideology. The difficulty in challenging male power would have been more intense prior to the 1960s, the pre Vatican II era, a time when there was little feminist consciousness about family violence and abuses of male power. Second, by not challenging her husband, Cherrie's mother may have safeguarded her own bodily integrity and prevented violence being used against her as well. Third, Cherrie's mother was economically dependent on her husband and it was probably not in her interest to threaten the source of her own, and her children's, security.

Taking into account how such a complex (and undoubtedly incomplete) set of social conditions may have influenced Cherrie's mother's decision not to challenge her husband supports Smith's (1987; 1990) claim that material and social conditions affect the historical moments at which the rupture in women's experience can emerge. We also broaden our analysis of mothering in Catholic family contexts by exploring the additional impact of Catholic identity and the mechanisms of Catholic family ideology which contributed to women's social vulnerability.

Mary's mother juggled full-time work with the family business and full responsibility for care of the home.

To make ends meet she tried to operate three cottages, cabins that they rented to people, and that was a lot of work for her, too, before the days of automated washing machines and all that. They also ran a store, that's what the income was...that's why they were well known. Eventually they even tried a restaurant in a little part of the store. So she was always busy, plus trying to bring up seven children.

Mary described her mother as emotionally distant and unapproachable. She emphasized her mother's likeness to Mary, the Blessed Virgin, who was revered by Catholics for her purity and untouchability, and upheld as a model of Catholic womanhood.

I may have felt that [my mother] would never believe me if I told her [about the incest.] Now I'm not sure, I may have told her in my own way and she didn't believe or didn't listen...My mother was more like the church was: unapproachable...She tried to be a role model. I almost analyse her like the Blessed Virgin. She was the pure part of our family, untouchable.

Faye told me that, contrary to the dictates of Catholic family ideology, it was her father, not her mother, who provided the emotional support in the family. The following excerpt from one of my interviews with Faye reveals striking similarities between Mary's mother and Faye's mother.

My mother was a very cold person emotionally...She was hopeless as far as any kind of emotional contact...I don't ever remember telling my mother about the incest. It was partly because of the alienation and emotional distance between us. She just wasn't the person I would go to...I would have made my mother different, so that she wasn't so emotionally detached from her children. It would have made a big difference in my life if I'd felt closer to my mother, if she'd been more approachable and more open to hearing about distress. But she wasn't.

The two excerpts suggest that these mothers were far from being "warm, tender, understanding and loving" as Kelly (1958) expected Catholic mothers to be (p. 25).

Jackie was sexually abused by her step-father for many years. She told me there was abundant evidence that the abuse was taking place but that her mother denied ever knowing about it. Jackie's mother, however, must have had some idea about the abuse because, just after she asked her husband to leave, she asked Jackie if her step-father had ever touched her.

I didn't tell [my Mom], she asked me. It was either the day she asked Dan to leave or shortly after. Something tells me it was the day she asked him to leave. She asked, "Did Dan ever touch you?"...It was clear what she meant by "touching" (i.e., sexual touching). I was in my bedroom, lying on my bed, crying-- it seemed like I was always upset when I was home. I said, "Yes." After that nothing was ever said...She's always maintained that she didn't know he was sexually abusing me. But she knew he was physically abusing me and verbally abusing me. It just became a way of life. They'd argue about his treatment of me but it was never stopped.

Jackie does not believe that having Dan leave was Jackie's mother's way of putting a stop to the abuse. She told me there were plenty of other reasons for the separation. Jackie emphasized her mother's lack of support for her by telling me that, when she (Jackie) pursued legal action against her step-father, her mother barely tolerated it and certainly did not support it.

An important additional factor associated with the

mothers' denial and failure to protect seemed to be intergenerational patterns of sexual abuse and incest. The women suggested that their mothers' histories of sexual abuse played a role in the social construction of family environments in which incest could occur. Maya told me,

My mother is also a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. And I think she is wondering why, as a survivor herself, she wouldn't have recognized that the same thing was happening to her daughter. She doesn't want to look at it. She didn't want to tell me anything further, any other details. I think she really needs to look at this. I think she thinks it's such a big, overwhelming thing that she'd rather keep a lid on it than explore it. But I think this asexuality thing, the thing where my parents seemed pretty asexual and how it affected me not being able to think about or talk about sexuality, I think a lot of that might come from her bad experiences as a child. I think she has a real blind spot, like whatever part of her soul that's supposed to be a sexual woman is not functioning. That energy is being taken up by other things.

Faye suspects that her mother has been sexually abused. "My mother certainly hasn't admitted to it but I'd be willing to bet she was." And when I asked her if her mother was aware of the incest between Faye and her father she told me,

You see, if she'd been abused herself and repressed all that then she just wouldn't have been able to see it, because anything sexual would immediately have been kind of denied...You could never say anything about sex to my mother. Well, I mean, I can talk to her now. But when we were younger she was very straight-laced I guess in that sense. We could never say a dirty joke in front of her...She was very, very uptight about sex...Again it was part of the Catholic thing which would have made it very difficult to tell her what was going on. For one thing, because we never knew anything about sex I didn't even have the words for what was going on. I didn't know how to describe what was going on. And, another thing,

because I knew that my mother just reacted so negatively and was so horrified by anything sexual it would have just been hopeless. I don't remember ever trying to tell her. Looking back now, I can see why I wouldn't have. Partly because of that and partly because we had this real kind of distant relationship. I wasn't close to her at all-emotionally she was very cut off.

Faye feels resolved about her mother's role because she now understands that her mother was forced to mother within a strongly anti-sexual climate. Faye's words support Smith's (1990) claim that the rupture between women's experiences and ideological practices cannot emerge if the proper social conditions are lacking.

I am very upset about the fact that my mother never picked up on the abuse. But I can also understand why she didn't, too...In those days, and the way she kind of reacted towards sex, she wouldn't have picked up anything sexual. When people can't handle something, when they feel powerless in a situation, they just don't see it. So I don't think she would have had any way of handling [the incest] so she just wouldn't have seen it.

Elizabeth's own denial of her children's sexual abuse suggests, in a powerful way, that denial is strongly influenced by a woman's own history of abuse. As a survivor of incest herself, as the mother of children who were sexually abused, and as a mother who initially repressed her knowledge of that abuse, she helps us to understand how the process of denial can happen.

The whole thing came out when the second youngest started to have serious marriage problems. You think you hear everything your children tell you. But several years before he started to have the marriage problems, he

disclosed to me. It was at the time that I was disclosing to him about my own abuse. I guess I was so into my own abuse at the time that I didn't even hear him. I didn't do anything about it. I might've been in shock about it and I didn't do anything. I heard about it again when he started to have marital problems. It's amazing what the human mind can do, repress memories and information when you have to, especially if you haven't dealt with your own abuse, or you're dealing with your own. I can understand a parent who reacts this way because I've done it myself. I don't think I would've reacted that way if I hadn't been abused myself. The first time I didn't deal with it because I was just barely touching base with mine, and I didn't know how to respond. I went numb, absolutely numb. I didn't hear it anymore...I remember thinking and I remember saying, "You son of a bitch. Damn him anyway!" And something inside of me just stopped. It was like, "I can't deal with this." So I did my old disassociating trick and I didn't. Just pulled it off beautifully...I think it's very real that we don't see it right away...It's the most shocking thing you can hear your child say...It's just so unfathomable that anyone could do this to your child.

Once I finally let it sink in, when my son came back in distress two or three years after he first told me, he was really having a hard time keeping his life together. That's when it started to come through, the second time. By that time I had worked enough on my own abuse to be able to recognize what he was saying to me, and that it was something that had to be dealt with.

Mary suggested something similar during our discussion on mothering in the second focus group. Mary's daughter is also a survivor of incest with Mary's father, providing additional evidence of intergenerational patterns of abuse.

I should have known in the case of my own daughter. All I thought was that it was a behavioural problem. I didn't want to know. So when you're looking at mothers who didn't have any of that kind of training I don't know how you could ever have expected them to respond to their children. And a lot of those mothers had training to suppress because they were abused...In many ways my

daughter [repeated] my pattern. It breaks my heart that it couldn't have been prevented.

VII.iii.b Mothering and women's critical consciousness:

During the second focus group we struggled over our explanations for the fact that all of the mothers, in various ways, were emotionally unsupportive and unavailable to respond to their daughters' distress. We considered the fact that all of the mothers were brought up long before the Vatican II era and second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s. (Some mothers were brought up in the earliest decades of this century.) We agreed that it is of critical importance to remember that, especially during the earlier decades in which these women were abused (the 1940s to the 1970s), material and social conditions did not support an emergent awareness of patriarchal families as abusive to women and children. In other words, the conditions which would have enabled mothers to respond to the incest by challenging male power or seeking alternative family arrangements were not in place (such as funded day care programs and employment equity initiatives).¹⁶ Mary's comment during the second focus group supports Smith's (1990) argument that the rupture between women's experiences and the established social forms of consciousness emerges when

¹⁶ Such social supports remain largely unavailable to mothers in Canadian society (Callahan, 1993; Luxton, 1990).

the material and social conditions support such an emergence.

Mothers were isolated. They had their everyday work world and they had to keep quiet because what other woman was going to share that trash with them. They would have thought they were the only one in the world likely. When I started to remember the abuse we had our women's centre and I trusted some women and I started talking, little by little. My mother would never have had that. There was no women's group where they could talk and learn to trust.

In response, Faye, a psychologist who works with sexual abuse survivors, reminded us that sexual abuse has only recently come into wide public awareness.

We're in a different cultural atmosphere now. There's a lot more publicity. Even ten years ago we thought incest was rare so if anybody had faced the fact that there was incest in their family they would have been immediately stigmatized. And they wouldn't have had any support, or they certainly wouldn't have expected anyone else to relate to them...All I have to do is think back twenty years ago when I was working as a psychologist and we never picked it up. There we were with people in front of us trying to understand why people were behaving the way they were...I didn't pick it up and I was trained as a psychologist [and an incest survivor].

Cherrie affirmed Faye's words during this discussion, suggesting that mothers would not have had the knowledge about incest and sexual abuse. "I don't think [mothers] had the knowledge...of what to look for. Who at that time would have been aware of sexual abuse? That was kept so secret that they themselves would have been brought up in that secrecy."

VII.iii.c Catholic mothering: "Through thick and thin"

Five of the women described their mothers' inability to

seek alternative family arrangements. Many reasons for this were provided: economic dependency and the threat of imminent poverty in the wake of marital separation; the threat of alienation from the church in the case of a divorce; domestic responsibilities and large numbers of children which would have diminished their abilities to earn a living; and illness.

Of the women representing the pre Vatican II period, Elizabeth and Faye said they believe their mothers wanted to leave. Elizabeth said, "I'm sure Mom wanted to leave him many times. But where would she go? How did you do that in those days? Eight kids-- what do you do?" Faye emphasized that her mother stayed in the marriage at least in part because she felt it was her duty as a good Catholic wife. "My parents stayed married but they hated one another. They put up with one another until the bitter end. My Mom's favourite saying was, 'You made your bed, you lie in it.' Divorce at that time was a terrible disgrace. You stayed married through thick and thin."

Two of the four women representing the post Vatican II period told me it would have been very difficult for their mothers to leave. Content, whose mother had twelve children and a terminal illness, told me "it would have been very difficult for my Mom to leave. Definitely very difficult. She had no where to go to. And what would she do with all

these kids? It definitely would have been impossible." Courage told me that her mother tried to leave but returned, mostly for financial reasons.

Mom left Dad once. We moved back to Nova Scotia because Mom wanted to be closer to her family. She had no family in Ontario. So we were in Halifax for about six months...My Dad always made good money and he'd send us money, plus she was getting social assistance but it wasn't very much. The homes we lived in Ontario were always nice, and she wasn't used to living in a rat-trap apartment.

Maya believes her mother would have left sooner had she been economically independent from the beginning. She said, "[Mom] might not have put up with Dad for so long."

But the mothers' socio-economic vulnerability may not have been the only factor influencing their decisions to stay. Faye suggested that in the Irish Catholic community in which she was raised, Catholic family ideological practices esteemed women for staying in a marriage. Thus, their identities as Catholic wives took precedence over their own and their children's physical safety.

[I grew up in] a very violent culture. On Saturday nights our idea of entertainment was to stand on our back porches and watch the domestic violence-- wives and furniture and children being sent through the windows when the men would come home from the pubs drunk. The wives were still expected to stay with their husbands. It was far worse to not have a husband than to have a husband who beat you up. [By satisfying my father's sexual needs] I felt I was saving my parents from that.

Content told me that her parents followed the Catholic

family ideological position on contraception despite Content's mother diagnosis with cancer, and despite the knowledge that each pregnancy would diminish her chances of recovery. The rupture in her mother's experience is obvious as it was clearly not in her interests to follow this tenet of Catholic family ideology.

[My mother] was just a, I shouldn't say "just a housewife." She was a housewife. She wasn't supposed to have that many kids because she was sick. She had twelve children. After she was diagnosed with cancer, I don't know when that was, she was told she wasn't supposed to have that many kids but she kept having them. She wasn't allowed to use contraceptives. I think it distressed her a lot [to have that many children]. The more kids she had the longer it took her to recover from her illness. Maybe if she didn't have so many kids she wouldn't have gotten as sick and it wouldn't have taken her as long to recover.

Elizabeth's frustration with the Catholic family ideological position against contraception encourages questions about the reason why the church has never allowed it.

I had eight pregnancies before I realized it was time to stop, that my body could no longer tolerate it. [My husband] would have stopped after the first two-- I was the one who had to keep this going. It took all that time before I could say, "That's enough, this is crazy. You can't do this to me anymore. There's no mutuality in this." There was no mutual consent between church and couples-- it was told to us. "This is the way it is." We're still being told, "This is how you do it. And this is why."-- not, "How do you feel about it?" or, "How can we do this together?" We are still being told by the patriarchy how to control birth.

VII.iv Conclusion:

From the standpoint of these women, then, the social

construction of mothering in Catholic families was a fundamental point of rupture in the daughters' lives. Catholic family ideology, premised on the conflation of women's identity with fertility and domesticity, demanded that women give precedence to their marriage vows and the unpaid care of children and home over their own safety and dignity and the safety and dignity of their children.

The standpoint of these women also suggests that women's identities as Catholic mothers and Catholic wives functioned as an additional mechanism of social control and reinforcement of Catholic family ideology. In other words, the mothers' Catholic identities reflected an adherence to the "honour and shame" code of Catholic ideology. As stated in chapter five, an honour and shame code refers to a system of social control whereby members monitor and regulate behaviour based on a set of relatively unambiguous standards (Cole, 1991). Catholic family ideological practices, thus, were reinforced by women's identities as Catholic wives and mothers.

The social realities for these Catholic mothers included economic vulnerability, primary responsibility for childcare and domestic labour, a permanent and indissoluble marriage bond, the disavowal of contraception, a demand for openness to all possibilities of life, and, in several cases, their own histories of incest and sexual abuse. These realities added

up to tremendous vulnerability both for mothers and for daughters. It is within the context of women's vulnerability that I have attempted to account for the mothers' emotional unavailability and denial in the face of their daughters' experiences of incest. For mothers, taking a stand against such profound violations as incest would have been next to impossible without, first, awareness of the signs and significance of incest, and second, the social supports for, and social sanctioning of, alternative family arrangements. The combined realities, then, of, on the one hand, male privilege and, on the other hand, women's vulnerabilities in Catholic families strongly suggest that Catholic family ideological practices fostered family environments which set up and fostered family violence, in particular, incestuous sexual abuse.

Chapter Eight

Incest and Catholic Sexual Ideology

The only "place" in which the self-giving in its whole truth [i.e., sexual expression] is made possible is marriage (Pope John Paul II, 1981, p. 25).

In many ways I divorce God and Catholicism....I have to divorce what the church says from my relationship with God. I've learned that God is not anti-sexual, and God doesn't judge us sexually in the same way the church does. -- Faye

Knowing that sex was such a loaded issue made it impossible. I felt it was impossible to go to my parents for help. I thought I would be punished and blamed. -- Maya

There's no way there's enough time to convey the guilt they [parents, teachers, nuns and priests] were able to put on us. They meant well, they really believed what they were saying. -
- Mary

I think the church does have a role in saying what's morally wrong. It's just that I disagree with their perception of what's morally wrong. --Faye

VIII.i Introduction:

Catholic ideology has consistently paid pronounced attention to sexuality and to prescriptions about sexual behaviour. It is common knowledge that sexuality is not a neutral subject for Catholics. According to Catholic ideology, sexuality is morally appropriate in one forum alone: heterosexual, monogamous, indissoluble marriage. For Catholics, this has meant denying or actively preventing sexual expression among people who are unmarried, lesbian, gay, divorced or members of religious orders. A metaphor for

Catholic sexual ideology comes to mind as I think about a favourite film of my younger siblings, Walt Disney's production of Aladdin. In the film the genie describes his situation: he has immense cosmic powers but "itty-bitty living space". Sexuality, according to Catholic sexual ideology, is similar. It has immense power but "itty-bitty living space" because its expression must be contained safely within marriage. In this chapter I draw on the interview data and textual analysis to explore the rupture between women's sexual experiences, especially their experiences of incest, and Catholic sexual ideology. Throughout the following sections, I cite interview excerpts to support my claim that Catholic sexual ideological practices and mechanisms fostered a culture which supported incest. Although I primarily explore incest as a point of rupture, I also explore related aspects of women's sexuality in these families. The first section outlines two main tenets of Catholic sexual ideology: first, that sexuality be expressed only between married couples; and second, that women are morally inferior and in need of redemption. Next I explore the forms of Catholic sexual ideology during the pre Vatican II era. I suggest that this era was one in which, for a variety of reasons, women were profoundly alienated from their sexuality and sexual experiences. I then cite excerpts to support the claim that

Catholic sexual ideological practices "domesticated" women. I discuss some excerpts which make links between incest and the myth of women's moral inferiority. Next I identify the lack of language about sexuality, and the incest itself, as a primary mechanism by which the women were alienated from their incest experiences. Finally, I explore Catholic sexual ideology as an impediment to women's sexual fulfilment.

VIII.ii Catholic sexual ideology:

VII.ii.a The "proper" expression of sexuality:

Catholic sexual ideology considers sexual purity outside of marriage, and sexual fidelity within marriage, as the primary means both of remaining within God's "good graces" and of maintaining social respectability. As such Catholic sexual ideology functions as an honour and shame code (Cole, 1991). Throughout the official Catholic texts references were made to the requirement that sexuality be expressed only between consecrated spouses. John Paul's (1981) statement summarizes Catholic sexual ideology:

The only "place" in which the self-giving in its whole truth [i.e. sexual expression] is made possible is marriage. Sexuality, by means of which man and woman give themselves to one another through the acts which are proper and exclusive to spouses, is by no means something purely biological, but concerns the innermost being of the person as such. It is realized in a truly human way only if it is an integral part of the love by which a man and a woman commit themselves totally to one another until death. The total physical self-giving would be a lie if it were not the sign and fruit of a total personal

self-giving, in which the whole person, including the temporal dimension, is present: if the person were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in the future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally (p. 25).

This requirement provides the fundamental groundwork for a complex set of ideological practices and mechanisms.

VIII.ii.b Catholic sexual ideology and the myth of women's moral inferiority:

Mary Daly (1973; 1979) and Uta Ranke Heinemann (1990) argue that Catholic sexual ideological practices have been premised on a belief that women are evil, lustful and, therefore, morally inferior creatures. The medieval witch-hunts, initiated and supported by the Catholic church, stand as a clear example of such practices (Radford Ruether, 1989). Feminist scholars argue that women's morally inferior status (based especially on women's supposed tendency toward sexual infidelity) justified the domestication of women. They emphasize a connection between, on the one hand, the demand that sexuality be expressed only within marriage and, on the other hand, the domestication of women within marriage. Historically, the enforcement of marriage has been the primary way to control women's sexuality and fertility (Daly, 1973, 1979; Heyward, 1989; Radford Ruether, 1989; Ranke Heinemann, 1990). Daly and Ranke Heinemann also suggest that Catholic sexual ideology has upheld the Virgin Mary as the model,

albeit an inimitable one, for Catholic women. Mary contrasts with Eve, the temptress and model of morally inferior womanhood. Mary's paradoxical virginal and maternal status (achieved by miraculous and divine intervention) is an impossible ideal for "real" women to achieve. However, Catholic sexual ideology continues to uphold this contradictory ideal. According to Daly and Ranke Heinemann, the myth of women's moral inferiority has justified horrific violations of women, and, in turn, encouraged women to believe that they are, in fact, morally inferior and deserving of punishment.

John Paul's post Vatican II document provides evidence to suggest that Catholic sexual ideology continues to support the myth of women's moral inferiority and to uphold Mary as a model of "redeemed woman."

God... manifests the dignity of women in the highest form possible, by assuming human flesh from the Virgin Mary, whom the church honours as the mother of God, calling her the new Eve and presenting her as the model of redeemed woman (p. 28).

While the reference to women's need for redemption is brief and subtle, it seems that the myth of women's moral inferiority, with its origins in the Genesis account of creation in the Old Testament, remains as a tenet of Catholic sexual ideology.

VIII.iii Catholic sexual ideology and the rupture in women's experience:

The women's experiences of incest have been identified as significant points of rupture in their everyday/everynight Catholic family histories. The women who shared their life stories with me connected their incest histories to a complex, interconnected set of Catholic sexual ideological practices. These practices played a role in alienating these women from their experiences of incest. The experience of alienation is, for women, the sine qua non of ideological practices and discourses (Smith, 1987, 1990; Walker, 1990).

Identified within this complex set of Catholic sexual practices and discourses were a plethora of rules regulating sexual behaviour; priests and nuns in the institutional church and parochial schools who were granted exceptional authority on matters regarding sexuality; the promotion of celibacy as a morally superior life choice; threats of alienation and abandonment from parents for breaking Catholic sexual codes (especially pregnancy "out of wedlock"); imagery of the divine which reinforced the rightness and rigidity of Catholic sexual ideology; church sacraments (especially holy communion, which demanded chastity and sexual purity, and confession, which functioned as the legitimate way to purify oneself from impious sexual acts and thoughts); and the threat of "going to

hell" for committing mortal sins of a sexual nature. This collection of ideological practices was premised on the tenet that sexuality ought to be expressed only within marriage. Together, these practices mediated the social construction of powerful and distinct forms of social/sexual consciousness to which the families demanded strict adherence.

The incest histories were linked with and compounded by Catholic sexual ideology in interconnected ways. Sexual shame was induced in these families when there arose a breach, or potential breach, in the "established forms of [Catholic social/sexual] consciousness" (Smith, 1990, p. 13). The incest survivors internalized the incestuous abuse as a profound breach of Catholic sexual ideology. The survivors were blamed, and blamed themselves, because Catholic sexual ideology failed to provide the language and concepts to distinguish between consensual and non-consensual sexual activity. Further, Catholic sexual ideology failed to distinguish between sex and abusive sex (the latter being instances in which someone- usually male, usually adult- forces another into sexual activity). In other words, Catholic sexual ideology emphasized individual accountability for breaches of Catholic sexual ideology and failed to recognize that all individuals do not have equivalent control and autonomy in their sexual lives (e.g., in the case of a

father engaging a daughter in non-consensual sex). In addition, the established forms of social/sexual consciousness in these Catholic families were reinforced by the Catholic identities of each family member. The Catholic identities of mothers, fathers and children differed according to the gender-based prescriptions of Catholic family ideology (discussed in previous chapters). Catholic sexual identities encouraged, especially among the incest survivors who internalized blame and shame, a self-regulating adherence to Catholic sexual ideology.

VIII.iii.a Catholic sexual ideology in the pre Vatican II period:

The women identified pre Vatican II Catholic sexual ideological discourses and practices as particularly rigid and damaging. Thus, the incest histories during this period stand as more profound examples of points of rupture. Pre Vatican II practices strictly regulated the sexual behaviour of Catholics. These practices induced guilt for any breach of Catholic sexual ideology and threatened Catholics with an eternity in hell for unforgiven sins.

For all of the women, and especially for Cherrie, Elizabeth, Faye and Mary who were abused during the pre Vatican II period, the incest had profound inward and outward consequences. Maya described the fear of sexuality in her

family and the demand, especially by and for the women in her family, for sexual restraint. The words of her grandmother, who was brought up in the earliest decades of the twentieth century, highlight the fear of sexuality which characterized the pre Vatican II period.

Once my grandmother saw one of my sisters holding hands with her boyfriend...My grandmother gave her a huge lecture about being too young to hold hands with a boy. She said, "You're only nineteen. You're too young to be holding hands with a boy. If you're engaged to be married, well, maybe then."

Confession played a role in increasing the guilt about sexual expression, but it also, especially in the pre Vatican II period, served as the central mechanism by which a young Catholic could alleviate her guilt. Mary told me,

Of course, those were the days when you ran to confession every week. I remember the agony over having kissed a boy very thoroughly, and thinking that was so wrong...I was, oh, I don't know, fourteen...Having to go to confessions over that was such agony...If you didn't go to confessions every week you were giving scandal, if you didn't receive communion you were giving scandal because it meant you were in [a state of] mortal sin.

Pre Vatican II Catholic sexual ideology emphasized the consequences of sexual sin. Catholic theology, grounded in philosophical tenets about the nature of God, the nature of human beings and the purpose for which human beings have been created, historically defined sin as an act committed against God "as manifested in the orders of nature and grace and verbal revelation" and against human persons as they are

called to be by God (Rahner & Vorgrimler, 1965, p. 436). The "orders of nature" reflected the fundamental tenet of Catholic sexual ideology: that sexuality is to be expressed within marriage alone. A sin was considered a "mortal" sin when a person, freely and with complete knowledge, acted against God's will. A mortal sin was a clear rejection of the Creator's will for the basic structures of God's creation and a contradiction of a person's own nature and the purpose of human freedom. A sin was considered a "venial" sin when it was not wholly voluntary because of partial knowledge or restricted freedom, or when it did not fundamentally violate "God's will" (Rahner & Vorgrimler, 1965, p. 436).

Mary reflected on the rupture between Catholic sexual ideology and her experiences in the sexual culture of the pre Vatican II period. Celibacy was promoted as a morally superior life choice and pre-Vatican II Catholicism warned against committing a mortal sin by receiving holy communion in an "unclean body." Sexual purity was required if a Catholic was to receive communion without "giving scandal." She said that "remaining a holy vessel" was central to Catholic identity. Pre Vatican II Catholic sexual ideology's emphasis on personal responsibility for sin also intensified Mary's self-blame. In the following excerpt Mary describes the profound impact of knowing that she was, according to a

priest, responsible for stopping the incest (although at the time it was not identified as such). The priest's response to her disclosure reflected the established forms of consciousness which were characterized by a lack of awareness about abusive sex, and, as a consequence, a lack of awareness about perpetrators' culpability and social power. Thus, Mary internalized the belief that by continuing to "allow" her father to have sex with her, she was committing a mortal sin every time she took holy communion.

Growing up we had this nun [in school] who used to ask us, the boys really, what we were going to be when we grew up. And they'd all stick up their hands and say, "Priests." And all the girls would put up their hands and say, "Sisters." They knew what she would want to hear and a lot of people did take up [religious] vocations in those days...I was one of the ones who would never put my hand up...I know now, in retrospect, it was probably because I didn't feel worthy. That was really sad, because that stuck with me all my life, that feeling of not being worthy...So when it came time to prepare for first communion I was one of those rebels who would give Sister a hard time...I would not partake in the ritual, I wasn't cooperative and she couldn't understand it. So she called my mother and my mother, for some reason right off the bat, got the priest to come to my home and speak to me...So anyway, this priest came in to talk to me. He sat me on his lap and talked to me about communion. And this is when I disclosed for the first time. I told him, "My Daddy and me do bad things together," so I couldn't have communion. And he told me that would not happen anymore, that I musn't let it happen, that I was forgiven...That was fine, for that occasion. But then once I took first communion, he was wrong. It did happen again. Only this time I went to the priest and told him I let it happen again and then I was twice as bad. So it was really a bad background. I was reinforcing it because every time I went to confession I was omitting a big sin. Because it happened over and over. And what's

worse, I went to communion with that sin on my soul. What's worse is that it was deliberate!

From Mary's account it is clear that the lack of consciousness about sexual abuse during the time in which she was being abused made it impossible for her to identify the incest as something for which she was not responsible. This lack of consciousness, therefore, illustrates very clearly the rupture, from the standpoint of this incest survivor, between her experience and the Catholic sexual ideological consciousness and practices of that period. Mary now emphasizes the faith part of Catholicism, rather than Catholicism's rules, which made the pre Vatican II period particularly rigid.

[We learned that Catholicism] is like algebra, like mathematics. We have these two things and if they don't equal that then they're wrong. That's it. There are no little ways around it...I hate that about the church and I don't think it has anything to do with faith. I think it's overdue that we make [the hierarchy] accountable for their rotten language and their authoritarian stuff they say, that it's gospel and it's not! It's the rules we're making into our religion. It's like, where's the faith part of it?

Faye's pre Vatican II experience of incest led to a similarly profound feeling of unworthiness. Faye's feeling that she was "beyond redemption" led her to reject the church altogether.

I really felt irredeemable. Whatever was happening to me was so bad that I was unsaveable, unredeemable. I still remember that feeling. I didn't really know what it was

coming from because I repressed a lot of [the abuse]. But I remember feeling that feeling-- having done something so bad that it was irredeemable...When I left the convent school I left the church. I think, at base, I felt that I was too bad to ever be loved by God.

Faye felt oppressed and stifled by the Catholic sexual culture within her family, the convent school she attended, and the Irish Catholic community in which she was brought up. One way for her to reject Catholicism was to marry a man who hated Catholics.

Being abused by my father I realize really did have a big effect on my relationship to the Catholic Church...I was brought up in the Irish Catholic community in Liverpool which was a very oppressive kind of Catholicism. You know, rigid, legalistic, lots of guilt...and my reaction to that and the fact that I was being abused was to reject the church...I married a man who hated Catholics-- he was Protestant. He hated Catholics, he hated Jews, and I found out later he hated [Native] Indians as well. The main reason I married him was because he *wasn't* Catholic. The worst thing a Catholic woman could do was get pregnant before she was married. The second worst thing a woman could do was marry a Protestant. [So I did.]

During the second focus group we discussed the impact of the second Vatican council regarding Catholic sexual ideology. Mary said she does not believe Vatican II has made much of a difference "when it comes to recognizing that sex is not a dirty word to talk about...It's still all lumped together like a bad act, except under certain conditions, mostly to have children." During this discussion, Mary emphasized that

there must have been pages if you lined up all our rules so no wonder we were so caught up in ritual...We had

such rigidity, and as a survivor that hadn't disclosed that she'd sucked her Dad's penis that day or that she'd slept with him that night or whatever, if you didn't disclose that in confession and you turned around and had communion the next day you were doubly dirty, your soul was totally black. God help you if you died before you confessed because where were you going to go? Straight to hell.

Cherrie responded by saying that, while the pre-Vatican II rigidity helped her to suppress the incest, she feels that the relaxation of rules during the post Vatican II period helped her to remember the incest.

The abuse itself got repressed...Most of the time I left my body, it was me that was observing what was going on. The family I was brought up in the faith was very central to our home; the rosary was said, you wouldn't dream of sitting down and having a meal without the blessing before the meal, you didn't get up from the table until the grace was said. There were very rigid rules. And the schooling was the same way...There were no grey areas...And I think for me because of those rigid rules in the Catholic church and the way I was brought up with them (I don't disagree with them, I just disagree with how rigid they were), I think for me that really helped me to suppress. It was a way of total denial that these things happened. It wasn't until after Vatican II that I started to remember [the abuse].

Mary suggested that in the decades prior to Vatican II, Catholics were encouraged to silently "offer up" their pain and suffering. This practice of keeping silent in the face of suffering stands as a primary example of the way in which Catholic sexual ideology impeded an emergent awareness of the rupture created out of women's experiences of Catholic sexual practices.

You got an extra indulgence if you offered up your pain, your sadness. Or if you wanted something and didn't get it you offered that up for the souls in purgatory. "Offer it up." The only thing is it wouldn't count if you talked about it. You had to keep it private...Martyrs. I call it the martyr syndrome.

With specific reference to the interplay of between the Christian "virtue" of suffering and recovery from childhood sexual abuse, Sheila Redmond (1989) suggests that

the justification or honouring of suffering can have a negative impact on the victims of child sexual abuse. The value placed on suffering in the Christian context has at least three important aspects. First, since the Christian God is just and merciful, if one has suffered, one has sinned. Second, suffering and repentance teach humility and are the way back to forgiveness from this Christian god. Third, martyrdom, which is an extreme form of suffering, holds a special place of honour with the Christian tradition (p. 74).

The social forms of consciousness in these Catholic families esteemed, especially among girls, chastity and sexual restraint. Mary said her mother made it clear that she expected her daughters to remain chaste until marriage. "There were a few girls around who got pregnant [as teenagers] and her way of making a statement was to say 'If that ever happened to you'-- I don't know if she said I wasn't welcome back home or she did not ever want to hear that [becoming pregnant out of wedlock] would happen to me."

Elizabeth talked about the key role her mother played in the transmission of shame about sexuality. During the first focus group discussion she told us,

It was my mother who behaved dysfunctionally sexually. She's the one who taught us to hate our bodies... When I think of the Catholic church and the values we were brought up with I have a hard time connecting my father to those values. It was really my mother who was the tyrant.

Maya, raised in the late 1960s and 1970s by parents who were dedicated to pre Vatican II ideological practices, stated that belonging to the church (attending mass, being a lector at mass and singing in the choir) helped her to feel redeemed from her past. During the second focus group discussion Maya emphasized that looking to the church for "redemption" leads to a false sense of self-worth.

It made me feel virtuous and partly served to redeem my past. I had a strong feeling of needing to be virtuous and I still have it to an extent. Even now the vestiges of it are still with me. It's almost prudish that it's important to be this way. It makes me critical of others who don't measure up to Catholic standards. The other side of the coin is that when you need to be virtuous and you don't measure up, you increase your self-criticism...So, going to church for redemption, it's both good and bad because it does make you feel good and virtuous but if you can't keep that act up all the time then your self-criticism is all the stronger. You have the whole institution behind you, telling you what the ideal is... I think it's kind of a false sense of self-worth. A real sense of self-worth says, "I'm a good person whether I go to church this week or not."

VIII.iii.b The myth of women's moral inferiority:

The significance of the survivors' internalized guilt is important in light of the Catholic ideological tenet that women are to look to Mary, the "new Eve," as a model of "redeemed woman" (John Paul II, 1981, p. 28). The myth of

women's moral inferiority has roots in the Genesis myth of creation, a myth which justifies women's guilt and responsibility for the fall of "man". Faye's father justified the incest by comparing Faye and her father to Eve and Adam. From almost infancy onward, she was forced to act as a mutually responsible partner in the incest.

I was thinking about the garden of Eden and what an important myth that is. It was in the garden of Eden and it was Eve that tempted Adam and in a sense ruined the whole human race. So I think that's where a lot of our women's guilt comes from. My father had this kind of fantasy where we were both creatures in the garden of Eden, both innocent children enjoying each other's bodies. The horror of it for me [is that] I felt I had to act like I wanted this just as much as he did and I hated him more for that. I think I got the idea that, of course it was my fault, because, of course, it was Eve's fault.

In the aftermath of Elizabeth's first experience of sexual abuse (in which she was assaulted by a family acquaintance), she told us about her profound need to purify herself. She described how she mimicked the saints as told in popular Catholic children's books. Her need to purify herself was linked with her sense of culpability in the abuse.

At the age of four I was very badly abused. Not long after that and I'm not sure where that was coming from, it might sound utterly ridiculous, but a child of about five or six at the most had this desperate need to purge, to be pure, to be clean...I remember the heavy guilt feeling as a child, although I had been vindicated and helped through that first abuse, you know...Somehow or other there was another message. [The abuse] was hidden...Obviously, if you hide it it's bad. I remember during the lenten days we always had to do something,

some little penance to purify ourselves. And I remember a desperate need to really purge myself, to really purify myself. I really felt dirty. I remember tying a knotted belt around my waist-- that's pretty young! Now I was imitating the old stories of the saints that you'd hear. To me that was the way that I could be pure, that I could be okay. And I knew that I had to hurt myself to be okay.

Mary, after being raped by a school principal in the early 1960s, internalized the blame.

When I came to, I had a lot of shame. I didn't even blame him. I was totally to blame. I didn't know at that time that I'd been raped repeatedly by my Dad. The principal said if he'd known I was a virgin he wouldn't have touched me. But he said I was no virgin, he checked me out. That **totally** insulted and embarrassed me...not knowing that I was not a virgin [because of the incest]...I said, "I'm very much a virgin. I've never been with a man." It's interesting that my reaction was one of such shame because a more natural one would have been some anger.

Catholicism's emphasis on woman-blaming and self-blame during the pre Vatican II period further alienated Mary from her experiences. The forms of social/sexual consciousness at that time led her to believe that being raped was an appropriate punishment for having abandoned her role as a good, young Catholic. The message seemed to be: if you fail to live up to the expectations of Catholic ideology, you are deserving of punishment. Thus, the social forms of consciousness as constructed by Catholic ideological practices helped to alienate Mary not only from her first experiences of violation, the incest with her father, but from the violations

that followed.

It was no time 'til I met some gink who was going to take advantage of me. Ironically, I disclosed to him that I had been raped and that was what cut me off. Like I had no feelings, sexuality feelings. I felt that I was neutral. And so he was going to prove to me that I could feel. It was really like date rape. He'd give me drinks and just do it. And it would be horrible and it would be painful and emotionally disgusting...**I thought I deserved the punishment. I was convinced.** The whole ordeal was a punishment. It was painful, there was no pleasure to it. It was what I deserved as a young Catholic who had drank too much, left home, left her siblings abandoned, you name it. I could list a half dozen-- it's a matter of choice which one you pick.

VIII.iii.c Catholic sexual ideology and the domestication of women:

Three separate accounts from these women's lives demonstrate a link between Catholic sexual ideology and the domestication of women within marriage. These instances of domestication emerged as a clear point of rupture along the line of fault. Catholic sexual ideology placed much greater emphasis and value on maintaining its "honour and shame" code than it did on ensuring women's happiness, dignity and safety.

Mary's second pregnancy "out of wedlock" in the 1960s was the primary catalyst in her marriage. It was a pattern familiar to many Catholic couples who became pregnant outside of marriage. The priest involved insisted that Mary and Frank get married as a way of redeeming Mary's honour. Emphasis was placed on maintaining Catholic sexual ideology above all, despite the profound consequences. The events leading up to

Mary's engagement and marriage show the power of priests as mediators in the social construction of Catholic family and sexual ideology.

I think it was two lonely people, we weren't in love at all. But one thing led to another with us and one night we wound up having intercourse. Wouldn't you know, I was pregnant! Very fertile people this whole family, good at producing children! Anyway, I knew that he didn't want to get married. Being a good Catholic I went to a priest and told him. He said, "You'll have to honour that. You'll have to get married." And he's dead now or would I ever give him a tongue lashing. He said, "Make sure you're right and then I'll look him up." The priest went up to the school where Frank was teaching and told the principal he had to see him. He said to Frank, "What are you going to do to redeem this woman's honour?" The priest just said he owed this to me, he'd have to marry me. Of course, Frank said, "Ya, I'll marry her." What can you say? Here's a priest with shotgun to your head! Ohh! Isn't that terrible?

There had not been any pleasure for me [in the sex] because I was still the most neutralized sexual person one could have been. I often wondered if I had any sexual parts in my body. I just had no feeling sexually. Everything was so locked tight. So we had some struggle of a marriage.

Although, after many years of struggle, Mary and Frank have a wonderful marriage today ("We're like newlyweds!"), Mary is critical of the priest's insistence on marriage without finding out what they both really wanted and needed in that situation.

Content told me that in the late 1960s her (then teenaged) sister was forced to get married when she became pregnant. Clearly, her parents' endorsement of Catholic

sexual ideology focused more on the shame that would be brought upon the family than the dignity and protection of their daughter. Content's sister has just left that violent marriage after twenty-five years.

Now it's twenty-five years down the road and she just left him now, three kids later, and she left him. He was beating her, and I think it was known at the time that she married him. He had a problem, he drank a lot, he was drinking a lot at the time. My parents and my mother's side of the family mostly felt strongly that she had to get married because of the shame [that pregnancy out of wedlock would bring to the family].

Courage tells about the guilt she felt, and the shame her family experienced, when she broke the Catholic sexual code by becoming pregnant as a teenager.

When I was pregnant with Sarah, my parents told me I was a disgrace to the family. They sent me away to a place for unwed mothers. It was run by nuns in Sydney. They made everybody feel like they were sinners-- we used to cry in our beds at night. My boyfriend told me he wanted me to keep the baby but that he'd let me decide. I had to call and ask permission from my parents if I could go back home. We got married ten months later, just so I could get out of the house. Living together was out of the question...We had no choice but to get married.

VIII.iii.d Secrecy, silence and the lack of language about sexuality and incest:

For many of the women, the lack of language about sexuality has been identified as a painful point of rupture. As Smith (1987) argues, ruling ideology, in this case, Catholic sexual ideology, has depended upon and taken for granted the silence of those who do not participate in the

creation of ruling relations and who do not benefit by them. The women described ways in which the denial and silence about sexuality discouraged them from identifying the incest as abusive, and discouraged them from disclosing to non-abusing parents and care-givers. Faye said that for her, the aspect of Catholic culture which most supported the incest was the tendency toward secrecy about sexuality. "Growing up in a Catholic culture, which I did...the values and beliefs of that culture may have, oh, how would you call it?-- really supported the secrecy more than anything else about incest." Mary said her experience of incest has made her despise secrets. "I despise secrets. If I could eliminate anything in a child's life it would be the necessity of having these secrets."

Maya told me that at least two things affected her ability to speak about the incest. The first was Maya's father's sexual attitudes, which she felt made him an unapproachable and undesirable confidante. "Dad has real issues about sexuality. [If he had known about the incest] he would have freaked out or blown up, gotten really upset and disturbed." The second was a profound feeling of asexuality that pervaded her home.

I think I had an idea that what was going on with my uncle was something embarrassing to talk about, like any type of sexuality or couples was kind of just not talked

about. Probably partly because my parents didn't have a really good relationship...I think I had the idea that any kind of sexuality wasn't something that I was expected to have or people in my family weren't supposed to have or show or do. It would have been too threatening for my family to see me as a sexual person. So that was a seed in myself that never sprouted. They didn't have to kill it, it didn't even sprout! That was hard for my parents to deal with too...The positive reinforcement I got when I was growing up seemed always to be based on one main thing and that was my intelligence and how well I did at school and how well I performed. Now my self-worth is built upon too small a foundation.

In connection with Maya's history of asexuality, Maya fears her family's reprisal for expressing herself sexually. So she leads a kind of "double life." This clearly illustrates that Catholic sexual ideology not only played into her silence about the incest during her childhood, but has fostered silence about healthy sexual relationships in her adult life.

"Double life." That really rings a bell because...I wouldn't ever let [people] know that I have a lover and we're sexually active and...we're not married. Also with my family lots of members of my family don't know. I'm pretty good at acting like this really good Catholic--because I feel that if they knew they would really hate me.

Several women described how the lack of language about sexuality, and incest in particular, made it difficult to communicate what was going on. For Content, the moment of consciousness occurred while watching a program about abuse on television. Thus, the fruit of other women's consciousness-

raising enabled her to name what happened to her.

I don't know why I never went to anybody. Maybe back then I didn't know what it was. Maybe I didn't understand what was happening to me-- why he was doing it and why it was just me...I think maybe I was seventeen, eighteen when I realized. I think I started seeing it more on TV, I started reading more about it and I was thinking, "That's me. Hey, that happened to me. I guess that wasn't supposed to happen." It's funny, I just realized that.

Maya told me that she did try to speak with her mother.

All I said was, probably when I was seven or eight, I was trying to give her some idea of what was going on but I wasn't able to frame it in terms of me being a victim. I was trying to say "We're more than friends" or "Something is going on with us." But she didn't pick up any clues as to any unhealthiness that was going on...So I guess there was no model, no precedent for talking about anything about sexuality. Think of trying to talk to someone about outer space travel, something they never would have done or experienced, and try to talk to them about it. You don't even have the language really.

Elizabeth described how she knew intuitively that the way her father was treating her was not right but had no words which would allow her to set boundaries between her father and herself. As Elizabeth was abused during the pre Vatican II period, it is not surprising that she and others lacked the language to describe and put a stop to these violations.

I would have told you long before I remembered [the incest with my Dad] how I used to get annoyed at my father for always feeling my ass and yet it didn't connect that he was violating me...I wouldn't have known to call it violating me then at all. I just knew, "It's not okay for you to do that to me- it doesn't feel right." I told him to stop. My mother told him to stop. But it was never recognized as violating. It really

wasn't. And yet it was recognized as not right.

VIII.iii.e Catholic ideology and women's lack of sexual fulfilment:

The women described a variety of ways in which Catholicism's sexual ideology prevented mothers and daughters in Catholic families from attaining sexual fulfilment in their relationships. Mary believes that Catholicism stifled positive feelings about sexuality and encouraged her to feel ashamed of her body.

Every time I had to have intercourse I cried and I was very good at hiding it because I knew it wouldn't do very much for his ego to know that. You know, good Catholics have intercourse in the dark, so he wouldn't have known...It just felt so dirty and unwanted and it was just a one-sided affair. It was man-in and man-out. To be fair to him he was young and green and knew nothing about lovemaking. And he was just doing his best. He was against an obstacle and a half, there's no two ways about it. So it's no wonder the first fifteen years were hell.

I think if there was a way that I was gypped in my life, in the biggest way, it was with my sexual fulfilment. Certainly the Catholic heritage stifles an awful lot of spiritual growth because in the past we were so into being ashamed of even feeling normal feelings. I know there was a day as a teenager when I had normal sexual feelings-- but running to confessions the very next day about it! Put that in perspective, eh? Put those feelings away! Say penance and do some acts of holy charity. Holy Frig! You know with that kind of repetition, almost brainwashing...I went through so much of my life being ashamed of my body, and I had a normal body. I know in retrospect, but I didn't grow up feeling that. I am no longer ashamed of my body but I definitely blame our church for an awful lot of that body shame...It's something to do with being that holy vessel, you know, not taking in the host in an unclean body.

Maya told me how her sexuality was denied and stifled when she was growing up.

I used to tell people I was asexual--like an amoeba. I would reproduce by spores or by budding! So, the family culture was denial of sexuality. When I finally did start dating [in my twenties] my relationships [with men] were always problematic...I guess my mother modelled this type of asexuality for me. My mother upholds the basic Catholic family value of all the women in her family--that you shouldn't sleep with a man before you're married because men are basically at the mercy of their hormones and you have to guard your virginity until you get married.

Courage believes her mother received little sexual pleasure in her marriage.

One night my Mom's sister was talking about sex, something about an orgasm, and my mother said, "What's an orgasm?" I said, "Oh, my God, Mom! You've never had an orgasm?" She was getting sort of angry because we were all talking and laughing and she didn't know what we were talking about. She said, "You know what your father was like...He'd get drunk, jump into bed, do it, fart and roll over." It was almost like being raped most times. A couple of times he did rape her. I remember her crying, telling him to get off of her and stuff. I think if Mom didn't have such strong denial she would have cracked up by now.

Jackie told me that her family did not feel comfortable talking about sex. She identified her mother as a rigid upholder of Catholic sexuality.

There was a lot of shame about sex. I guess it was weird because although it wasn't talked about there were underlying messages - that it shouldn't be talked about, that it was dirty, cheap...I went to a party once with some friends and there was a guy there that I really liked. I remember he gave me a hickey that night and the next day my Mom looked at me and knew what it was. I felt so low and trashy and cheap. She made me feel like

it was the worst thing I could have done.

Thus, a point of rupture emerged for Jackie as her sexual behaviour left her feeling that she was blameworthy and deserving of punishment. Within such a sexual climate it is perhaps not surprising that Jackie never went to her mother for protection from incest with her step-father.

VIII.iv Conclusion:

The women's incest histories were linked with and compounded by Catholic sexual ideology in many significant ways. The fundamental tenet of Catholic sexual ideology, that sexuality be expressed only within marriage, laid the groundwork for a strictly regulated and complex honour and shame code for appropriate Catholic sexual behaviour and sexual identity. The survivors identified an awareness of a profound rupture between, on the one hand, Catholic sexual ideological consciousness and practices and, on the other hand, their experiences of incest. The established forms of Catholic social/sexual consciousness in these families were mediated and shaped by the social construction of sexual shame and denial of sexuality. A pattern of "victim-blaming" was a common manifestation of Catholic sexual ideology. Within this Catholic sexual culture the women learned to blame themselves because Catholic sexual ideology failed to provide the language to distinguish between consensual and non-consensual

sexual activity (i.e., the difference between sex and abusive sex). Catholic social/sexual consciousness dramatically limited the survivors' ability to identify the incest as abusive and to seek protection from further abuse. Thus, Catholic sexual ideology played a significant role in creating a culture which fostered and maintained incestuous sexual relations.

Chapter Nine

Healing the Points of Rupture:
Reconstructing Gender and Sexual Relations in Families

All members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building day by day the communion of persons, making the family "a school of deeper humanity" (John Paul II, 1981, p. 28).

I think to reconstruct the family it would take whole generations of reconstructing to make things better. -- Maya

The Catholic church is not my redeemer. Christ is. God is. The church is men. The church has nothing to do with my redemption, absolutely nothing. -- Elizabeth

A nun once said to me, "To be healed you have to go back to the place where you were hurt." I also think that part of the reason that I'm in the church now, and probably the reason that most of us are, is because we're called to heal the church as much as the church is there to heal us. -- Faye

IX.i Introduction:

In this final chapter I draw on my analysis of the interviews and the Catholic texts as well as my own experience as a woman and a Catholic. My goal is to create a vision of family life which has the potential to heal the "points of rupture" for women and children (especially female children) in Catholic families. The process of revisioning took shape as I reflected on the ways that the women creatively reconstructed their gender, sexual and Catholic identities in the wake of their healing from the trauma of incest. I acknowledge that I am indebted to a number of feminist

scholars, cited throughout the thesis, who have previously identified Catholic ideology as a vehicle for the maintenance of patriarchal relations.

As I concluded the thesis I was reminded of the metaphor of a conceptual web of theory, outlined in chapter two, which has guided and shaped the thesis writing process. Sandra Harding's (1991; 1993) and Dorothy Smith's (1987; 1990) works represented the two primary strands on the conceptual web. I used Harding and Smith to justify my grounding in the standpoint of women because I believe that from such a standpoint we can best critically evaluate our dominant patriarchal order. There is a clear connection between the women's struggles to heal from incest and Harding's and Smith's primary tenet: that struggles against oppression provide an epistemologically privileged vantage point from which to view social relations. These struggles provide important clues about how gender and sexual relations can become more empowering for women and children.

I recalled also the socialist feminist theorists whose works represented additional strands on the conceptual web. They helped me to focus on Catholic ideology's endorsement of a gendered division of labour as a vehicle for the maintenance of patriarchal ruling relations. In addition, as I reflected on the fact that all of the women I interviewed are

courageous, empowered women, I recalled Sally Cole's (1991) and Gillian Walker's (1990) insistence that women are **actors**, not passive victims of patriarchal ruling relations: the women I interviewed have acted, in powerful and creative ways, against Catholic family and sexual ideology.

In this chapter I highlight the women's suggestions for healing the three main points of rupture identified in chapters six through eight respectively: male privilege, women's vulnerability, and a rigid regulation of sexuality in families. The chapter ends with a return to the theme, identified in the introductory chapter, of social justice. I pose questions about the extent to which the standpoint of women might both influence Catholic social teaching and challenge Catholic family and sexual ideology.

IX.ii Reconstructing gender and sexual identities: A process of spiritual healing

The aim of conducting a feminist sociology from the standpoint of women is to make visible a line of fault "between ideology and the actualities it glosses [i.e., conceals]" (Smith, 1987, pp. 175-176). In this thesis project we found that Catholic family and sexual ideology dissociated women from the actualities of their everyday/everynight lives, especially their experiences of incest. Most of the women who shared their stories with me, however, found healing through

some form of spiritual expression which countered and transformed Catholic ideological practices, symbols and beliefs. In other words, having reflected on and struggled against Catholic ideology, the women have created a "new language" (Smith, 1990, p. 11), one based on the actualities of their everyday/everynight lives rather than ideological descriptions which gloss over and misrepresent those actualities (Smith, 1987).

The women brought up in the pre Vatican II period most easily found healing from incest through the Catholic church. The women brought up in the post Vatican II period were less likely to use the Catholic church as an avenue for healing and more likely to use informal expressions of spirituality. Three of the women brought up in the pre Vatican II period, Mary, Faye and Elizabeth, did, however, go through periods of abandoning, or threatening to abandon, the church. Yet they have returned to participate actively in the life of the church. Mary attends mass on a regular basis and is active in the music ministry of her parish. Faye belonged to an order of nuns. Although she is no longer a member of the order, Faye continues to attend mass and participate in parish life. Elizabeth, who recently joined an order of nuns, is active in the community life of her order. Each in their own way, these women are struggling to reconcile the often conflicting

realities associated with healing from incest and being Catholic. Mary told me about her struggle.

I'm still in the struggle about being Catholic. Sometimes I think it's like life insurance, in case this faith is the right one then I'll stick with it. "All the Catholics stand to the right." I don't mean to poke fun. I don't know what it is about this faith....There was an angry stage I had and at that point it would have been tempting to just leave.

Faye abandoned the Catholic church for ten years. She shared with us, in a powerful and moving way, how the church has since fostered her healing from incest.

I had no desire to go back to the Catholic church-- it never, never entered my mind. It was just abhorrent to me. And then I got to the point where I was getting into an early forties crisis and my relationship with God was very important in my life but I'd hit a kind of a wall or a plateau and it wasn't going anywhere...So I really prayed about what I should do next. I went to quite a number of Protestant churches but none of them seemed to be what I was looking for....The first time I went to mass [after many years] I had the most incredible experience. It was like that whole feeling of really being loved, it was like a feeling of coming home. It was so dramatic, the whole thing, that I couldn't talk myself out of [becoming a Catholic again]. A nun once said to me, "To be healed you have to go back to the place where you were hurt." And that always stuck in my mind. And that gave me an understanding, to some extent, of why I'd been drawn back into it. It was like I couldn't get the same kind of healing except in the place where I'd been hurt. I don't think the Catholic church is any better for people than any other kind of church or any other religion. It's just a matter of what will fit for what you need.

I've found the church healing in a number of different ways. I do find God in the church now and again, not all the time, now and again, in things like sacraments and the mass and so on. Mostly I think I've found the church healing through the people who have helped me. A couple

of priests I've found really, really helpful. About incest, too. But I also think that part of the reason that I'm in the church now, and probably the reason that most of us are, is because we're called to heal the church as much as the church is there to heal us. And as people who've been harmed by the church in many ways then we're the suppressed group you talk about in your research. We have more insight, so we can help heal the church in a way the hierarchy can't because they don't have the same perspective.

In healing from incest, Faye has identified a distinction between her present relationship with God and the God of her pre Vatican II childhood. She has creatively transformed the oppressive, anti-sexual image of "Father God." She told me about the contrast between her present relationship with God and her relationship to the God of her childhood.

When I was growing up God was the judge. It's just the opposite now. I'm past feeling that God would disapprove of me as a sexual person. I had to work at that because I can remember that initially I was afraid that God would disapprove of me sexually or disapprove of sexual activity. God made sexual activity! But I grew up in a very anti-sexual culture, and that was part of the Catholicism that I grew up in. It was very, very anti-sexual. And in many ways I divorce God and Catholicism....I have to divorce what the church says from my relationship with God. I've learned that God is not anti-sexual, and God doesn't judge us sexually in the same way the church does.

Elizabeth told me that despite a period of abandonment, she has returned to embrace the church. She now appreciates the sacramentality of Catholicism and the opportunity to build community with other spiritually minded women.

I had a period of about ten years myself where I just completely abandoned the church and all its teaching. It

was just, "I can't be bothered any more." And I think it was a period of my life that I had to grow and I had to do it another way. And the other way brought me back. Right now [being Catholic, and being a nun] is a source of strength and courage...it's not just being Catholic, it's being spiritual more than anything else.

There is something about the Catholic faith that is really wonderful. It's very sacramental. I think the focus on ritual is part of it, too...Maybe covenantal is more the word than sacramental. There's something very bonding about the Catholic church. And I think the rituals are so rich that that's what makes it tangible for us. You can almost feel it-- there's a richness to it that keeps you in touch spiritually with all of it.

Elizabeth emphasized that her healing has come from her relationship with God and not from her involvement with the institutional church. She made a clear distinction between "the Catholic church," a fallible, man-made institution, and the Catholic faith, a medium for communing with God and building community. "The Catholic church is not my redeemer. Christ is. God is. The church is men. The church has nothing to do with my redemption, absolutely nothing."

As part of her healing from incest, Mary has reconstructed her identity as a Catholic. While speaking with me, she used religious imagery in a beautiful way to describe her healing process.

You lived to be a saint [when I was young]- that was your aim. You wouldn't say that out loud, that you wanted to be a saint, but that was our aim. That's why we had to be so pure. Pure vessels....We've been burned at the stake in our way, anyone that's been burned sexually. Like myself, I sometimes feel that I've been so damaged and I've almost gone through some kind of maintenance

process through most of my life, but now the bandaid's off and I don't even need a bandaid anymore. I'm at the stage where I'm-- I guess I feel like the warrior stage has come, like I am the Joan of Arc. I have been burnt but I've resurrected.

The following recollection stands as a powerful example of the way in which Catholic identity has been central to Mary's life and her healing from incest, perhaps especially because the social construction of her identity as a Catholic took place during the pre Vatican II period. I also cite it as an example of Mary's profound need to reconcile her changed gender and sexual identities with her identity as a Catholic in the wake of her healing from incest. This excerpt is especially powerful when we recall Mary's early childhood experiences with the sacraments of confession and communion (cited in chapter eight). Mary was able to exorcise her guilt and free herself from the "trappings of the church" by creatively renegotiating the meaning of Confession.

When I did this soul searching about the church one thing that came up through counselling was the problem with the whole act of forgiveness. It was no good for my Jewish counsellor to say to me, "You're forgiven." It just wasn't working. It didn't assure me. So when I went to [a priest who was a special friend] I explained that I needed to go through the actual ritual of Confession because somewhere it was stuck in there that I wasn't truly forgiven. I just knew that I went to communion over and over again with sin on my soul. So he asked permission first to read something that was very comforting. And I'm really sorry that I didn't tape the whole thing because it was that healing. And what he read to me was beautiful. And then he asked me to help him walk through this with him because he didn't know the

steps. Could I be his guide? And he asked permission for everything, from putting on his [vestments]. Did he have to do this? I said, "Yes! I want the works. This is how I see this, almost as an exorcism. You're getting rid of everything negative that's still in there." So he went through it just as if I were a young child and it was beautiful. And the tears that I did expel were totally of joyful freedom, there was no sorrow. It was wonderful, it was not a morbid, depressing experience, it was wonderful. And I felt like I was free of the trappings of the church ever since. And I could stand back and really see politics for what it is, and the structure, see them as separate from the people that I know within it who are doing good things. I don't confuse those two anymore. So it was a very healthy experience.

Mary, then, also made a clear distinction between the "trappings" and "politics" of the institutional church (which promotes Catholic ideology) and her spiritual experience as a member of the Catholic faith.

Of the four women brought up during the post Vatican II period, Courage and Maya were able to identify, in limited ways, healing aspects of the church. Courage told me that, although she no longer attends mass, her "faith in a spiritual being" has been a central part of her healing. Courage was able to gain some healing in the church through relationships with two supportive priests. Her experience with members of the institutional church points to a continuum on which Catholics can experience and express their spirituality. In other words, being Catholic does not have to mean formally participating in church rituals and sacraments. In an

informal way, then, Courage was able to benefit from some of the healing aspects of Catholicism, especially the acts of communing with God and of being forgiven.

A priest [who died recently] helped me to come to my understanding of God. He explained that I don't have to go to church to have a relationship with God. Even to have a communion with God I don't need to go to church. At first I was threatened by him being in the church. I think if he were still alive he'd be one of the people trying to make changes in the church. Another guy, a priest, he's hardly like a priest, I had my confession done in his car, which was okay by me. Both of those priests said you don't have to go to church to have an understanding of who God is.

During the second focus group discussion, Maya emphasized that she abides by only those aspects of church life which promote her own healing. For instance, she cited the Christian motto "love your neighbour as yourself" as one which helps her to heal relationships with family members, friends and with herself. She rejects many Catholic tenets, such as those opposing divorce and the entrance of women into the priesthood.

Two of the younger women have found no healing in the church. Jackie emphatically stated that she had no desire to be part of the Catholic church. Content told me,

I've had no healing from the church. People ask me all the time why I don't go to church and I think, "Why should I go to church to prove that I believe in God?" I don't want the church to control me. And I don't want people to think I'm not a good person because I don't go to church.

Although the group of post Vatican II women have in large part rejected formal participation in the Catholic church, all except Jackie identified spirituality as an integral part of healing from incest.

Several women identified their participation in this research process as an avenue for healing. I cited several excerpts in chapter four to support this claim. I consider this healing a vital component of our participatory action methodology. When women move along in their healing process they are better able to change the patterns of their own relationships and to act, more generally, against abusive relations in society. In summary, the women said, first, that the process of sharing with other women helped them to make connections between Catholic family culture and their own experiences of incest. Second, they felt empowered by belonging to a "circle" of women sought to heal from similar childhood experiences to their own. Moreover, because the similarities in their childhood experiences included not only incest but also having grown up in a Catholic family culture, there was an added dimension of solidarity among the women. Faye expressed a sense of relief about being able to discuss not only her incest history among a group of incest survivors but also how the Church played a role in this history. Third, some said that the process of reading their own words, in the

form of interview transcripts, made their healing process more tangible and real. Maya, for instance, also told me that participating in the research project moved her to unequivocally identify herself as an incest survivor, whereas prior to participating she had minimized her experience and been reluctant to claim the "label" for herself.

IX.iii Reconstructing family life from the standpoint of women: Structural and cultural change for challenging male control

The women I interviewed suggested ways in which families could become more empowering for women and children. I cite here those excerpts which refer explicitly to the Catholic church (i.e., what I have theoretically identified throughout this thesis as Catholic family and sexual ideology). The first collection of excerpts is a response to chapters six and seven in which I connected, respectively, male privilege and women's vulnerability in families to the histories of incest. The second collection of excerpts is a response to chapter eight in which I connected Catholicism's rigid regulation of sexuality to the histories of incest.

IX.iii.a Gender relations in families:

Faye told me that she would like to see the Catholic church "do away" with hierarchical family relations. She said, "I can see how the church adopting a kind of hierarchical structure and a patriarchy reinforces the family

having the same kind of structure, a kind of patriarchy in the family." She identified male privilege and women's vulnerability in families as the primary building blocks of hierarchical relations. She is frustrated by Pope John Paul II's insistence that women ought to play the same roles in families that they have always played. At the same time, she expressed concern about devaluing the traditional work of women and suggested that a structural economic change should be brought about so that women are paid a living wage to perform those necessary tasks.

I think the Pope is fighting a losing battle [when it comes to keeping women in their "natural" place]. I have very mixed feelings about that because I think women who want to be mothers and want to raise kids should feel that this is a really valid kind of choice. But again, I think it should be a choice. I wouldn't want to see that elevated as the only role for women. But I'd certainly like to see it elevated as a more important role for women. A lot of women who really want to stay home just feel dismissed by society. Many women talk about how devalued they feel because they're not out working and they don't have a profession. And that's wrong, too. I think it's a very valuable role. And some women are very good at it. If our society was different and we actually paid women to stay home for being mothers then it would be a real, valid choice for them and they could choose to leave then and still get paid for what they're doing. That's what I'd like to see. But we'd have to restructure our whole social network. If we really valued children that's what we would do. But we don't value children enough.

Elizabeth suggested that gender roles need to be redefined for both men and women if we are going to have families which promote mutuality and in which all people are

empowered.

The church is also imposing on men. It's imposing on men a system that says, "You have to be the powerful one. You have to be the boss. You have to demand respect." That's not mutuality. They're teaching [men] power. Abusive power. So the church is not playing with a full deck when it comes to men. We keep saying, "Poor women, poor women." But men have these dominant roles and half of them don't want them, they don't know what to do with them-- head of a household, the strong one. They're not even allowed to grieve and weep. Still a lot of them don't know how to do that. So they're not giving them a chance to be mutual in partnership and in relationship. They're still saying, "You have to be the dominant one." And that's where the church goes wrong. And that's where we go wrong when we say, "It's just the women who are suffering in the church." It's easy to focus on that because we've suffered longer.

Elizabeth identified male privilege as a "carte blanche" for men to sexually abuse.

When it comes to incest and the church, we say that the role of the men has been taught as the dominant and powerful ones and that it's been very easy to slip into incest because the church has almost given them a carte blanche in that sense. They weren't saying, "You have a right to go and sexually abuse," but they were saying, "You have a right." Like when you get married your wife is supposed to fulfil all your needs. It's your right as a husband to expect this. That's not teaching them mutuality and respect. That's teaching them dominance.

IX.iii.b Sexuality and family living:

Faye said the church is more open today to discussing sexuality, especially in light of the sexual abuse perpetrated by members of the clergy. She feels, however, that there is not enough emphasis on defining and identifying abusive sexuality in families.

I think the church is changing in the sense that they'll actually talk about things like sexual abuse but they don't talk about it enough. It's mentioned occasionally, you know, in homilies and so on, but not nearly as much as it should be. The church has been forced to deal with sexual abuse because of the sexual abuse by clergy...But God knows how many times I sit in mass and think, "There are all kinds of families, I know statistically that there are all kinds of kids who are sitting at mass who are being abused." And I wish they'd have more homilies just saying it's wrong, in families. They're so concerned with supporting "the family", wanting the family to stay strong. I think it's better than it was and I think if they changed the emphasis on keeping families together and keeping families strong, if they emphasized more the dignity and integrity of the person and children as being more important than any kind of image of the family [it would be better still].

She cited the example of her own sexually abusive marriage to show that sexual violence can occur within the only type of relationship morally sanctioned by the church: a heterosexual, monogamous marriage.

I wish the church would emphasize the fact that sex can be abusive in any relationship, even a monogamous marriage can be abusive. I mean, certainly when I look back on my own marriage it was sexually abusive. And that, according to the church, was the only relationship in which sex was okay.

Faye also suggested going back to a definition of sin which would recognize how abusive sex is sinful.

They [the clergy in the church] hardly ever talk about sin any more. If they even did that a little bit...but they don't. I think there is such a thing as sexual sin. It's abusive sex, where you're using another person for your own needs without any regard for them as a person. That's sexual sin. It's certainly my understanding of it now, I think it's God's understanding of it, too, in my relationship with God...It's not the type of relationship that's important but it's the attitude

[about sexuality] that's important.

IX.iii.c Structural and cultural change for challenging male control:

Having reflected on the collective standpoint of the women I interviewed, then, it seems that, while it is essential for women as individuals to heal from the effects of patriarchal relations, individual healing is not enough. In earlier chapters, both in the literature review and in later chapters in which I documented links between women's childhood experiences of incest and Catholic family culture, it was shown that an effective response to incest would include an attempt to reverse the conflation of women's identity with primary responsibility for childcare and unpaid domestic labour (Butler, 1978; Callahan, 1993; Tyler Johnson, 1992). While it is clear that further research is needed on the most effective ways to respond to incest, some preliminary recommendations seem appropriate. Consistent with my grounding in socialist feminism and the standpoint of these women, I would suggest at least a two-fold approach to making families more empowering for women and children. First, through structural changes patriarchal family ideology needs to be fundamentally challenged.¹⁷ Such changes would include,

¹⁷ Feminists have for decades been challenging a hierarchical model of family relations (Callahan, 1993; Daly, 1973, 1979; Heyward, 1989; Rush, 1982).

but not be limited to, socialized day-care and full-time, meaningful, well-paying work for women. These changes would encourage men to take on at least half of the child-care and domestic responsibilities (Barrett & McIntosh, 1982). In addition, structural changes would facilitate a more effective response to those who least benefit from present family demographics, especially single women with children who almost invariably live in poverty (Gunderson et al., 1990). From such structural changes "alternative" approaches to family life would continue to emerge, such as lesbian/gay and collective parenting models (Barrett & McIntosh, 1982). Finally, structural changes would allow us to expand our definition of "family" so as to include within it our woman-centred networks (Rich, 1980). In this way, women (especially heterosexual women who live with men) could have some of their needs met by a broader social network. Second, alongside such structural changes, we need to challenge the ruling ideology of cultural institutions, such as the Catholic church (Smith, 1987): heterosexist ideology which attempts to render as "natural," immutable and "godly-ordained" the institution of heterosexuality (Rich, 1980). Thus, an interplay between structural and cultural challenges to patriarchal ideology would allow women to continue challenging male power in the home.

Working toward a reconstruction of family life requires courageous, revolutionary patience with ourselves and one another (Heyward, 1989). As we make our family living part of our political activism, that is, weaken the boundaries between our "public" and "private" lives, there are inherent tensions.

The first is a tension between the secular and the sacred. Many of the women who participated in this thesis project are profoundly spiritual. Like these women, I do not apologize for incorporating my spiritual commitments into my writing. Spiritual commitments often provide the foundation for political commitments. I am aware of walking boundaries of feminist theory and feminist activism which do not usually make room for spirituality. I want to be clear that my denunciation of Catholic ideology is not a repudiation of religion and spirituality, nor a rejection of all aspects of Catholic teaching.

Second, there is a tension in deciding what from Catholicism can and should be changed: knowing when we have destroyed too much and when we have compromised too much. In other words, we need to further distinguish between Catholic ideology and Catholic spirituality which is the basis for Catholic social teaching.

Finally, there is a tension between taking risks and succumbing to fear. Challenging Catholic family and sexual

ideology is a frightening prospect, as many, including the women who shared their life stories with me, already know. In listening to the voices of women who grew up in Catholic homes we challenge the "conspiracy of silence" (Butler, 1978) which has fostered incest and other forms of family violence. Breaking silence about any kind of oppression is a political act. Given the strength of Catholic family and sexual ideology, and taboos against challenging Catholic family values, breaking silence about incest in Catholic families may be nothing short of revolutionary.

IX.iv Joining Catholic principles of social justice and Catholic teaching on the family

Some difficult questions emerge as we grapple with distinguishing between, on the one hand, the "Catholic faith" as a medium for spiritual expression, and, on the other hand, "Catholic ideology" as a medium for the maintenance of male control: Why does the church feel threatened by women's demands for shared domestic responsibilities, and equal leadership roles in the church? Why does the official church insist on an ideology which supports a "natural" gendered division of labour? Why does it refuse to alter its rigid prescriptions about the "proper" expression of sexuality? It seems to be, in part, because the male actors within the church have a vested interest in maintaining patriarchal

privilege, in limiting women's ability to achieve economic independence, and in denying women the autonomy to determine our own reproductive futures. In other words, a form of patriarchy has been integral to Catholicism and to the identity of Catholics.

What, then, do we want to hold on to of Catholic teaching? How can family life promote the development of human dignity, especially the development of children's dignity? If we change the underlying components of Catholic family and sexual ideology, have we fundamentally changed Catholicism? To what extent can Catholics, especially Catholic women who have historically been marginalized, take ownership of the faith even while the "powers that be" remain entrenched in an authoritarian mindset and resist opportunities to change? How can "the church" more adequately respond to Catholics who have taken it upon themselves to integrate gender and sexual identities which counter Catholic ideology?

To answer these questions we might return to the theme identified in my opening chapter: the vital, creative tension between the principles of Catholic social teaching and Catholic family and sexual ideology. Writing this thesis has allowed me to begin to bridge the "line of fault" I perceived between Catholic principles of social justice and Catholic

teaching on the family. I believe today, as I did at the inception of this thesis project, that Catholic social teaching which takes seriously a feminist analysis of gender and sexual relations will have deep and revolutionary ramifications for Catholic teaching as a whole, and specifically, those about family life and sexuality.

Throughout this thesis I have emphasized, in accord with the principles of social justice, the need to challenge not only individual acts of injustice but also unjust structures which foster abusive relations (Ryan, 1990). In accord with feminist standpoint theory, I have suggested that the principles of social justice ought to emanate from the struggles of oppressed people. Thus, I have argued that the standpoint of women can contribute in a special way to the evolving formation of these principles. (Recall Faye's words: "As people who've been harmed by the church...we have more insight, so we can help heal the church in a way the hierarchy can't because they don't have the same perspective.") I have also been guided by the dictum of the second wave feminist movement, "the personal is political," as I sought to politicize Catholic teaching about an institution commonly thought to be without political significance: "the family." This thesis attests to the fact that women in families are often profoundly vulnerable. Thus, the organization of

families and dominant ideologies about them are of profound political significance.

Through the interviews it became clear that the Catholic culture in these eight families¹⁸ contributed to the onset and continuation of incest. Incest seems to thrive in a culture which encourages male privilege and women and children's vulnerability. In the Catholic families of the women I interviewed such a culture led to a tolerance for the violation of female children's sexual boundaries. Our analysis of mothering in these Catholic families also revealed that mothers' responses to incest were negatively affected by a lack of social supports for alternative family arrangements, taboos against challenging male power in the home and, in several cases, the mothers' own histories of incest. Finally, the stories of these women reveal that incest thrived in a family culture which fostered silence and shame about sexuality, and failed to provide the language to identify abusive sexual relations.

At the inception of this thesis project it was my belief that from Catholic women's everyday/everynight experiences of

¹⁸ Incest and family violence are, of course, not exclusively associated with Catholic family life-- these characteristics are found in many homes of other Christian denominations and religious affiliations as well as non-religious homes (Imbens & Jonker, 1992; Rogers, 1980; Rush, 1982).

incest a critical, feminist standpoint would emerge, providing a clear and fresh critique of Catholic ideology. It seems evident that the standpoint of women incest survivors who grew up in Catholic homes has provided just such a critique. We are now in a position to continue grappling with the questions emerging out of this thesis, especially how a "marriage" of feminism and Catholicism's principles of social justice might help us reconstruct gender and sexual relations in families.

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Appendix I

Summary of Research Objectives

My name is Tish Langlois and I'm doing a research project to fulfil requirements for a Master's degree in Women's Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland. I have chosen to do an in-depth, qualitative study with survivors of incest. Specifically, I am inviting women survivors who have grown up in Catholic homes. The idea to look at some possible connections between Catholicism and incest came after I read a book called Christianity and Incest (1992). In the book, the authors suggest that religious family values sometimes foster incest and sexual abuse.

I have spoken to several counsellors and psychologists in town who have agreed to help me identify potential participants. I invite you to read this summary and consider joining my study. The project will be completed by the spring of 1995. I hope to conduct two sets of interviews and group discussions during the late summer and early fall. Ethical considerations in conducting research with incest survivors require that I take a number of measures to protect the participants.

i) Since I am not a professional counsellor, only women who are active in a survivors' group and/or individual counselling will be allowed to participate.

ii) Pseudonyms will be used to conceal the identity of participants and the identity of family members and friends named during the interviews.

iii) The researcher, the participants and any research assistants will be required to sign an oath of confidentiality.

iv) Each participant will be required to sign a consent form a) at the commencement of the study and b) at the completion of the study.

v) Participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice, even after the consent forms have been signed.

vi) All research materials will be stored in a locked file box.

vii) Participants should be aware that parts of this study may be published in popular, religious or scholarly journals, or in book form.

If you would like to join the study, please contact me.

Tish Langlois (709) 122-3486
9 Tessier Place, St. John's, NF A1C 1W9

Appendix II**Individual Interview Guide #1**

(page one of two)

Introduction:

The purpose of this research is to explore social factors which give rise to incest, and to explore possible connections between incest and Catholic family values. This is the first of two in-depth interviews. The questions are open-ended. If you wish to skip one, or come back to it later in the interview, please feel free to say so.

Identifying information:

With as much detail as you feel comfortable, please describe the circumstances surrounding your history of incest. Who were the main actors? When did it occur? Please give as many details as possible which will help to describe the atmosphere and circumstances of your family life before, during and after the incest.

Possible Connections between Incest and Catholic Family values:

Reflecting on your own experience, in what ways was/is your family a "Catholic" family?

Were/are there some benefits to your family's commitment to Catholicism? Did Catholicism help you in any way to deal with the incest?

In what ways might there have been connections between your family's Catholic values and the incest?

In your case, describe any possible connection between Catholic family values and women's (e.g., a mother's, a daughter's) powerlessness? Reflecting on your family experience, in what ways might your mother's position have affected her ability to protect you?

Appendix II (Continued)

(page two of two)

Understanding Incest:

From your own experience, reading and reflection, why do you think incest happens?

Conclusion:

This interview was designed to introduce you and the researcher to the subject area.

How are you feeling about the topics discussed and the questions that were asked?

Did you feel comfortable with the researcher and the researcher's comments throughout the interview? Please elaborate.

Appendix III

Individual Interview Guide #2

Questions:

[Initial questions varied according to the details of the first individual interview. I generally asked follow-up questions in order to clarify and highlight points made in the first interview.]

If at all, how has your participation in this research contributed to your understanding of the connections between incest and Catholic family culture?

If you could change some things about your family's history what would these changes be?

If you could reconstruct family relations, what recommendations would you make?

What role, if any, would you see the Catholic church playing in these reconstructed relations?

Appendix IV**Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide #1****Introduction:**

The purpose of a focus group discussion is to encourage research participants to explore the subject area in greater depth, and to provide a forum for research participants to learn from one another. Please feel free to speak as you wish, bearing in mind that the goal of the focus group discussion is to get input from all research participants. The researcher will act as the primary facilitator. A qualified counsellor, chosen and approved by the research participants, will join the focus group discussion. The counsellor will be available in the event that a participant feels uncomfortable and needs time, within the group or in private, to talk. The counsellor will be asked to use her professional discretion in assessing the needs of participants during the discussion.

With as much detail as you feel comfortable, please introduce yourself to the group and describe the circumstances surrounding your history of incest.

Do you think there are important differences between incest and sexual abuse committed by a non-family member? If you think so, please elaborate.

Incest and Catholic Family Values:

Given your own experience, and further reflection since the initial in-depth interview, do you think there are connections between your family's Catholic values and your history of incest? What might these be?

How may Catholicism's insistence on patriarchal authority (both within the family and within the institutional church) have played a role in the incest?

What role do you see your mother having played in your history of incest? Do you see any ways in which Catholicism's insistence on women's primary roles as mother and wives may have connected to your incest history?

How are you feeling about the focus group discussion?

Appendix V

Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide #2

I introduced the focus group by handing out a copy of "An abuse of journalistic privilege: Local commentator takes action over CBC-Radio broadcast" to each participant. I chose to do this because the article was directly related to the paper I delivered in December which was based upon my preliminary interpretations of the summer 1994 interviews.

Questions:

What is your response to this article?

How are you feeling about your participation in the research process to date?

Do you have any feedback on the preliminary [October 1994] or secondary [March 1995] reports ?

Please explore, from your own experience, any differences between the pre and post Vatican II period in Catholic families.

Please explore, again from your own experience, the role of your mother (or mothers in general) in your incest history.

What additional thoughts do you have on the possible connection between incest and Catholic family culture?

How are you feeling about this focus group discussion?

Appendix VI (page one of two)

**Consent Form for Research Participants
and Counsellors**

The purpose of this study is two-fold: first, to explore social factors which give rise to incest; and second, to explore possible connections between incest and Catholic family values.

Participants are invited to join a study which may help to end the cycle of sexual violence in families, Catholic families in particular. The results of this study may be made available to relevant groups and publishers who have an interest in ending family violence. Individual participants may benefit from the act of joining with other survivors of sexual abuse to explore the causes of sexual violence against women.

[A women's centre] has helped me to identify potential participants in this study. You were identified and informed about my study. This consent form is an official invitation to participate.

The study will be conducted over a one-year period. It will consist of at least two extensive individual interviews. Additionally, participants will be invited to participate in focus group discussions about incest and Catholic family life.

I, _____ (research participant) understand that all interview transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet. I understand that participants' names will not appear on transcripts; aliases or codes will be used.

I understand that risks to the participants are two-fold. First, participants may find the subject matter disturbing. Therefore, only participants who are presently involved in a group for survivors of sexual abuse and/or are receiving counselling related to their history of incest will be invited to participate. Second, while every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality and to protect anonymity of the participants (for instance, through the use of pseudonyms) identification of participation in the study is a possibility.

(over)

Appendix VI (Continued)

(page two of two)

**Consent Form for Research Participants
Counsellors and Research Assistants**

Participants need to be aware that this is a potential risk. The limitations on confidentiality are threefold: a) information surfacing about the abuse of a current minor, b) threats of harm against another person, and c) stopping an act of suicide.

As the research proceeds, transcripts and interpretations of the data will be made available to the participants. A second consent form will be presented to the participants prior to completion of the study.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice. In other words, participants may withdraw their written consent after it has been granted to the researcher.

I _____ understand the terms of this study, agree to abide by these conditions and consent to participate.

Signed _____ (research participant)

Date _____

Researcher (Patricia Langlois) _____

Date _____

Referring Counsellor _____

Date _____

Appendix VII

Oath of Confidentiality

To be signed by all people involved in the research project conducted by Patricia Langlois, including: research participants, research assistants, counsellors and support persons.

I _____ understand that all information shared during the research process, including the names of participants, shall be kept confidential. I agree not to reveal any of this information to anyone beyond those who are officially part of the research project (that is, those who have also signed an oath of confidentiality).

Signed _____

Date _____

Researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix VIII

Consent to Have Focus Group Discussions Audiotaped

I _____ give Patricia Langlois consent to audiotape the focus group sessions. I understand that the tapes will be erased following submission and acceptance of the thesis requirement for the degree Master of Women's Studies. I understand that, in the case that a research assistant is hired to transcribe the discussions, the research assistant will be required to sign an oath of confidentiality. I understand that tapes and any written material will be stored in a locked file cabinet. I understand that names of interviewees will not appear on the transcriptions and codes or aliases will be used to identify participants.

Signed _____

Date _____

Principal Researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix IX

Consent Form to Release Research Data

I have participated in a study conducted by Patricia Langlois. I have read the interpretations of the data, and have been given an opportunity to comment on these interpretations. I understand that if I disagree with the researcher's interpretations, the principal researcher will report those disagreements in her research.

I _____ consent to release the interpretations of the data for publication in her thesis (to be housed and available for perusal and loan through the Centre for Newfoundland Studies). I am aware that parts of this study may be published in popular, scholarly or religious journals, or be published in its entirety in book form. Further, I have been consulted about the most appropriate places to send the results of this study for publication in journals or in book form.

I am aware that any audio tapes of recorded interviews will be erased upon submission of the thesis. I am aware that the master list which matches actual names to given aliases will be destroyed upon submission of the thesis. I understand that all transcripts will not list actual names of participants but will be identified through the use of aliases. Further, I am aware that the principal researcher wishes to hold onto interview transcripts for three years after the date of thesis submission, during which time the transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet, and after which time the transcripts will be destroyed. The transcripts may be needed to prepare results of the study for future publication by the researcher.

Signed _____

Date _____

Principal Researcher _____

Date _____

Appendix X

As a guide for readers I list below a month-by-month chart of the research process.

June 1994

Thesis proposal submitted and approved.

Began textual analysis.

July 1994

Proposal approved by Memorial University's Faculty of Arts Ethics Committee.

Established group of participants.

Conducted and transcribed notes from six individual interviews.

August 1994

Conducted and transcribed notes from two individual interviews.

Conducted and transcribed notes from first focus group discussion.

September 1994

Prepared and sent preliminary report to participants, combining textual analysis with analysis of interviews.

October 1994

Presented "Incest: The dark side of Catholic families" to the Atlantic Anthropology and Sociology Association's annual conference, Dalhousie University.

November 1994

Continued to combine textual analysis with analysis of interviews.

Appendix X (Continued)**December 1994**

Presented paper entitled "Incest and Catholic Family Culture" in Memorial University's Women's Studies Speakers' Series.

Conducted six follow-up individual interviews.

January-February 1995

Transcribed individual interviews.

Prepared secondary report for participants, combining analysis of interviews with analysis of additional texts on Catholic marriage and family life.

March 1995

Sent secondary report to participants.

Conducted second focus group discussion.

April 1995

Transcribed second focus group discussion.

Summer 1995

Prepared thesis for internal and external review.

Winter Semester 1996

Submitted thesis for internal and external review.

