

A STUDY OF GIRL SEX VICTIMS*

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INTRODUCTION

Psychological investigations into the problems of sex crimes involving children generally are focused on the personalities of the adult offenders. Very little research has been concerned with the personalities of the girl victims of these crimes. Of those studies which have been concerned with the child sex victim, some have emphasized the effects of the sexual experiences upon the child,¹⁻⁴ while others have considered factors favoring her sexual participation with the offender.^{3, 5-8} The present study belongs to the latter group in that it is concerned with the investigation of factors in the child's personality which may have favored the occurrence of her sexual activities. It seeks to answer two questions. Do some children participate with the adult offender in initiating or maintaining a sexual relationship with him? If so, what factors in the child's personality favor such participation?

I

This article is based on a California study of 73 girls who were victims of adult sex offenders. As the girls studied were, with few exceptions, referred to the writers by district attorneys, they were a select group, in that they were children of parents who had seen fit to bring legal charges against the offenders involved. Thus the characteristics noted in these children may not be typical of child sex victims in general.

The children in this group came predominantly from lower middle-class and working-class homes. In terms of religious affiliation they seemed to represent a random sample for this socio-economic group in their geographical area (Table 1).

The age range of the children studied was from four to 16 years (Table 2).

*This study is a part of the Sexual Deviation Research authorized in 1950 by the California Legislature and supervised by Karl M. Bowman, M. D., medical superintendent of the Langley Porter Clinic, and professor of psychiatry, University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco. The authors comprised the staff which carried out this part of the general study.

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Table 1. Religious Affiliation

Catholic	27	Buddhist	1
Protestant	37	Unknown	3
Jewish	5		—
		Total	73

Each child was seen for as many interviews as could be arranged. Practically all had psychological tests (Rorschach, TAT and Draw-a-Person).^{*} In all cases, the mothers of the victims or their mother substitutes were interviewed; many were also tested.

Table 2. Age of Victim at Time of Referral

Age	No. of children	Age	No. of children
16	5	8	8
15	3	7	5
14	7	6	11
13	7	5	3
12	2	4	2
11	6		—
10	8	Total	73
9	6		

On the basis of this study, it was concluded that the child sex victims in the group could be separated into two subgroups: those who took part in initiating and maintaining the relationship (participant victims), and those who did not do so (accidental victims).

In almost all cases this classification was made on the basis of the writers' over-all evaluation of the child's personality, but it could have been made on the basis of a single factor, that is the frequency of the child's sexual experiences (more than one sexual experience with one, or more than one, adult). Two or three exceptions were cases in which the child had only one sexual experience, but in which there was other evidence of participation, such as the child's assertion that she had enjoyed the sexual act. Most of the participant victims knew the offender for some time before the incident, and frequently he was a relative or family friend^a (Table 3).

In many cases, the participant victims received some type of remuneration such as candy, money or movie tickets. In many cases, but with notable exceptions, the participant victims kept their sex relationships with the offenders secret from their parents.

^aA report by Dr. Dutton on these psychological tests, with an interpretation of the findings, will appear in a separate paper.

Table 3. Offender's Relationship to Child

	Accidental	Participating	Undetermined
Father	3	4	2
Brother .....	..	2	..
Stepfather .....	..	7	2
Uncle	1	1	..
Foster-father .....	..	3	..
Step-grandfather .....	..	1	..
Family friend	2	5	..
Neighbor	3	13	3
Mother's boyfriend.....	1	1	1
Boyfriend	1	3	..
Storekeeper .....	..	3	..
Stranger	10	1	..
	21	44	8

In almost all cases classified as accidental victims, the offender was a stranger, the act occurred only once, the child received no remuneration for it, and she told her parents of the incident soon after it occurred. The accidental victims were on the average slightly younger than were the participant victims (Table 4). For instance, 15 accidental victims were aged 10 or younger, or roughly three out of four of the total accidental sample; whereas, only 23 participant victims, roughly a half of the total participant sample, were 10 or younger.

Table 4. Victims Classified as Accidental or Participating, and Ages

Age	Accidental	Participating	Undetermined
16	2	3	..
15	1	2	..
14	1	4	2
13	1	5	1
12	1	1	..
11 .....	..	6	..
10	3	5	..
9	3	3	..
8	1	6	1
7	2	3	..
6	3	5	3
5	2	1	..
4	1	..	1
	21	44	8

Table 5 compares the types of offenses committed against the participating and the accidental victims. This table shows that vaginal intercourse occurred relatively more often in the participant victim group than in the accidental victim group.

Table 5. Types of Sex Offenses

	Accidental	Participating	Undetermined
Vaginal intercourse attempted and executed	2	13	4
Vaginal intercourse resulting in pregnancy	..	3	..
Fingering and fondling of genitals*	18	27	4
Anal intercourse (sodomy) .....	..	1**	..
Mutual masturbation and exposure .....	..	1	..
Fondling breasts.....	1	..	..
	21	44	8

*Including mouth-genital contacts.

**An additional form of sexual activity occurring in one case only.

Although the girls classified as participant victims show marked individual differences, a majority of these girls have certain personality traits in common, so that for purposes of exposition it is possible to describe a typical participant victim. The typical participant victim, as was noted by Bender and Blau,⁹ is often very attractive and appealing. She establishes a superficial relationship with the psychiatrist almost immediately. She does not hesitate to enter the playroom, and, once there, she is more interested in the psychiatrist than in the playroom toys. She may behave with the male psychiatrist as if he is an exalted authority. She may be submissive or sexually seductive with him, or she may attempt to win him masochistically by humiliating herself in order to gain pity. Often she is demanding of proofs of affection from him. For instance, she may ask to take a present from the playroom.

Certain tendencies are frequently revealed in the playroom fantasies of the typical participant victim. Her fantasies may contain masochistic elements. For instance, she may enact a scene in which a girl doll is misunderstood and unfairly punished by a parent doll; or she herself may lie on the floor, pretending to be completely paralyzed by poliomyelitis, and ask to be fed. Her play reveals, too, her unresolved conflicts about looking and being looked at (scopophilia and exhibitionism). She may fantasy a situation in which a child peeks at her parents in bed, or she may slyly re-

move the trousers from one of the dolls and giggle. Another of her playroom preoccupations is with family conspiracies, and in her doll play she may have a girl doll and a father doll keep a secret from the mother doll, or she may have the daughter and the mother keep a secret from the father.

From interviews with the mothers of participant victims, one can arrive at a typical picture of the family situation in these cases. The mother is masochistic. Often she is married to a helpless, dependent man whom she has to support, or to a strict, demanding man who permits her little individual expression. Frequently she is divorced or separated from the victim's father (Table 6).

Table 6. Family Make-up at Time of Experience

	Accidental	Participating	Undetermined
Parents together	13	23	3
Stepfather in home	2	9	2
With relatives .....	..	..	..
Foster home	1	2	..
Divorced	3	2	1
Father in jail	1	..	..
Father deserted .....	..	1	..
Separated .....	..	5	2
Stepmother in home	1	..	..
With father .....	..	2	..
	21	44	8

The mother is masochistic in her attitude to her daughter. She feels harassed by her daughter and unable to handle her. If she has other children, she feels closer to them. She describes her daughter's moodiness and un-co-operative attitude, maintaining that her daughter is spoiled because she has been overindulged. She describes the sacrifices she makes for her daughter and her daughter's ingratitude. She complains that her daughter has a winning way with adults which conceals her real selfishness. It is not hard for the interviewer to detect jealousy of the daughter in the mother's comments.

The typical mother is at least as critical of herself as she is of her daughter. She vacillates between criticizing herself for strictness and criticizing herself for leniency. She feels that her strictness and her lack of understanding of her daughter have contributed to the child's difficulties; but, also, that she has spoiled her

daughter by being too lenient. If her husband is strict and punitive toward the child, she vacillates between supporting his strict attitude and protecting the child from him.

Often, the mother is in conflict, not only about strictness and leniency, but also about her attitude toward the child's developing sexuality. She feels that she should teach her daughter more than she has taught her about sex, but cannot do so because of embarrassment. At times she feels proud of her daughter's attractive appearance and winning ways, but at other times she labels her a "flirt" or a "prima donna" and fears that the child's attractiveness will lead her into sexual difficulties in adolescence.

The mother's vacillation in her attitude to her daughter may be understood in terms of her guilt over jealousy of her daughter. This jealousy leads her to deprive and belittle her daughter, whose freedom and attractiveness she feels are at her expense. Her guilt over her jealousy causes her to indulge and flatter her daughter and to humiliate and criticize herself.

In some cases conflict regarding the child's upbringing appears more prominently as a disagreement between the parents than as an intrapsychic conflict in the mother. For example, a father enjoins modesty and makes certain that he is always fully clothed in the child's presence, while the mother deplores his prudishness and encourages the child to take a more "natural" attitude toward nudity.

Conflicts within one parent or between the parents as to proper attitudes toward the child's expression of her sexual impulses are confusing to the child and sexually stimulating to her, in that they focus her attention on sex. Her parents' confusion makes it difficult for her to have a stable set of attitudes toward her own sexual impulses, and makes it difficult, therefore, to develop a stable conscience (super-ego).

In this discussion of the typical family of a participant victim, the prominence of parental disagreement about the child's sexual upbringing has been stressed. An example will indicate how such parental disagreement may favor the child's tendency to act out sexually with an adult.

The parents of a six-year-old girl disagreed about what to teach her concerning modesty. Her father encouraged her to go nude in his presence and he went nude in hers. Her mother attempted to counteract the father's influence on the child by teaching her to be

modest. In a sense the child's sexual behavior, in which she looked at a man's genitals and allowed him to look at hers, was sanctioned by her father's attitude and forbidden by her mother's, so that this behavior represented on one level the child's alliance with her father in the parental disagreement. The child was able to feel somewhat relieved of responsibility for her sexual activity because this activity seemed to be sanctioned by her father. Nevertheless, she must have known that her father's permissiveness was not meant to lead her to actual sexual activity, so that her behavior was a kind of spiteful obedience to him. Also, she may have been aware that her behavior would prove her mother right in the parental disagreement and thus, in a sense, please her mother. She realized that her father would blame himself rather than her for the sexual activity, and that her mother, too, would blame him. Thus, in her sexual behavior, the child expressed defiance toward each parent and ingratiated herself with each.

In a number of cases, parental conflicts about the child's expression of her sexuality were not the most striking determinants of the child's sexual acting out. More evident in these cases, was the sexually stimulating behavior of the parents toward the child. These parents were actually in conflict about their attitudes in that they did not consciously intend to lead their child to overt sexual behavior. In fact when the child of such parents became a sex victim the parents felt very disturbed and guilty.

The parents stimulated their children sexually in various ways. In some cases the mother warned her daughter from an early age to avoid men because of the sexual consequences, and in so doing made the child aware of the possibility of sexual relationships with adult men; the mother's warnings were at the same time prohibiting and stimulating to her child. Several mothers directly encouraged their daughters to be "sexy," as for example the mother who repeatedly had her six-year-old do a strip-tease act for company. In some cases, the child's father was very seductive with her and stimulated her physically by kissing, fondling and wrestling. A number of participant victims were stimulated sexually by having the opportunity to watch their parents having sexual intercourse.

Although these children were able to indulge in sexual activities with adults, they were not free of remorse and guilt about their sexual behavior. Quite the opposite was the case. All the partici-

pant victims had guilt about their sexual activities, guilt which, if not expressed directly, was manifest in phobias, nightmares, anxieties, etc. The children's guilt is understandable in terms of their parents' attitudes: The parents both stimulated and prohibited the children's sexual impulses.

Though sexual conflicts were extremely common among the participant victims, more basic conflicts underlay the sexual ones. Almost all of them felt deprived by their mothers and resentful toward them. Their mothers' masochistic attitudes engendered in the girls intense feelings of guilt and obligation; many felt that they should devote themselves to making their mothers happy, and that they should have no lives apart from their mothers. These girls, feeling trapped by their sense of obligation to their mothers, rebelled against it. Through sexual relationships with adult men, they expressed their defiance of their mothers and gained a feeling of independence. At the same time, they satisfied their longings for approval and attention.

II

Some of the points made in the foregoing can best be clarified and elaborated through discussion of individual cases.

Kathleen R., an eight-year-old girl, was repeatedly the passive partner in acts of cunnilinctus and masturbation with her father's best friend. The offender, Mike, was a 45-year-old unemployed house-painter. His relationship with Kathleen began shortly after he rented a room in the R. household, and lasted for about a year. Kathleen did not reveal the relationship to her parents nor did they suspect it. It came to light when Mike bragged about it in a bar. Kathleen readily acknowledged her activities with Mike, who was convicted and sent to state prison.

Kathleen was an only child. During Kathleen's delivery her mother almost died. Fearing that another pregnancy might kill her, Mrs. R. never again had sexual intercourse.

During Kathleen's infancy and childhood her father was a semi-invalid. When the baby was a few weeks old she was left in her father's care and her mother returned to her job in a laundry. From the age of three to seven, she was cared for by her invalid grandmother, as her father was then working part-time. When Kathleen was seven, her grandmother became too ill to care for her, and thereafter she was usually left unsupervised.

The relationship between Kathleen's parents was an unhappy one. After her third year they had several short separations, but came back together each time for the sake of the child. They often quarreled violently in Kathleen's presence, and each sought Kathleen as an ally against the other. Mrs. R. complained to Kathleen that her father was unfaithful and a poor provider, while Mr. R. complained to Kathleen of her mother's constant nagging.

Kathleen's mother was a large, excitable woman who pleaded with the court authorities not to let her child be taken from her. She told the writers how she had sacrificed for Kathleen, and how in spite of ill health she had supported her family because of her husband's inadequacy. Her whole life, in fact, had been devoted to the service of others. She was the oldest of 10 children, and before her marriage had sacrificed her own happiness to help her deserted mother care for the younger children. Mrs. R. felt rejected by her husband; she accused him of interest in other women, and, in Kathleen's presence, criticized him for flirting with them. She also accused him of behaving flirtatiously toward Kathleen, saying that he kissed her as if he were "making love to a grown woman." She complained that Mr. R. preferred going out with Kathleen to staying home with her.

Kathleen's father was a slight, shabbily dressed man who had an exaggerated limp. In Kathleen's presence he bragged about her talents and accomplishments. He called attention to her clothing, and mentioned how much he had paid for each garment. He seemed to feel that to prove himself a good father he had to demonstrate his sacrifices for his daughter.

Mr. R. expressed mixed feelings about Kathleen. He described her beauty and talents with enthusiasm, and told of his plans to make her a child actress, a ballet dancer or a photographer's model. He said that he was prepared to make any sacrifice for his daughter's sake. He felt, however, that Kathleen was selfish and cold and that she did not appreciate what he was doing for her.

Mr. R. compared Kathleen to his own mother, whom he remembered as a beautiful, selfish, promiscuous woman who had never loved him. When he was five, his parents were divorced. He was sent away by his mother, and had spent the remainder of his childhood in institutions. He attributed his failure in life to his mother's rejection of him.

Kathleen was an elaborately dressed little girl. She stood listlessly at her father's side while he bragged about her. She scarcely responded to him when he tickled her or called her his "little darling" or a "little flirt."

In the playroom, Kathleen was compliant and sullen. In a bored manner she played with various toys and would not start a new activity without asking permission to do so. She pointed to small scratches and bruises on her body and told how these had been inflicted by "mean" children. She spoke disparagingly of several of her friends, telling how one girl got herself dirty, how another lied and how a third "thought she was smart" and tried to act grown up. She added that her parents did not like her to associate with these children.

In doll play, Kathleen enacted situations in which a husband and wife quarreled, and in which their little girl conspired with each parent to keep secrets from the other. In one fantasy, the little girl sneaked out of the house and spent the night in the automobile. The mother knew about this, but did not tell the father, who would have punished the child. In another fantasy the husband hid from his angry wife, and the child, who knew where her father was hiding, did not tell her mother.

Certain facts brought out by Kathleen during the interviews suggested that she felt intensely guilty toward her mother. She spoke frequently of her mother's sacrifices for her, and expressed the fear that her mother might die of overwork. Whenever her mother fell asleep in a chair, Kathleen felt compelled to perform a ritual in which she touched her mother four times to assure herself that her mother was still alive.

Kathleen feared that one or both of her parents might be carried away by ghosts. These fears were such that she could not go to sleep at night unless she could hear both of her parents in the next room. She also feared that she herself might be carried away by ghosts unless both parents were in the house. This need to have both parents with her was probably related to Kathleen's guilt over her conspiracy fantasies. It was a reassurance to Kathleen to have her parents together, a reassurance that she had not separated them by conspiring with one against the other. Her fears concerning her parents, though present for three or four years, were accentuated during the year preceding the writers' inter-

views with Kathleen, that is during the period of her sexual relationship with the offender.

Mr. R. and Mike, the offender, were close friends. Mr. R. felt that Mike, like himself, was a man of great talent who had been misunderstood and abused. He nursed Mike after his alcoholic binges. He planned business ventures with him to exploit Kathleen's attractiveness; for example, they planned to become dealers in hand-painted blouses which Kathleen would model. Mr. R. frequently left Kathleen with Mike all day. He encouraged Kathleen to call the offender "Uncle Mike." He was pleased when Mike visited Kathleen in her room at night, ostensibly to tell her bedtime stories. He suspected nothing when Kathleen brought home five-dollar bills which Mike had given to her. Mr. R. felt that he, his daughter and his friend were allied against his unsympathetic wife.

Of prime importance among the factors favoring Kathleen's sexual behavior with the offender, was the relationship between Kathleen and her parents. Kathleen's father expressed frankly erotic feelings toward his daughter, and Kathleen's mother was outspokenly jealous of her. Her father's attitude was directly stimulating to her sexually, and the attitudes of both parents heightened her interest in her sexual attractiveness.

Kathleen could easily displace her interest in her father onto Mike, since her father encouraged her relationship with Mike, his close friend. She must have experienced her sexual relationship with Mike as an alliance with her father and a defiance to her mother in the conflict between her parents. This siding with her father, although gratifying, caused Kathleen conflict in that she wished to retain her mother's love. She was able to side with her father only at the expense of considerable guilt and anxiety, as is shown by her fear that her mother would die, and by her compulsive rituals which were concerned with her mother's life and death. It is likely that her guilt was augmented by a feeling of power that her parents' attitudes toward her engendered. Since each parent constantly appealed to her for support against the other, she could easily feel that the wellbeing of each of her parents depended upon her loyalty to each.

Kathleen's sexual behavior expressed not only her siding with her father in the conflict between her parents, but also asserted her independence of each of them. Both parents felt, and encouraged

Kathleen to feel, that they had made great sacrifices for her; and her father led her to believe that his future happiness depended upon her. The attitudes of her parents caused Kathleen to feel intensely obligated to each of them, and to feel that she should belong to each of them and not regard herself as a separate individual.

In itself such an intense feeling of obligation was disagreeable, but it was made especially so by the contest between Kathleen's parents for her loyalty, because she could not belong to either of them without disappointing the other. Kathleen's relationship with Mike may be considered as an attempt on her part to extricate herself from this situation. By forming a close relationship with him, Kathleen was less in need of a close relationship with her parents. Through this substitute relationship, she could express her wish to feel independent of her parents and to feel more separate from them.

In this, as in other cases, parental blindness to the child's sexual affair permitted its continuation. To protect himself from the guilt that awareness of a child's sexual activities could engender in him, the parent has to deny that these activities occur. Such a mechanism was noted by Eissler.¹⁰ Kathleen's father could not see what was going on between Kathleen and Mike, for had he done so he would have had to acknowledge that his wife was justified in regarding his attitude toward Kathleen as harmful.

To restate part of this formulation in a more theoretical framework, it would seem that the attitudes of Kathleen's parents made it difficult for her to repress her impulses, but did permit her to handle them by a type of projection. She did not have to acknowledge her jealousy of her mother. By noticing her mother's jealousy of her, she could in effect deny her own jealousy. Likewise, by noticing her father's sexual interest in her, she did not have to consider her own sexual interest in him. Thus, though she could not repress these impulses, since her parents were constantly stimulating them, she did not have to feel responsible for the impulses. Her parents were now responsible. But her parents were in conflict. Consequently, she experienced her sexual conflicts, in part, as a conflict between the demands made upon her by her parents, so that her sexual problems became fused with the more general problem of trying to get along with her parents, who were fighting for her allegiance.

III

Shirley D. was a 10-year-old girl who was sexually molested three times in the course of a year. The offender was a 60-year-old neighbor. Each incident occurred while Shirley was visiting the neighbor in his home. According to Shirley the offender exposed himself to her and forced her to handle his genitals; he threatened to "take me away somewhere" if she told her parents. The offender claimed that Shirley invited his actions by putting her arm around him and touching his genitals through his clothing.

Shirley told a girlfriend about the first two incidents, but did not tell her parents because she felt ashamed and because she feared that her mother might not believe her. She had her friend accompany her on her third visit to the neighbor's house, so that she would have a witness if anything happened. The third offense occurred upstairs, where Shirley and the offender went, ostensibly to find a bag of walnuts. Shirley told her friend what had happened, and the friend told Shirley's mother. Shirley confirmed her friend's story when questioned by her mother and appeared to feel very ashamed. Her mother reported that Shirley slept restlessly and talked in her sleep for two or three nights following the confession.

Shirley, unlike Kathleen, was friendly and talkative in the playroom. During the first interview she complained of her untidy hair, and told how her baby sister "ties me down." She had the manner of a harassed mother. She told of her anger at her five-year-old brother, who scattered her toys around the floor and put the blame on her. She described "scary games" which she enjoyed playing with her father, and mentioned a "grumpy" school janitor, whom she said she liked because he sometimes chased her.

In the second interview, she was less self-conscious and more vehement and direct in her expression of feeling. She made up a game in which she threw a ball at a formation of toy soldiers, explaining that a king was rewarding her by letting her kill all his soldiers. In a self-critical tone she said that she was enjoying herself because she was being mean, adding, "I hate people but the trouble is that I'm people myself." She declared that she especially hated her mother for preferring her brother, but that her father liked her even if her mother did not.

The mother described Shirley as an active tomboy who was much harder to control than was her brother. She said that Shirley frequently disobeyed her. "When I call Shirley she has to play 10

minutes more before she comes." The mother always has to check on whether Shirley has performed her household duties since Shirley has lied to her about this. She complained that Shirley liked to show off and did things "for effect."

Shirley's mother, a quiet, shy woman of 35, appeared uncomfortable during the interviews, and was self-critical in discussing her relationship with her daughter. She spoke mainly of her uncertainty regarding the correct attitude for her to take toward Shirley. She felt that she was being either too lenient or too strict with her. On the one hand she did not wish to spoil Shirley by being too lenient, but on the other hand she feared that if she were too strict Shirley would feel rejected and unloved. Further, she did not know what attitude to take toward Shirley's "showing off." Although aware that Shirley's showing off irritated her, she attempted to check her impulse to criticize Shirley for it. She also had a conflict regarding the proper attitude to take toward Shirley's sexual curiosity. She felt that she should talk frankly to Shirley about sex but was too embarrassed to do so.

Mrs. D. felt that these problems were related to her fear of treating Shirley as her own mother had treated her. Mrs. D. recalled her mother as a prudish, strict, unloving woman. Her mother had often teased her when she looked in the mirror—saying, "There's Lady Jane admiring herself again."

Mrs. D. experienced similar conflicts regarding her husband's attitude toward Shirley. Mr. D. was prudish and strict; he punished the children by spanking them or by withdrawing privileges whenever they disobeyed him. Mrs. D. sometimes felt that he was too severe, and intervened on their behalf, meantime criticizing herself for interfering with his discipline. She felt that her husband, who had no conflicts regarding his attitude toward the children, handled them better than she. She observed that Shirley, when alone with her father, behaved better than when both parents were present.

Both Mr. and Mrs. D. were prudish, and in 10 years of marriage had never seen each other nude. Mr. D. felt that the children should be taught modesty and decorum. Mrs. D. advocated teaching them "wholesome attitudes toward sex." She felt guilty about her own prudishness and her husband's. She felt that Shirley would have been less shocked by the sight of the offender's genitals had she permitted Shirley to see her father nude. Mrs. D. recalled

how shocked she had been as a child of eight, when on one occasion a man exposed his genitals to her. She laid the blame for her reaction on her mother, who had failed to discuss sex with her.*

On the basis of these facts, it is possible to formulate the factors favoring Shirley's sexual behavior as follows:

Shirley's mother was in conflict as to how much obedience to expect from Shirley. She was concerned also with how much she should permit Shirley to show off and with the extent to which she should permit Shirley to satisfy her sexual curiosity. She was in conflict regarding her husband's strict attitude toward Shirley. At times she sided with Shirley in her rebellion against Mr. D. and at other times she sided with the father in his strictness toward Shirley.

Shirley felt deprived and mistreated by her mother, who, she believed, favored her young brother. She felt rebellious toward her mother, and expressed this rebelliousness in several ways, of which her sexual behavior was one. In looking at an adult man's genitals she was satisfying the very impulse—sexual curiosity—which her mother both condemned and condoned. Further, her rebellion took place in an area in which the mother, because of her own problems, was unable to deal with her. It was as though Shirley realized she would not be held accountable for her behavior, which, in fact, she was not. Her mother blamed herself and her husband for Shirley's difficulties. (See Colm,¹¹ and Johnson and Szurek.¹²)

Shirley may have felt frightened by the offender during her sexual activities with him and may have enjoyed this in the same way she enjoyed being frightened by her father or by "the grumpy janitor." Her experience with the offender was thus a gratifying one. Shirley could express her anger and defiance toward her mother in obtaining this forbidden gratification, since she was doing something for which she knew her mother would take the blame.

IV

Dorothy B., a 10-year-old girl, had a sexual relationship of four years in duration with her stepfather. The relationship began when Dorothy, then aged five, returned to her mother's home after living for two years with her grandmother and her aunt in another city.

*Colm reports a case in which the mother of a probable sex victim attempted to diminish her daughter's sexual preoccupations by letting her look at her father nude (Ref. 11).

The stepfather at first had Dorothy handle his genitals, and when she was about seven, he began having vaginal intercourse with her. He was rough and abusive, threatening to beat her if she told her mother of his actions. Dorothy, nevertheless, attempted several times to tell her mother what was going on, but her mother was reluctant to believe her because she felt Dorothy was merely making a bid for attention. When Mrs. B. finally realized that Dorothy's accusations were justified, she confronted her husband with them. He confessed remorsefully and was sent to prison. Upon his release six months later, he resumed his sexual practices with Dorothy, then aged nine. Dorothy did not tell her mother of this because she did not want to be responsible again for separating her mother and stepfather. Mrs. B. felt uncertain whether she was right in letting her husband return; she decided to leave to Dorothy the final decision as to whether he might stay.

Dorothy was the second of four children; she had two brothers, aged 11 and eight, and a half-brother aged nine months. Her birth and early development were uneventful. According to her mother she was a cheerful, friendly child. When she was two-and-a-half, her mother already considered her "a little flirt." She would wander from home and be found by her mother making friends with strange men in a public park. From two-and-a-half to five, Dorothy stayed with her maternal grandmother and her aunt in another city, while her brothers remained at home. This separation was occasioned by her mother's illness, and by difficulties between her mother and father, which ended in the latter's desertion of the family. At three Dorothy was given a choice between returning home and remaining with her grandmother and aunt, and she chose the latter alternative. Evidently Dorothy was responding to her mother's rejection by rejecting her mother in return. By her indifference she denied that her mother's rejection hurt her.

At five, following the death of her aunt, Dorothy moved back with her mother and her mother's second husband, the offender. Her mother found her a changed child; she was now ungracious and demanding. "If you gave her shoes, she wanted socks." At times she was affectionate toward her mother and desirous of love, but more often she was sullen and spiteful. It appeared to Mrs. B. that when she and her husband behaved affectionately to each other, Dorothy felt jealous and left out.

According to Mrs. B., Dorothy at the age of five accused an adult male cousin of molesting her sexually, and at the age of seven accused a school janitor of doing so. The janitor defended himself by pointing out that Dorothy had asked him to let her play with his genitals.

With the male psychiatrist, Dorothy was friendly and flirtatious. She talked freely and was mainly preoccupied with the feelings of fear and disgust which her stepfather inspired. Following sexual contacts with him she avoided her friends, fearing that they might smell semen on her. At these times she avoided her stepfather also and could not look him in the eye. She recalled that following her stepfather's return from prison she had nightmares which frequently concerned snakes or other loathsome animals. She dreamed that if she touched these animals she would kill them or be killed herself. She reported the following detailed dream:

"I was going to a social with Lillian [a girlfriend]. Presents were being given away and I got first choice. I picked the best one. The old man who gave them out didn't want me to have the best one. On the way home I passed a haunted house. Policemen and lots of other people were inside. The man who had passed out the presents was lying dead on the floor; he had no eyes. I looked away from him and left right away. Then he came back to life and came out the door. He touched his finger to the holes where his eyes had been and started to touch me on the shoulder with the gooey stuff. If he had I would have died. Then he fell down, laughed and died in peace."

Dorothy volunteered that the old man in the dream reminded her of her stepfather.

Dorothy remarked that she feared growing up and getting married because neither of her mother's husbands had been any good. Her mother had suffered a great deal and this was to be expected, she said, because good people always suffer.

On one visit Dorothy appeared tense and unhappy. She said that both of her parents seemed sick of her; her stepfather had accused her of being the cause of all his trouble, and her mother had said there was too much hatred in the family and if things did not improve one of the children would have to be sent away. Dorothy assumed that she would be the child to go.

Mrs. B. was, in fact, very critical of Dorothy, who she felt was cold, distant and demanding, and whom she considered her most

difficult child. She maintained that Dorothy was vain and too concerned with getting the attention of others, especially of men. She resented Dorothy as the cause of the trouble between herself and her husband.

Mrs. B., however, reproached herself for these attitudes. She felt responsible for Dorothy's difficulties, believing that her resentment of Dorothy and her "martyr" attitude affected the child adversely. She recalled her resentment of her own mother's coldness and martyr-like attitude, and did not want to treat Dorothy as she had been treated. Further, she reproached herself for her inability to discuss sex with Dorothy; she felt that frank sexual discussions might somehow have helped Dorothy avoid the sexual relationship with her stepfather.

When first confronted with them, Mrs. B. had dismissed Dorothy's accusations against her stepfather as a bid for attention in keeping with her flirtatious disposition. After becoming convinced that Dorothy had actually had a sexual relationship with Mr. B., the mother was angry at her and jealous of her. She also felt guilty toward Dorothy, saying, "It was my happiness or Dorothy's, and in letting him remain I was being selfish and not considering my daughter." Further, she blamed herself for refusing to have sexual intercourse with her husband; this refusal she believed tempted him to molest Dorothy.

A detailed discussion of the offender is not relevant. It is sufficient to state that he was a very masochistic man, always ready to feel mistreated. Although he felt intensely guilty toward both Mrs. B. and Dorothy after his sexual activities with the child were discovered, he also felt that they were to blame for these activities: Mrs. B. for refusing him intercourse, and Dorothy for her seductiveness. "She put ideas in my head by climbing on my lap and rubbing against me."

One may ask why specific factors in Dorothy's development have to be considered in order to account for her sexual activities. Would not any child intimidated, as Dorothy was, by her stepfather, submit to him? Despite the relevance of this viewpoint, Dorothy's seductiveness with the janitor shows that she did have a tendency to participate sexually with an adult man, regardless of the factor of intimidation.

It is not necessary again to point out in detail how the child's feeling of rejection by her mother, her hostility to her mother, and

her jealousy of her mother were permitted expression in her sexual activities. As in the other cases the mother's jealousy of the child and her conflicting attitudes toward the child were factors that hampered the development of a stable conscience in the child.

Dorothy's situation resembled that of three or four other girls in the research group who had sexual relationships with their stepfathers. In these cases, as in Dorothy's, the mother was unable to intervene and put a stop to the child's activities. Mrs. B. could not "hear" Dorothy's confession of sexual involvement with Mr. B., for she knew that facing the fact would mean that she would have to give up her husband, and would also have to feel more guilty toward Dorothy.

Clearly demonstrated in Dorothy's case, is the intense anxiety and guilt aroused in her by the sexual experience. Dorothy's dream reveals her disgust and shame over it. Her comments to the psychiatrist show how guilty she felt toward her mother and how intensely she feared that her mother would reject her. She could not tell her mother of the second series of sexual episodes because she did not want to separate her mother and her stepfather again. She feared, too, that if her mother were faced with the choice of rejecting either her or her husband, her mother would reject her.

V

Elizabeth K. was an attractive and very flirtatious eight-year-old girl who had a history of several sexual contacts with the 51-year-old stepfather of a playmate. According to the history, Mary, the playmate, offered Elizabeth a candy bar "to come to my house and see my father's 'thing.'" Elizabeth accepted the invitation. She permitted the man to fondle her genitals and she inspected and handled his genitals. She could not tell her parents, she said, because the offender threatened to hurt her if she did. The affair came to light when the offender's son teased Elizabeth about letting men fondle her. Later Elizabeth told her mother that she had enjoyed the sex play. This caused Mrs. K. much concern, as she feared that Elizabeth might continue to engage in such activities, and prompted Mrs. K. to seek the writers' advice regarding the proper way of dealing with Elizabeth's sexual problems.

Elizabeth was the fifth of 11 children. Her mother said that there was nothing remarkable about Elizabeth's personality or development except that she was the prettiest and most attractive of

the children, and that she seemed to crave the attention and approval of adults more than the other children did. For example, she occasionally pretended that she was sick so that her mother would show her special attention; often she got up at night on the pretext of getting a drink of water to visit with her mother and father downstairs. According to Mrs. K., Elizabeth seemed to try hard to make an impression on casual adult acquaintances, and such acquaintances usually paid more attention to Elizabeth than to the other children. Mrs. K. disapproved of this, as she feared the attention might "go to Elizabeth's head."

Mrs. K. volunteered that she and her husband disagreed about the raising of the children. Mr. K. loved the children but "emphasizes absolute obedience and doesn't regard the children as individuals." Mrs. K. believed in being completely frank with the children about sex; she answered all their questions. Her husband felt that she was too preoccupied with their sexual education.

Elizabeth was seen for three playroom interviews; first by a male psychiatrist and on two subsequent occasions by a female psychiatrist. Since Elizabeth's behavior during these interviews revealed very clearly certain of her characteristics—her flirtatiousness and her tendency to manipulate people by playing them against one another—these interviews will be presented in some detail. The interview material also makes evident Elizabeth's feeling of deprivation and her jealousy of her siblings.

At the beginning of the first interview she was reluctant to leave her mother to accompany the doctor to the playroom. For the first 20 minutes of the hour she stood in the middle of the room and appeared distant and sullen. When asked if she wanted to sit down she replied haughtily, "No thank you."

When the doctor commented, "You have a large family," she replied, "You wouldn't think so the way they treat me." She explained that all the other children picked on her but declared, "I don't care." She then began to rearrange the doll house furniture. When asked about sleeping arrangements in her own house she replied that she slept with her sister, who wet the bed, "probably on purpose."

Elizabeth became flirtatious in her manner, brushing against the doctor's leg as she walked past him, and putting her head very close to his when she talked.

The doctor asked if she had any dreams, and she replied "Yes, but I'm not going to tell you." She added, "Mr. T. [the offender] wasn't in them." The doctor said, "Why do you tell me that Mr. T. was not in them?" She answered, "That's what you wanted to find out, isn't it? I know you doctors." She added in a coquettish voice, "Doctors aren't too nice; they give people shots and cut them open and take out their appendixes."

She continued teasingly to tell the doctor that she was having thoughts but she wouldn't tell him what they were. She said, blushing, "I'm going to tell my mother I don't want to come back." Noticing the bathroom door, she commented, "I wish you were a woman so that I could go to the bathroom." The doctor offered to leave the room. She then asked, "What if I wanted you to stay while I was going to the bathroom? Would you?" The doctor answered no, whereupon she said, "I was just kidding; I don't have to go to the bathroom; I just wanted to see if you were nasty."

Although she was clearly enjoying herself, she frequently asked when the time would be up, saying that she was eager to leave and join her mother. At the end of the hour she and the doctor went to her mother. Elizabeth kissed her mother. Blushing, she looked at the doctor and in a tone of mock petulance said, "I don't want to come back any more with that man." After this she hugged her mother and they left.

Following this interview Mrs. K. telephoned the staff social worker, whom she had seen, to ask whether Elizabeth had to continue seeing the male doctor. According to Mrs. K., the interview with him had upset Elizabeth. She had told her mother that he had asked whether she had seen her parents having intercourse (which in fact he had not). Elizabeth had then led Mrs. K. into a discussion of her mother's marital intercourse. Because of Elizabeth's feelings, arrangements were made for her to see the woman psychiatrist for her remaining interviews.

At the beginning of the second hour, Elizabeth brought to the social worker who had interviewed her mother a note which read, "Dear Mrs. D.: How are you? Thank you for letting me play in the playhouse. I had a wonderful time."

In her first interview with the woman therapist she seemed slightly bored and sighed often. She occasionally looked at the doctor with a penetrating, questioning stare. She asked teasingly if she could take the blackboard home.

She said that once while attending a parochial school she had fallen off a seesaw in the yard. The girls had teased her for this so that she had refused to return to the school. Asked about her mother's attitude she replied, "She felt the same way I felt because she knew those girls had no right to be mad at me." As the end of the hour approached, she sighed frequently and said she was lonesome for her mother. When she and the doctor joined her mother she asked her mother, "Do we have to come back here?"

The third hour opened with Elizabeth telling a story she had heard from her sister about a haunted house. An old witch had a haunted house; a man went in the house and tried to shoot a ghost. In so doing he shot off his own toe. Elizabeth then noticed that the toy gun was broken and asked the female therapist to take it to the male therapist and have him fix it. "But," she added, "don't bring him in here; I don't want to see him for personal reasons." Elizabeth seemed pleased when the female therapist returned with the repaired gun. She broke it again. When the therapist suggested that she wanted the other doctor to fix it again, Elizabeth smiled in reply. The therapist remarked, "Maybe you don't dislike him all the time; maybe sometimes you like him and you want to see if he likes you." Elizabeth seemed annoyed and said, "That's not true." Elizabeth suddenly became irritated. She said, "I don't see why I have to come here; my mother is in there telling that nice lady all sorts of lies about me." She asked if the therapist was the wife of the male therapist. She remarked that he had a nice name.

For the remainder of the hour, she played with the dolls. In her fantasies, the older siblings tattled on a younger girl when she did not take care of the babies. The mother and father punished her by making her sleep downstairs. The mother and father dolls were in bed together and kissed one another.

There were no further interviews because the mother found it inconvenient to come in.

Although our knowledge of Elizabeth's history is incomplete, certain formulations seem warranted. It is evident from her playroom behavior that she felt deprived by her mother and jealous of the other children, who, she felt, received more attention than she. Such a feeling may be partly explained by the number of children in her family. It is likely that Elizabeth's seductiveness

and her manipulative tendencies had in part the function of getting her the attention of which she felt deprived.

Her tendency to play one adult against the other, as she did with the male and female psychiatrists, must have had its origin in her family life. Her manipulative tendency could develop because of the disagreements between her parents, and her tendencies exploited these disagreements.

It will be recalled that Elizabeth's mother was lenient with the children, while the father was strict and punitive. Evidently Elizabeth could get sympathy from her mother after her father had rebuked or punished her. She attempted in a similar way to win the female therapist's sympathy after her play with the "nasty" male therapist. Elizabeth could act out sexual fantasies in relation to the male therapist but then absolve herself (to the female therapist) of responsibility by projecting her guilt about the fantasies onto him. In this way she could feel close to both the male and the female therapist.

Elizabeth's parents also disagreed about her sexual education. Her mother was very frank with the children about sex, while her father disapproved of this frankness. It is likely in this case, as in the others, that parental disagreement favored the child's sexual behavior. Elizabeth, in her sexual behavior, satisfied the very impulse, sexual curiosity, that her mother condoned and her father condemned. It is likely then that Elizabeth could satisfy her sexual curiosity in her relationship with the offender because she believed that her mother condoned this curiosity, and because she could project responsibility for the experience onto the man and win her mother's sympathy for being molested by him.

VI

In the four cases just presented, stress has been laid on specific factors which focus the participant victim's attention on sex and which permit her to act out sexually. In other cases which the writers have studied, however, concern with such specific factors is irrelevant. In these cases, sexual acting out is but one aspect of a profound emotional disturbance which is manifest in all areas of the child's life.

Children of this type are sexually promiscuous; they steal, play truant from school, run away from home and, in brief, have severe behavior problems of many sorts. They are subject to extreme

fluctuations of mood and they react to stress or anxiety with impulsive, frequently self-damaging behavior. They have no friends, and no hobbies. Often they show many pronounced neurotic symptoms such as phobias, tics, nightmares and compulsive rituals.

As would be expected, the parents of these children are severely disturbed. Several of the parents in this series were institutionalized for mental illness. Without exception the children have been subjected, from early infancy, to neglect and to cruel and inconsistent treatment.

Typical of such cases was Pat L., who at the age of four began a sexual relationship with a 54-year-old man which continued until she was 11. Initially, the offender had Pat perform fellatio on him. Later, he had anal and vaginal intercourse with her. He regularly rewarded her for her participation with gifts of candy, fruit and money.

Pat was extremely disturbed. To the male psychiatrist, she seemed withdrawn, lonely and very anxious. She stated that from early childhood she had felt misunderstood and mistreated. She told the psychiatrist that she had to be with people at all times because, when alone, she was terrified of dying. Also, she imagined seeing each member of her family die. She had frequent nightmares which were concerned with death and with the destruction of the world. She expressed the wish that she might be put in a convent because she felt addicted to sex and did not see how she could control herself.

Pat's family reported that she had always been a serious problem to them. From about the age of four, she had violent outbursts of temper. She stole and lied, and cut to shreds new dresses which her father gave her.

Pat's mother had a psychotic breakdown when Pat was born. For two years the child was cared for by an aunt, and then she was returned to her psychotic mother. Her mother neglected her seriously; she often forgot to feed her and occasionally locked her out of the house. She was very inconsistent in her attitude toward Pat; at times she beat her severely without provocation, while at other times she was extremely indulgent. Pat's father was a passive, withdrawn individual who had little contact with his daughter.

In this case, the child's sexual behavior is only one aspect of a general and profound disturbance. Sexual activities, lying, steal-

ing and impulsively aggressive behavior were varied manifestations of her inability to control her impulses effectively.

From another point of view, Pat's sexual behavior may have been particularly meaningful in terms of her feeling that she was deprived by her mother. She received little consistent gratification from her mother, while her relationship with the offender was a relatively stable one. Perhaps she found in this relationship a consistent affection which was lacking in her life at home.

VII

No attempt was made to generalize about the accidental victims in this study. There was considerable variety among them, and the impression was gained that they showed scarcely any more homogeneity than would a random group of girls from the same socio-economic background. None of them possessed those special traits which have been emphasized as characteristic of participant victims.

Mildred A., an accidental victim, differs in important respects from the participant victims described. Mildred was a six-year-old girl who came to the writers' attention through a district attorney's office. Her mother had called the district attorney immediately after Mildred told her the following incident: Mildred had gone to the corner store to get some ice cream for dessert. She returned from the store screaming but still clutching her bag of ice cream. It took Mrs. A. a few minutes to calm her and to elicit her story. Finally she said that a man had grabbed her by the arm as she was walking home and had put his hand over her jeans in the area of her genitals. He had pinched her several times, but she broke away and ran home. Upon hearing about this, Mr. A. took Mildred and went out in search of the man. They found him hiding behind some bushes near the house. Mr. A. beat him and held him until the police arrived.

Mildred's sexual experience and her family's reaction to it differ in characteristic ways from the experiences of the participant victims. In Mildred's case, the offender was a stranger; Mildred received no reward from him and she reported the experience immediately to her parents. The A.'s, unlike most of the families of participant victims, took prompt and decisive action.

Mildred differed from most of the participant victims also in her attitude toward the male therapist and in her playroom behavior.

She was not eager to enter the playroom; in fact she told the therapist she was angry about having to come because she had wanted to go to a movie with her girlfriend that afternoon. She was not particularly interested in the therapist; she was absorbed in her play and did not seem to be concerned about making a good impression. She related some fantasies in connection with doll play which were concerned mainly with teachers punishing and humiliating mischievous children in school.

It was evident that there were certain neurotic difficulties in Mildred's family, but these were not of the sort which specifically characterized the families of participant victims. In the interview with Mrs. A., she expressed no concern about the sexual upbringing of the children, nor was there evidence that she was preoccupied with sexual conflicts. She discussed certain areas of disagreement between herself and her husband, but gave no indication that they disagreed regarding the way Mildred should be brought up.

VIII

This paper has emphasized how conflict within one of the parents or between the parents over a child's expression of her sexual impulses favors the child's acting out of these impulses. It is not the writers' intention, however, to give the impression that there is a mysterious short-circuit between the parents' impulses and the child's acting out of similar impulses. An understanding of the child's acting out must be in terms of the structure of the child's own personality. It has been seen that the conflict in one of the parents or between the parents, over how to deal with expressions of the child's sexual impulses, makes it difficult for the child to develop a consistent and stable conscience that can prohibit the acting out of those impulses.

It may be that the factor of parental conflict in the sexual area has undue emphasis in this presentation. Almost all the mothers who were interviewed described such conflicts, but it is possible that they were motivated by their guilt to look for something in themselves which they could hold responsible for their children's sexual activities.

It should be emphasized that the factors that were found to favor the participant victim's sexual activities are not in themselves sufficient to account for these activities. Other children with similar backgrounds do not become sex victims.

With the foregoing reservations in mind, the factors that seem to favor sexual participation of children with adults may be summarized as follows.

1. *Factors that do not specifically favor the acting out of the child's sexual impulses, but that make for generally poor control of impulses in the child.* Among such factors are deprivation and rejection of the child by the mother and inconsistent attitudes of the mother to the child.

2. *Specific factors predisposing the child to sexual acting out:* (a) Intense sexual stimulation of the child by the parents. (b) Conflict within one parent or disagreement between the parents over the child's expressions of her sexual impulses.

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