

# Violence Against Women

<http://vaw.sagepub.com>

---

## **Nonoffending Mothers of Sexually Abused Children: A Case of Institutionalized Sexism?**

Rebecca M. Bolen

*VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN* 2003; 9; 1336

DOI: 10.1177/1077801203256001

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<http://vaw.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/9/11/1336>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

**Additional services and information for *Violence Against Women* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://vaw.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://vaw.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations** <http://vaw.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/9/11/1336>

# *Nonoffending Mothers of Sexually Abused Children*

*A Case of Institutionalized Sexism?*

REBECCA M. BOLEN

*Boston University*

---

---

*A recent national study found that females offended in 44% of all cases of child sexual abuse reported to child protective services, and that mothers offended in 53% of all cases of parental incest. These findings contradict other data suggesting that the percentage of females and mothers who commit sexual abuse is much lower. The purpose of this article is to explore the historical conceptualization of nonoffending mothers of sexually abused children and the development of child abuse and neglect policies and statutes for the purpose of providing insight into the overidentification of mothers in cases of identified sexual abuse.*

**Keywords:** *child sexual abuse; guardian support; nonoffending mother*

---

---

*In 1981, the first National Incidence Study (NIS-1), designed to capture all cases of child abuse and neglect known to professionals during a specific time period, documented a practice of categorizing a substantial number of mothers as sexual offenders or co-offenders when their children were sexually abused. In a reanalysis of the NIS-1 by Finkelhor and Hotaling (1984), mothers and mother substitutes offended or co-offended in 46% of all cases of child sexual abuse. In the next study of incidence-level data in which perpetrators of sexual abuse were categorized—the 1998 National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) incidence study (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000b)—the percentage of cases in which mothers and other female caregivers offended and co-offended remained virtually unchanged, dropping in reporting states from 46% in 1981 to 44%*

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, Vol. 9 No. 11, November 2003 1336-1366

DOI: 10.1177/1077801203256001

© 2003 Sage Publications

1336

in 1998. Furthermore, mothers offended or co-offended in 53% of all cases of sexual abuse committed by a parent or parent figure.

To place these percentages in perspective, they are compared to equivalent information in random national, state, and community prevalence studies. These studies, which query adults about their childhood sexual abuse history, represent our best estimates of abuse committed or abuse estimated to occur in the general population. Of the more than 20 retrospective random community, state, and national prevalence studies (Bolen, 2001; Finkelhor, 1994), only four provide sufficient information about the offender's gender and relationship to the victim (Finkelhor, Hotaling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990; Russell, 1983; Saunders, Kilpatrick, Hanson, Resnick, & Walker, 1999; Wyatt, 1985). Of the 7,812 respondents across these four studies, 1,971 incidents of abuse were reported, 163 of which were cases of paternal sexual abuse and 1 of which was a case of maternal sexual abuse (Bolen, 2001). Thus, only 0.01% of the respondents in the combined sample was sexually abused by a mother. Furthermore, mothers accounted for only 0.6% of all parental abuse and 0.05% of all abuse, whereas fathers accounted for 8% of all abuse.

The differences between these two sets of data are striking. Whereas mothers commit only 0.05% of all *retrospectively reported* abuse, they commit, either solely or with a co-offender, 44% of all *identified* abuse. Furthermore, whereas mothers commit only 0.6% of all *retrospectively reported* parental abuse, they commit, either solely or with a co-offender, 53% of all *identified* parental abuse. Consequently, mothers are identified as offenders by child protective services at 880 times and 88 times, respectively, their rate of actual abuse.

What can account for the much greater percentage of maternal offenders in cases of sexual abuse known to professionals as compared to those in random prevalence studies? In the only known study to analyze this issue, Finkelhor and Hotaling (1984) uncovered a practice by child protective services workers of categorizing mothers as co-offenders when the workers considered that the mother allowed the abuse to occur, even though she did not participate in the actual abuse. As Finkelhor and Hotaling state, however, "There is a vast degree of difference between playing such a role and being the person who actually physically molests the child" (p. 27). Regretfully, more recent information about

whether this practice continues and whether it explains discrepancies in the rate of maternal abuse between retrospective and identified data sources is not available.

The purpose of this article is to address the significant gap in the professional literature on nonoffending mothers determined by child protective services to be offenders of child sexual abuse. To do so, this article develops two important themes. The first is the sociohistorical context in which nonoffending mothers came to be judged. This portion of the article specifically considers how the historical professional literature on child sexual abuse might have shaped the conceptualization of nonoffending mothers. The second portion of the article then considers the role of child protection policies and national and state statutes in the profession's assessment and intervention with nonoffending mothers. First, however, this article considers the critical issue of language regarding offending behavior.

#### WHEN IS AN OFFENDER AN OFFENDER?

This article considers three groups of alleged offenders: those identified by adult survivors in retrospective random surveys, those identified by child protective services, and those prosecuted in court. Perhaps because alleged offenders in retrospective random surveys are not officially identified, the language consistently used in professional papers for this population is "offenders." Their status—alleged versus actual offenders—does not appear to be questioned. Verbiage for the latter group of offenders—those prosecuted in court—is also fairly clear. Once offenders are identified, they are considered alleged offenders until convicted. Verbiage for the middle group—those identified by child protective services—is also consistent. They are offenders or perpetrators. For example, *Child Maltreatment 1998*, an annual compilation of the NCANDS, states, "A perpetrator of child abuse and/or neglect is a person who has maltreated a child while in a caretaking relationship to the child" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000b, pp. 6-1). "In cases of child sexual abuse, more than half (55.9%) of the victims were abused by male parents, male relatives, or other males" (pp. 6-2). The verbiage of the report is not technically correct, however, because the alleged offenders may not be convicted.

The question for this article, then, is whether to adopt the language of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the more technically correct language. Using the first model, alleged offenders would be referred to as offenders. In the second, the more technically correct language would be “those individuals categorized as offenders by child protective services.” When considering questions of labeling, we must also consider possible negative consequences for applying that label. Because this article will argue that nonoffending mothers categorized as offenders by child protective services may suffer dire consequences—sometimes even more severe than those of the offender who physically perpetrates the abuse—this article will use the verbiage of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

## THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL WORK REGARDING NONOFFENDING MOTHERS

### HISTORICAL LITERATURE

To understand the profession’s current conceptualization of nonoffending mothers of sexually abused children, it is first necessary to understand the historical conceptualization of nonoffending mothers. The first known study of father-daughter incest to consider the mother of the sexually abused child was published in 1940. In this study of 100 cases of incest by Swedish fathers, Riemer stated,

With almost no exceptions, the [father], shortly before the incestuous relationship begins, finds himself barred from sexual intercourse with his own wife. She may be temporarily absent from home (in hospital) or she may be incapacitated by numerous childbirths and from hard work on the farm and in the household. . . . In this situation of extreme sexual frustration there seems to be no available outlet by choosing another sexual partner outside the family. (pp. 571-572)

He continued,

There are several cases in which sexual relations between father and daughter developed into a marriage-like state, which lasted for a long time after the daughter’s adolescence. She might even

take the mother's place with respect to household duties and child care and thus stabilize her position. The mother does not always fight the father-daughter relationship efficiently. She prefers to be left alone, but she is jealous. Very often, of course, she does not know what is going on. But sometimes she seems even to conceal facts from herself. In other cases it is the mother herself who communicates with the authorities when she finds out about the relationship. (p. 575)

Riemer's citation is interesting because it hints at various dynamics that are purported repeatedly in later papers: potential role reversal between the mother and daughter, the mother's sexual unavailability to the father, and her denial or collusion in the ensuing incest. Conversely, the finding that most mothers were unaware of the ongoing abuse appears forgotten in later writings.

The first important dynamic purported by Riemer (1940) is the mother's sexual withdrawal from the husband. The next known mention of sexual withdrawal is found in a case study analysis by Kaufman and colleagues (Kaufman, Peck, & Tagiuri, 1954), who suggested that mothers experienced unresolved anxiety over their own Oedipal conflict that was based on having been hurt by their own fathers' desertion of them. Their unrequited Oedipal conflict was then expressed by "choosing men who would desert them, and by deserting their husbands sexually" (p. 270). Kaufman et al. also noted that the incest usually began after the father and daughter were "abandoned" by the mother, "either by giving birth to a new sibling, turning to the maternal grandmother, or developing some new interest outside the house" (p. 276). Weinberg (1955) noted other dynamics in the sexual relationship, including strained relationships resulting from the perpetrator's "inadequate income, adultery, alcoholism and general abuse" (p. 105), mutual boredom, and even having sexual relations two or three times a night with their wives. He concluded that "many father incest participants did not have tender or affectionate relations with their wives. Their relations were physical, and because they became frustrated by the wives' absences, or refusal to cooperate sexually, they became intensely frustrated and sexually restless" (p. 110).

Another purported dynamic noted by Riemer (1940)—role reversal—was documented only rarely prior to 1960. Again, Kaufman et al. (1954) noted:

The mothers singled out one daughter whom they treated in a special fashion. This daughter was given excellent physical care, was often overindulged materially, [and] was encouraged to assume responsibility beyond her years. . . . [The mothers] forced this daughter to become their confidante, helper with the other children, and advisor. They relinquished their responsibilities as parents so that they, in effect, became daughters again, and the daughter a mother. (p. 270)

Weinberg (1955), however, noted that the fathers created an "informal marital relation" with their daughters (p. 157), and the daughter assumed a maternal role when the mother was dead or absent. Rhinehart (1961) also noted the dynamic of role reversal in a case in which the mother "[gave] her daughter to her second husband by placing her in the housewife's role" (p. 345).

The final theme that was first intimated in Riemer's (1940) paper was conscious or unconscious collusion by the mother in the ongoing incest, sometimes by employing the defense of denial to allow the abuse to continue unrecognized. In a later paper, Rhinehart (1961) noted that "in some cases . . . the mother denied the existence of the incest even though it was obvious, whereas in others, the mother's objection quickly terminated the relationship" (p. 339). He also stated that

mothers gave the daughters tacit permission to act out their own forbidden incestuous wishes and the fathers condoned it. It is striking that the mothers used denial to blind themselves to the presence of the relationship for as long as six years. (p. 341)

A final theme that became popular with early professionals but that is not found in Riemer's (1940) paper is that of psychological and personality deficits of the mother. The first known paper in which this theme appeared was by Rascovsky and Rascovsky (1950), who described a case study in which the victim's mother was cold, with "intense genital and hedonic inhibitions" (p. 42). Kaufman et al. (1954) also considered that the mothers of victims in their case analyses were "hard, careless in dress and personal appearance; infantile, extremely dependent and intellectually dull" (p. 269). They were also poor housekeepers and "panicky in the face of responsibility" (p. 269), while feeling worthless and engaging in masochistic methods to fulfill their needs. Hersko and colleagues (Hersko, Halleck, Rosenberg, & Pacht, 1961)

further suggested that nonoffending mothers "harbor a good deal of hostility toward men" (p. 27). A year later, Cormier, Kennedy, and Sangowicz (1962) concurred, suggesting that many mothers were "frigid, hostile, and unloving women," although some were "passive and submissive" (p. 207).

Even though early writers expressed some ambivalence concerning dynamics of role reversal, sexual withdrawal, collusion, and psychological problems, these themes coalesced with somewhat more authority in Weiner's (1964) thorough review of the literature when he concluded,

There is much evidence to suggest that the wives of incestuous fathers promote the incest by frustrating their husbands sexually or deserting them in some fashion. In cases where the wife's unavailability is associated with pregnancy or illness, her participation in the incest might be considered coincidental; however, "incestuous wives" (so labeled to emphasize their usual collusion in the incest) have frequently been observed actively to frustrate their husbands and promote his intimacy with their daughters. . . . The typical personality of the incestuous wife accounts to some extent for her apparent collusion in the incestuous liaison. . . . Having set up a situation conducive to incest, the incestuous wife subsequently displays one of two typical patterns: either she tolerates the incestuous activity with little or only token protest, or by obvious use of denial she blinds herself to the ongoing incest she has promoted. . . . Regarding denial, numerous cases have been reported in which the wife claimed complete ignorance of the ongoing incest until she was confronted with it by some undeniable turn of events. (p. 145)

In 1966, Lustig, Dresser, Spellman, and Murray made another "advance" in this literature, suggesting that the incest served a family function of tension reduction within a dysfunctional family. They listed five factors as causal for overt father-daughter incest: role reversal between mother and daughter, "an impaired sexual relationship between the parents," the father's unwillingness to act out sexually outside the family, a fear of family disintegration, and "the conscious or unconscious sanction of the non-participant mother" (p. 39). Lustig et al. were also the first to note that the mother was "the cornerstone in the pathological family system" (p. 39). In 1967, Machotka, Pittman, and Flomenhaft continued this theme:

The liaison is made possible and later perpetuated by the collusion of several members . . . father-daughter incest typically results from the mother pushing the daughter into adult responsibilities; the mother is dependent and infantile and reverses the mother-daughter role with her daughter . . . sometimes she encourages father-daughter intimacy directly; her collusion is made possible . . . by her very strong denial of the incestuous relation; . . . in effect she is the cornerstone in the pathological family system. (pp. 99-100)

In summary, mothers, who were described as infantile, hostile, passive, and dependent, were accused of setting up the abuse by initiating role reversal and by deserting their husbands sexually. Examples of sexual desertion cited in this early literature were pregnancy, childbirth, illness, being in the hospital, divorce, and work on the farm or household, among others. Once the abuse was initiated, the mother was assumed to collude in the ongoing abuse. Although many mothers denied knowledge of the abuse, writers concluded that this denial was simply an unconscious method of allowing the incest to continue (Raphling, Carpenter, & Davis, 1967; Weiner, 1964). Thus, early writers seemed to assume that mothers had to know about, and thus participate in the maintenance of, sexual abuse that occurred over time. This theme paralleled a similar concept for sexually abused children, who were assumed to participate actively in ongoing abuse, often seducing the offender (Weiner, 1964). Thus, the ideology of child sexual abuse dynamics during this time and even through the 1970s (Gutheil & Avery, 1977; Henderson, 1972) resonated with a psychoanalytic perspective.

#### **FAMILY SYSTEMS THEORY**

This conceptualization of nonoffending mothers also appears in the family systems literature of the 1980s. Tierney and Corwin (1983) published the first known article positing a systems approach to incest. Although also considering the larger social context of incest in their thoughtful paper, Tierney and Corwin suggested that certain family dynamics—role reversal, absence of an affectionate mother-child relationship, and a patriarchal-authoritarian father—loosened constraints against sexual contact within the home. Alexander's (1985) model of systems theory, published at about the same time, echoed Lustig et al.'s (1966)

ideas, suggesting that "incest should not be viewed as an end in itself, but simply a behavior symptomatic of a family that is isolated from the environment" (p. 82). Other writers also supported the thesis that incest serves some function within the family. Possibly the most well-known of these was a model put forward by Larson and Maddock (1986) in which families were divided into four types based on the meaning of the incest, and thus the function the incest served, within these families.

In another paper written about "incestuous families," Cohen (1983) concluded that the two components central for understanding the incest were the mother's "abdication of her role as a mother and housewife" and her "backing out of her sexual role as a wife" (pp. 155-156). Citing earlier case studies, Cohen suggested that mothers were weak, indifferent, promiscuous, or depressed. He also acknowledged that most mothers, although denying knowledge of the ongoing abuse, probably did know about it. Of the family, Cohen concluded that "the incest is a structural pattern of the whole family" that "each individual family member . . . consciously or unconsciously, joins in a 'conspiracy of silence'" (pp. 154-155). Finally, Kadushin and Martin (1988) concluded that father-daughter incest was a "manifestation of a disturbed family equilibrium [that] occurs in response to an effort to establish an adaptation that is functional" (p. 298). Of mothers they stated, "The profile of the mother-wife in the incestuous family suggests a diffident, depressed, unassertive, subservient woman" who is "dependent on her husband for support and affection" (p. 303). They continue,

Some of the mothers have gradually reorganized the pattern of mother-daughter interaction in a manner that is conducive to a father-daughter incestuous relationship. With the acquiescence of their husbands they have transferred the responsibility for household management and child care of young siblings onto the oldest daughter. (p. 302)

Thus, "in some limited number of cases . . . the mother may overtly or covertly set the daughter up as her substitute in the marital relationship" (p. 304).

In 1986, the first known treatment model using a family systems perspective for incest was introduced by Trepper and Barrett.<sup>1</sup> Their model envisioned "all family members as sharing

in [the incest's] development; that is, all family members are both victims and perpetrators" (1986a, p. 7). Mirroring these dynamics, assessment of the mother evaluated her "passivity, dependence, and poor self-esteem, along with possible sexual dysfunction such as inhibited sexual desire" (1986b, p. 16). Treatment strategies included helping family members to understand the dynamics of role reversal and the function of the incest within the family, while also requiring that the mother apologize to her daughter for the mother's role in the incest (Trepper, 1986). Indeed, this model actively rejected any attempt by the mother to place full blame upon the offender.

Although not strictly a family systems model, the Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program developed by Giarretto (1982, 1989) also echoed similar themes. To ensure that sexual abuse by fathers did not reoccur, mothers were counseled to improve their sexual lives with the offenders. Mothers were also made to apologize to their daughters for their inability to protect them, and families were not allowed to reunite until this apology occurred. This treatment model had a great influence on other developing treatment centers, and by 1989 Giarretto reported that it was being used in more than 150 centers across the nation and internationally. Thus, both theoretical and clinical literature with a family systems orientation resonated with the themes developed by early clinicians: culpability of the mother and dysfunction within the mother and family.

### EMPIRICAL SUPPORT FOR EARLY HYPOTHESES

The historical and family systems conceptualization of nonoffending mothers was not accepted uniformly by professionals. Another compelling theoretical base that developed during the 1980s was that of feminists, who suggested that prevailing themes were often misogynist in nature. They developed competing views of nonoffending mothers that recognized factors such as the power imbalances in these families, financial dependence on the perpetrator, and battering (Cammaert, 1988; McIntyre, 1981; Wattenberg, 1985).

Partially through their influence, studies began to assess some of the dynamics purported in the family systems literature. These studies, however, found that the dynamics purported in family

systems literature had limited empirical support. For example, just as Weinberg determined in 1955, Herman (1981) found that many offenders had sex upon demand with their wives. Another study found that marital satisfaction in couples in which the husband committed incest was higher before treatment than even that of nonoffending, nonclinical controls (Maddock, Larson, & Lally, 1991). Faller (1990) also found that significant sexual difficulties occurred in only 10% of couples of abusive biological fathers. A number of studies also assessed personality deficits in nonoffending mothers, and reviews of the literature now exist (Corcoran, 1998; Crawford, 1999; Tamraz, 1996). Crawford (1999) summarized these studies: "The findings seem to indicate that although mothers may manifest some specific personality features . . . and/or distress symptomatology . . . that affect their functioning after disclosure, in general, they fall within the normal range of functioning" (p. 63). Furthermore, in the few studies in which mothers were asked if they knew about the ongoing abuse, findings are fairly consistent that most mothers were not aware of the ongoing abuse. Across studies, 87% to 95% of mothers stated that they did not know about ongoing abuse (De Young, 1994; Faller, 1990; Margolin, 1992). Finally, only two known studies have investigated the prevalence of role reversal in families in which incest occurs, with conflicting findings (Herman, 1981; Macfie et al., 1999).

#### ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME

Even with this limited empirical support, the historical literature and family systems theory may have had a profound effect on the manner in which professionals across disciplines ascribed blame for the incest. For example, a study on attribution of blame by Dietz and Craft (1980) found that 65% of child protective workers believed that the mother was as responsible for the incest as the father and that 85% of mothers gave their unconscious consent to the abuse. In a later study (Kelley, 1990) comparing attributions of responsibility, child protective services workers attributed partial responsibility to the mother even when she was not mentioned in the vignette. In other studies, 70% to 86% of professionals attributed some responsibility to the mother for both father-daughter incest and sexual abuse by a neighbor (Johnson,

Owens, Dewey, & Eisenberg, 1990; Kelley, 1990; Reidy & Hochstadt, 1993). When studies apportioned responsibility for the abuse, 11% to 21% of the blame was attributed to the mother (Kalichman, Craig, & Follingstad, 1990; Kelley, 1990).

Another study considered 277 cases of actual child sexual abuse (Ryan, Warren, & Weincek, 1991). The researchers found that child protective services workers considered that mothers were aware of the ongoing abuse in 82% of the cases of child sexual abuse. The two strongest predictors of whether the child was removed from the home were the mother's responses before and after the report. Still another study by Conte, Fogarty, and Collins (1991) found that 59% of professional respondents agreed that mothers of incest victims should apologize to their daughters for their failure to protect their child, thus implying attribution of blame. A final concern is exemplified in a study of attributions of blame by Hanson and Slater (1993) who found, when comparing nine different motivations for abuse, that therapists and probation officers assigned the least culpability to the offender who stated that he and his wife were not getting along.

These studies suggest that a mother-blaming ideology was particularly strong through the 1980s, although it was not fully rejected even in the 1990s. Because many policies and statutes were enacted, implemented, and refined prior to the 1990s, it is possible that this mother-blaming ideology influenced policies and statutes. The next section considers this issue.

### CHILD PREVENTION POLICIES AND STATUTES

In 1962, Kempe and his colleagues (Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller, & Silver, 1962) proposed the battered child syndrome and thus ushered in the modern era of responding to the problem of child abuse and neglect. Then in 1974 the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA), which charged states with the responsibility of developing procedures "to ensure and protect the safety of the abused or neglected child and of any other child under the same care who may also be in danger," was enacted (42 U.S.C. § 5106a). Importantly, CAPTA's criteria protected all children, regardless of the identity of the perpetrator. In response, all states developed procedures for identifying and responding to suspected abuse. The purpose of this section is to

consider factors that may have affected how statutes were implemented and how their implementation might have influenced policies for assessing nonoffending mothers of sexually abused children.

#### PRIORITIZATION OF INTRAFAMILIAL ABUSE

One of the critical decisions for states in implementing child abuse and neglect policies may have been that of dividing responsibility between child protective services and law enforcement, with states differing in their policies on whether child protective services was mandated to investigate all types of abuse or only abuse by caregivers. In reviewing state statutes, about 80% of states have laws charging their child protective services agencies with investigating all types of abuse (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001a). In other states, child protective services is charged with investigating abuse by caregivers, whereas law enforcement is charged with investigating abuse by noncaregivers. Although this latter method is effective for physical abuse and neglect, which is almost always committed by caregivers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001b), 70% of sexual abuse is extrafamilial (Finkelhor et al., 1990; Russell, 1983; Wyatt, 1985). Yet in national incidence studies of abuse coming to the attention of child protective services and other authorities, 54% (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996) to 70% (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000b) of abuse is intrafamilial. Thus, in practice it appears that many more states refer extrafamilial sexual abuse to law enforcement.

Within identified intrafamilial sexual abuse, parental abuse also appears to be identified disproportionately to other types of abuse. For example, a recent national incidence study of identified abuse found that 51% of all identified intrafamilial abuse was committed by a parent (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000b), whereas random retrospective prevalence studies instead have found that only 7% to 8% of abuse, and 20% to 30% of all incidents of intrafamilial abuse, are committed by a parent (Finkelhor et al., 1990; Russell, 1983; Saunders et al., 1999; Wyatt, 1985). Consequently, children abused intrafamilially, and especially by a parent, appear to have preferential access to protection and treatment in the child protection system.

When sexual abuse is identified, child protective services works closely with the nonoffending guardian to develop strategies for protecting the child. Because of the narrow concentration on intrafamilial abuse, however, the focus on nonoffending guardians has historically been oriented toward nonoffending mothers. For example, a review of studies of clinician-assessed guardian support published before 2000 found that the vast majority of persons assessed were nonoffending mothers. Furthermore, more than 75 papers now have as their primary focus the nonoffending mother, whereas not a single known paper has been written concerning the role of the nonoffending father (Bolen, 2002a). Thus, the prioritization of intrafamilial abuse within the child protection system may have made the actions of the nonoffending mother not only more visible, but also more salient.

#### SCARCE RESOURCES

Another important development that may have led to a greater emphasis on parental incest and a concomitant focus on the nonoffending mother was the increasing numbers of sexually abused children and previously abused adults coming to the attention of professionals during the 1970s and 1980s. With a burgeoning knowledge base, a more receptive society (Vander Mey & Neff, 1986), and the initiation of prevention programs, the atmosphere for disclosing, both for children and adults, became much safer. Reports of child sexual abuse known to professionals almost tripled between the national incidence studies done in 1980 and in 1986. Between 1986 and 1993, when the third national incidence study was done, reports almost doubled (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). Treatment centers also reported large increases in the number of adults reporting childhood sexual abuse, specialty programs proliferated, and conferences specializing in the sexual abuse of children and adults developed, as did new professional journals concentrating solely on issues of child maltreatment. Concomitantly, scarce resources became a reality in many child protective services agencies, which had to contend with budgetary crises. In responding to increasing needs for intervention but scarce resources, as well as for other reasons, some agencies narrowed the range of child abuse and neglect that child

protective services investigated, increased the practice of screening out cases, increased the level of evidence necessary for substantiating a case of abuse, reduced staff, and sometimes even reached a plateau in the workload of caseworkers (Jones & Finkelhor, 2001; Wang & Daro, 1997; Zellman & Faller, 1996). Thus, increased demand coupled with scarce resources may have shaped how child protective services identifies and assesses victims of child sexual abuse. It seems likely that scarce resources, by prioritizing cases, also contributed to the overrepresentation of parental incest and thus, the salience of the support of nonoffending mothers in reported cases.

#### **ALLEGED OFFENDERS ARE NOT REMOVED**

Another reason the actions of nonoffending mothers may have achieved heightened visibility within child protective services is that the legal system incarcerates only a small percentage of offenders. Because of the important need to protect children from abuse, child protective services' policies for substantiating a case of abuse are less rigorous than those of a court of law for convicting an offender. As such, only 17% to 39% of substantiated abuse cases across studies are prosecuted (Brewer, Rowe, & Brewer, 1997; Finkelhor, 1983; Martone, Jaudes, & Cavins, 1996; Sauzier, 1989; "Survey of State," 1992; Tjaden & Thoennes, 1992). Even when cases are referred for prosecution, a substantial percentage are not accepted for prosecution (Cross, Whitcomb, & De Vos, 1995). It does appear, however, that the rate of conviction is high when cases of abuse are prosecuted. In a study by Cross et al. (1995), 94% of prosecuted offenders were convicted, although only 38% of convicted offenders were incarcerated for more than a year. In another study, 91% of alleged offenders in cases of prosecuted sexual abuse (which occurred in only 19% of substantiated cases) were convicted or pled guilty, with 65% of those offenders being incarcerated ("Survey of State," 1992). Thus, across groups of studies, it is estimated that less than 10% of offenders are removed from the child's environment for more than a year (Bolen, 2001). These estimates, however, must be considered tentative because samples across studies are so dissimilar.

## GUARDIAN SUPPORT

If most alleged offenders are not or cannot be legally removed from the child's environment, child protective services' mandate to protect abused children becomes especially onerous. One of the methods by which child protective services has addressed this extraordinarily difficult task has been to place the responsibility for the protection of the victim onto primarily the nonoffending mother. As such, nonoffending mothers are assessed to determine whether their children will be safe to remain in the home. Perhaps because of the difficulty of removing offenders from their homes, the assessment of support in nonoffending guardians is defined at least partially by the needs of the child protection system, with the most consistent indicators of guardian support across studies being whether the nonoffending guardian takes active measures against the offender, believes the child, and is emotionally supportive (Bolen, 2002a). A less frequently used systemic indicator is whether nonoffending guardians comply with the mandates of child protective services. Even with this narrow definition of guardian support, however, the majority of nonoffending guardians are partially or fully supportive. Across the 27 studies reviewed by the author, 76% to 86% of guardians partially or fully believed their child's disclosure. Furthermore, 44% of nonoffending guardians across studies were fully supportive, 31% were partially supportive, and 25% were nonsupportive.

## REMOVALS OF CHILDREN

If child protective services does not believe that the mother can protect the child, its recourse historically has been to remove the victim. Perhaps at least partially because nonoffending mothers have been given the responsibility of protecting victims from alleged offenders who remain in the child's environment, a substantial percentage of their children are removed after disclosure. In those studies that assess the disposition of the child after disclosure, approximately half of sexually abused children are removed shortly after disclosure (Everson, Hunter, Runyan, Edelsohn, & Coulter, 1989; Jaudes & Morris, 1990; Leifer, Shapiro, & Kassem, 1993; Pellegrin & Wagner, 1990; Ryan et al., 1991) and approximately 65% are eventually removed (Faller, 1991; Hunter,

Coulter, Runyan, & Everson, 1990). Important reasons for some removals exist. Some nonoffending guardians are not supportive (Bolen, 2002a). In other cases, nonoffending mothers may request a temporary removal as they try to cope with the multiple stressors of disclosure. Yet that approximately two thirds of all sexually abused children are removed for some period of time after disclosure suggests a systemic bias.

Support for the supposition that the inability to remove the offender may have an important impact on whether children are removed comes from a study by Cross and colleagues (Cross, Martell, McDonald, & Ahl, 1999), who found that children whose cases of sexual abuse were referred for prosecution and then denied were approximately 3 times more likely to be removed from their homes than were children whose cases were accepted for prosecution, even after controlling for maternal support. Furthermore, the strongest predictor of child placement was the decision not to prosecute. In discussing this very interesting relationship between the decision to prosecute and removals, Cross et al. (1999) stated,

We think it is likely that prosecution decisions influence child placement decisions. When child abuse cases are accepted for prosecution, police will arrest and often jail a perpetrator. The criminal justice system may take other actions to restrain the perpetrator as well, such as issuance of a no-contact order. By removing the alleged perpetrator from the home or denying access to the child, the home becomes a safer environment. . . . If cases are not accepted for prosecution, usually due to insufficient evidence, prosecutors have no power to influence the alleged perpetrator's access to the child. In these cases, the child's removal from the home, either by child protective services or voluntarily by a non-offending parent, may be the only way to protect the child. . . .

About 10% of children and families in the sample were presumably caught in a bind. The criminal justice system did not prosecute, and children were placed outside the home. A reasonable inference is that the institutional response to child sexual abuse is not working well for most of these families, and child placement is the lesser of the two evils. . . . When the two primary institutions designed to respond to child abuse reports both find it difficult to carry out their missions for a specific group of children, the tragedy of child abuse is compounded. (pp. 41-42)

Thus, whether offenders are prosecuted, in some instances, may be related to removals of children, perhaps because prosecution provides more legal recourse for removing the offender.

### DISCREPANCIES ACROSS STUDIES

The discrepancy between sets of studies—with one set finding that most nonoffending mothers are partially or fully supportive after disclosure and the other set finding that most children are removed after disclosure—is perplexing. Admittedly, the reasons for such a discrepancy could be at least partially methodological, as few of the studies between sets overlap. Yet other reasons may contribute to the discrepancy.

The first possibility is that partial or full support after disclosure may not necessarily protect children from removal. Indeed, Ryan et al. (1991) found that 27% of sexually abused children were removed from mostly protective mothers and 20% were removed from very protective mothers. Leifer et al. (1993) also found that 15% of children were removed from supportive mothers, and Everson et al. (1989) found that all children of partially supportive/ambivalent nonoffending mothers were removed from their homes and placed with relatives. Thus, being a supportive mother does not always protect the child from being removed, and partial support is an important risk factor for removals.

Another reason for the discrepancy between maternal support and child removals may lie within the legal definition of abuse, which is defined by states. Twenty states restrict their definitions of sexual abuse to acts that harm or threaten harm, or similar verbiage (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000a, 2001a). The remaining states include in their definition circumstances in which someone, for example, knowingly, negligently allows or approves of the abuse, endangers the child, or fails to make reasonable efforts to prevent the abuse. This wording obviously widens the definition of sexual abuse to allow acts of omission. Indeed, as discussed earlier, Finkelhor and Hotelling's (1984) analysis of the NIS-1 found that mothers categorized as offenders were considered to have disproportionately engaged in acts of omission versus commission. Although empirical data are not yet available, it seems unlikely that child protective services would allow the child to remain with a mother categorized as an

offender, even if she were assessed as partially or fully supportive after disclosure. If so, the practice of categorizing so many mothers as offenders, assumedly for purported acts of omission (Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984), might increase the risk of the children's removal, regardless of the level of maternal support after disclosure.

## DISCUSSION

Various systemic priorities may have coalesced so that the role of the nonoffending mother has achieved heightened salience within the child protection system. The first priority involves a system, beleaguered by scarce resources, that has had to prioritize those victims with the greatest access to resources. Even though 80% of states have made intervention with both intrafamilial and extrafamilial abuse the responsibility of their respective child protective services agencies (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001a), national incidence studies suggest that victims most likely to be identified, and thus to be eligible for services, are those abused by parents, and less so, by other relatives or caregivers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000a, 2001a). Furthermore, because approximately half of all identified abuse is committed by a parent, with fathers being the ones who are far more likely to physically molest the child (Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984), nonoffending mothers, rather than nonoffending fathers or other guardians, have become the central family members with whom the system interfaces after disclosure.

The second systemic priority is the judicial system's need to protect the alleged offender's rights. For this and other complex reasons, less than 10% of offenders may spend more than 1 year in jail (Bolen, 2001). Although this finding does not necessarily indicate a failure to carry out justice, it does suggest an important concern with adequately protecting victims of substantiated sexual abuse from continued abuse by alleged offenders.<sup>2</sup> As a result, child protective services has been mandated what may seem the almost impossible task of providing adequate protection to victims, the large majority of whom may be at heightened risk of reabuse by the same offender. In turn, child protective services has placed this responsibility on the nonoffending guardian, most often the nonoffending mother (Bolen, 2001, 2002a).

Perhaps at least partially because so many offenders remain in the child's environment after disclosure, well more than half of all sexually abused children are removed from their homes at some time after disclosure (Faller, 1991; Hunter et al., 1990; Pellegrin & Wagner, 1990), with Cross et al. (1999) having found that risk of removal increased in those cases declined for prosecution. However, they could not determine whether risk occurred before or after the case was declined. Other studies indicate that children are at greater risk of removal from nonoffending guardians considered partially supportive (Everson et al., 1989; Ryan et al., 1991). Furthermore, most mothers in cases of parental abuse are categorized by child protective services as sexual offenders (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000b, 2001b), probably for acts of omission (Finkelhor & Hotaling, 1984). These mothers may be at great risk for having their children removed, a risk that would increase if the offender refused to leave the house and was not forcibly removed by the system. As such, these mothers and their children may suffer shattering effects resulting from the manner in which laws and policies were implemented.

Finally, the historical perspective of nonoffending mothers may also have contributed to a more pejorative conceptualization. Even in the 1990s, a majority of professionals placed at least some blame on the mother for the abuse (Hanson & Slater, 1993; Kelley, 1990; Reidy & Hochstadt, 1993), even considering that she knew about the abuse as it was occurring (Breckenridge & Baldry, 1997; Ryan et al., 1991). Many professionals and treatment centers also considered it appropriate for mothers to apologize for their role in the abuse (Conte et al., 1991; Madanes, Keim, & Smelser, 1995), and some centers did not allow the child to reunite with the mother until she apologized (Giarretto, 1982, 1989).

Thus, historical trends, statutes, and policies may have coalesced to influence the child protective services system in place today. In this system (a) mothers and other female caregivers offend or co-offend in 44% of cases of sexual abuse and in 53% of cases of parental sexual abuse (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000b) and (b) up to two thirds of children are removed from their homes at some time after disclosure (Faller, 1991; Hunter et al., 1990). These findings stand in stark contrast to another set of studies that finds that 75% of all nonoffending guardians are partially or fully supportive (Bolen,

2002a) and that mothers commit less than 0.1% of retrospectively reported abuse (Finkelhor et al., 1990; Russell, 1983; Wyatt, 1985).

The overriding question is why the disparities in numbers across these knowledge bases exist. The frustrating answer is that we do not know. What we can be fairly certain of, however, is that mothers are not physically sexually offending at the rate stated in the national incidence studies but are most likely being categorized as offenders for their purported acts of omission. What is of grave concern, however, is the lack of a literature base in this area. Research is needed for addressing the critical concern of why mothers are so vastly overrepresented as offenders in cases of identified abuse. Questions that need to be addressed are these:

- What are acts of omission and how are they defined across states? How much evidence is required to categorize a caregiver as an offender because of an act of omission? What percentage of identified maternal offenders physically commit the sexual abuse? Does the percentage of mothers categorized as offenders because of purported acts of omission change across states (reflecting policy differences) or within states (reflecting, perhaps, agency culture)? Do the consequences (e.g., removal of children, prosecution) vary by state and within states?
- What are child protective services workers being taught concerning nonoffending mothers and the dynamics of abuse? Are variations in training related to differences in percentages of mothers being categorized as offenders for their purported acts of omission? Is the ideology of the agency or worker regarding the nonoffending mother related to patterns of categorizing mothers as offenders for their purported acts of omission?
- What percentage of guardians categorized as offenders for their purported acts of omission are referred for prosecution, prosecuted, and convicted, as compared to alleged offenders who physically commit the abuse? How do their sentences compare with offenders who physically commit the abuse?
- What are the other consequences of being categorized as offenders for purported acts of omission? What percentage of these mothers lose their children, as compared to nonoffending mothers who are not categorized as offenders? Are maternal offenders who purportedly commit acts of omission considered nonoffending guardians and assessed to determine whether they can keep their children, or are their children automatically removed?
- How are legal rights different for alleged offenders who commit an act of omission versus commission? How are the legal rights of those who are purported to commit an act of omission protected, or are they?

- When is it appropriate to remove children from partially or fully supportive guardians? At what stage are their children removed? Are removals higher when the system is ineffective in removing the offender?

Answers to these questions are critical for a better understanding of the vast disparity between identified abuse and retrospectively reported abuse in percentages of mothers who offend.

Finally, it is important to consider the welfare of the abused child. Although children must be protected from those offenders who physically sexually abuse them and from those who are truly and actively complicit in the abuse, many studies report that sexually abused children have better outcomes when their nonoffending guardian is more supportive (Briere & Elliott, 1994; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993). Attachment theory would also suggest that a ruptured attachment relationship, as would occur in the child's removal from the nonoffending guardian, is traumatic (Bowlby, 1973, 1988; Robertson & Bowlby, 1952), and some studies have shown preliminary support for this contention (Arnold, 1999; Folman, 1998), although this area remains underresearched.

Given that removal is not a benign intervention, it appears that the welfare of the child is best served by keeping the child with the supportive nonoffending guardian whenever possible. When the nonoffending guardian is not optimally supportive, as defined by the system, perhaps a more logical intervention than removing the child is to provide support and resources to nonoffending guardians for the purpose of increasing their support. Although this may be considered a naïve suggestion by some who recognize how difficult it is to protect children from offenders who remain in the home, we have a responsibility to both children and their nonoffending guardians to consider creative alternatives for maintaining children within their homes. The literature bases on attachment and on the neurophysiological changes that can occur as a result of trauma, such as the loss of a parent, support our need to move forward in our research, our conceptualization, and interventions so that the best interest of the child truly is served. And we have an ethical responsibility to end the gendered discrimination against women in the child protection system.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Because the primary purpose of this article was to suggest a process by which the institutionalized practice of categorizing mothers as offenders has occurred, it is beyond the scope of the article to fully detail suggestions for moving forward. Yet the article would be incomplete without offering some suggestions for moving toward a more humanistic model for working with non-offending mothers. Various ideas are briefly forwarded. Again, certain of these ideas might be considered untenable within the current child protection paradigm but may provide alternatives for moving toward a more humanitarian paradigm of child protection. In this section "the offender" refers only to the person who physically commits the abuse.

*Remove the alleged offender from the victim's home.* Removing the alleged offender instead of the victim from the child's environment is not only the most essential, but also may be one of the most difficult, policy changes because it conflicts with society's presumption that the accused is innocent until proven guilty. Regardless, we need to consider this change as an ethical imperative. Creative solutions are certainly possible, and bringing experts to a common forum can allow for the development of strategies that allow children to remain in their homes with their nonabusive guardians. Strategies might include issuing restraining orders that would require the alleged offender to avoid the victim or monitoring alleged or convicted offenders. These methods would place the burden of responsibility for contact with the child on the alleged or known offender as opposed to the nonoffending guardian. Any contact could be punished, for example, by immediate incarceration. These methods would also allow law enforcement to resume primary responsibility for protecting the child from reabuse.

*Legal recourse.* It is recommended that the legal definition of an offender be changed so that only those who physically perpetrate the sexual abuse can be labeled or charged as sexual offenders, and thus potential felons. It is also recommended that "failure to protect" be redefined so that it can only be applied when there is court-admissible or other verifiable evidence that the nonoffending

mother knew about the abuse before it was officially disclosed and did nothing formally or informally to stop it. Evidence of formal or informal protective measures could be waived if mothers feared that initiating such measures would jeopardize their own or their children's safety, such as for victims of domestic violence. Nonoffending guardians should also be provided the right to free legal representation and appeal to a body independent of child protective services if they believe they are falsely judged to be a co-offender or as failing to protect.

*Training of child protective services workers.* The curriculum for child protective services workers needs to be reviewed to verify that it reflects the empirical literature rather than the historical conceptualization. If any agencies have a dated conceptualization, then their workers would need to be immediately retrained.

*Consider the environment of the child.* Given that the vast majority of assessments consider only the support of the nonoffending mother (Bolen, 2002a, 2002b), one of the easiest recommendations is to expand the consideration of guardian support beyond that of the nonoffending mother. The knowledge base on risk and resilience has long recognized the importance of multiple systems of support in the child's environment as well as positive relations with caregivers (Garmezy, 1991; Masten, Best, & Garmezy, 1990; Rutter, 1985; Werner, 1984). Especially when the child lives with two or more nonoffending guardians, the combined abilities of these caregivers to provide a supportive environment may be the more critical factor. Assessing the support of all significant adults could open new avenues of essential support for the well-being of the victimized child, make available resources upon which the nonoffending guardian can rely, and reduce some of the burdens placed upon nonoffending guardians after the child's disclosure of sexual abuse.

*Redefine guardian support.* The current operationalization of guardian support is so narrow that typical indicators of parenting are often ignored, as are the resources available to nonoffending guardians (Bolen, 2002a). Broadening the criteria would allow a more robust assessment of nonoffending guardians,

whereas considering guardian resources would open up other avenues for intervention.

*Consider the complexity of the nonoffending guardians' responses.* The narrow method of assessing the nonoffending guardian's support versus nonsupport and belief versus disbelief (Bolen, 2002a) also does an injustice to the complexity of responses to disclosure, especially when the offender is a loved one. In the "immensely hostile environment" (Hooper & Humphreys, 1998, p. 570) in which mothers are attempting to support their child, there is little room for fluctuations or ambivalence in thoughts and emotions. Yet these fluctuations may be normative as guardians cope with multiple stressors and feel forced to choose between loved ones (Bolen, in press). Understanding and allowing room for these emotions needs to be another essential priority for researchers and clinicians. This work will not only improve our understanding of normative responses to disclosure but will allow professionals to better serve the victims and their families.

*Provide treatment for nonoffending guardians.* A developing body of literature recognizes the traumatic effects of the child's disclosure upon many nonoffending mothers (De Jong, 1988; Wagner, 1991). As a result of the enormous stressors placed on nonoffending mothers after disclosure, the significant losses that occur (Levitt, Owen, & Truchsess, 1991; Massat & Lundy, 1998; Tyler & Brassard, 1984), and their centrality to the welfare of the child, it is recommended that nonoffending mothers have access to, if desired, a licensed, graduate-level mental health professional. Because of the conflict of interest presented by child protective services, it is also recommended that the treatment provider not be employed by child protective services or one of the agencies with which the nonoffending guardian must interface. Instead, it is recommended that the treating clinician be an independent specialist who endorses a humanistic and strengths-oriented perspective.

*Provide needed resources to the nonoffending mother and family.* Mothers experience numerous stressors and losses after the abuse is disclosed. These stressors often include the loss of some or all income, moving, returning to a job, and the loss of previous

support networks (Massat & Lundy, 1998; Tyler & Brassard, 1984; Wright, 1991). During this time of incredible stress, child protective services may unintentionally increase these stressors by placing the burden of responsibility for the protection of the child upon the mother while also making her responsible for transportation of the child to and from appointments as well as other matters related to the child. This intervention, by unintentionally placing more stressors on already stressed mothers, is one of the important paradoxes of current practice. It is very likely that some of the mothers' diminished coping strategies after disclosure are a result of the stressors (Bolen, 2001, in press; Hobfoll, Freedy, Green, & Solomon, 1996), including systemic interventions, placed upon them after disclosure. Thus, bringing needed resources to these nonoffending guardians might increase their coping capabilities, allowing them to be more emotionally supportive to their child.

*Safe houses.* A final recommendation is to create safe houses that are made available to nonoffending mothers and their children for short-term housing. These houses could serve two functions. First, they could provide transitional housing to nonoffending mothers who lose their homes as a consequence of the disclosure. Second, if houses were wired or otherwise monitored, victims and their families could be provided safety from the alleged offender.

Although some of these recommendations will obviously take time to implement, the most important ones—removing the alleged offender, making it illegal to categorize nonoffending mothers as offenders or co-offenders of sexual abuse if they do not physically commit or actively participate in the crime, and requiring rigorous, verifiable criteria for categorizing a guardian with an act of omission—are critical for ensuring that mothers are not themselves abused by the system. In the meantime, retraining child protective services staff as necessary, a more complex definition of support, and a greater emphasis on the child's environment can provide nonoffending mothers with more protection. Making treatment and real resources available to nonoffending mothers as needed can also buffer postdisclosure stressors and may maintain or increase their ability to cope adaptively, thus contributing to the welfare of the abused child.

## NOTES

1. Although Sgroi (1982) and Paulson (1978) had previously introduced family treatment models, they both applied to multiple types of abuse.
2. Indeed, child sexual abuse cases in Cross, Whitcomb, & De Vos's (1995) study were significantly more likely than felony arrest cases to go to trial (9% versus 3%, respectively).

## REFERENCES

- Alexander, P. C. (1985). A systems theory conceptualization of incest. *Family Process, 24*, 79-88.
- Arnold, J. L. (1999). Infants and toddlers entering foster care and Bowlby's theory of separation. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 60*, 2329.
- Bolen, R. M. (2001). *Child sexual abuse: Its scope and our failure*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
- Bolen, R. M. (2002a). Guardian support of sexually abused children: A definition in search of a construct. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 3*, 40-67.
- Bolen, R. M. (2002b). The Needs-Based Assessment of Parental (Guardian) Support: A test of its validity and reliability. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 26*, 1081-1099.
- Bolen, R. M. (in press). Maternal ambivalence after child sexual abuse disclosure. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Separation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bowlby, J. (1988). *A secure base: Parent-child attachment and healthy human development*. New York: Basic Books.
- Breckenridge, J., & Baldry, E. (1997). Workers dealing with mother blame in child sexual assault cases. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 6*, 65-80.
- Brewer, K. D., Rowe, D. M., & Brewer, D. D. (1997). Factors related to prosecution of child sexual abuse cases. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 6*, 91-111.
- Briere, J. N., & Elliot, D. M. (1994). Immediate and long-term impacts of child sexual abuse. *Sexual Abuse of Children, 4*, 54-69.
- Cammaert, L. P. (1988). Nonoffending mothers: A new conceptualization. In L. E. A. Walker (Ed.), *Handbook on sexual abuse of children: Assessment and treatment issues* (pp. 309-325). New York: Springer.
- Cohen, T. (1983). The incestuous family revisited. *Social Casework, 64*, 154-161.
- Conte, J. R., Fogarty, L., & Collins, M. E. (1991). National survey of professional practice in child sexual abuse. *Journal of Family Violence, 6*, 149-166.
- Corcoran, J. (1998). In defense of mothers of sexual abuse victims. *Families in Society, 79*, 358-369.
- Cormier, B. M., Kennedy, M., & Sangowicz, J. (1962). Psychodynamics of father daughter incest. *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal, 7*, 203-217.
- Crawford, S. L. (1999). Intrafamilial sexual abuse: What we think we know about mothers, and implications for intervention. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 7*, 55-72.
- Cross, T. P., Martell, D., McDonald, E., & Ahl, M. (1999). The criminal justice system and child placement in child sexual abuse cases. *Child Maltreatment, 4*, 32-44.
- Cross, T. P., Whitcomb, D., & De Vos, E. (1995). Criminal justice outcomes of prosecution of child sexual abuse: A case flow analysis. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 19*, 1431-1442.
- De Jong, A. R. (1988). Maternal responses to the sexual abuse of their children. *Pediatrics, 81*, 14-21.

- De Young, M. (1994). Immediate maternal reactions to the disclosure or discovery of incest. *Journal of Family Violence, 9*, 21-33.
- Dietz, C. A., & Craft, J. L. (1980). Family dynamics of incest: A new perspective. *Social Casework, 61*, 602-609.
- Everson, M. D., Hunter, W. M., Runyan, D. K., Edelson, G. A., & Coulter, M. L. (1989). Maternal support following disclosure of incest. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 59*, 197-207.
- Faller, K. C. (1990). Sexual abuse by paternal caretakers: A comparison of abusers who are biological fathers in intact families, stepfathers and noncustodial fathers. In A. L. Horton, B. L. Johnson, L. M. Roundy, & D. Williams (Eds.), *The incest perpetrator: A family member no one wants to treat* (pp. 65-73). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Faller, K. C. (1991). What happens to sexually abused children identified by child protective services? *Children and Youth Services Review, 13*, 101-111.
- Finkelhor, D. (1983). Removing the child—Prosecuting the offender in cases of child sexual abuse: Evidence from the National Reporting System for Child Abuse and Neglect. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 7*, 195-205.
- Finkelhor, D. (1994). Current information on the scope and nature of child sexual abuse. *Future of Children, 4*, 31-53.
- Finkelhor, D., & Hotaling, G. T. (1984). Sexual abuse in the National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect: An appraisal. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 8*, 22-33.
- Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G., Lewis, I. A., & Smith, C. (1990). Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics, and risk factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 14*, 19-28.
- Folman, R. D. (1998). "I was taken": How children experience removal from their parents preliminary to placement in foster care. *Adoption Quarterly, 2*, 7-35.
- Garnezy, N. (1991). Resilience in children's adaptation to negative life events and stressed environments. *Pediatric Annals, 20*, 459, 464-465.
- Giarretto, H. (1982). A comprehensive child sexual abuse treatment program. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 6*, 263-278.
- Giarretto, H. (1989). Community based treatment of the incest family. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 12*, 351-361.
- Gutheil, T. G., & Avery, N. C. (1977). Multiple overt incest as family defense against loss. *Family Process, 16*, 105-116.
- Hanson, R. K., & Slater, S. (1993). Reactions to motivational accounts of child molesters. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 2*, 43-57.
- Henderson, D. J. (1972). Incest: A synthesis of data. *Canadian Psychiatric Association Journal, 17*, 299-313.
- Herman, J. L. (1981). *Father-daughter incest*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hersko, M., Halleck, S., Rosenberg, M., & Pacht, A. R. (1961). Incest: A three way process. *Journal of Social Therapy, 7*, 22-31.
- Hobfoll, S. E., Freedy, J. R., Green, B. L., & Solomon, S. D. (1996). Coping in reaction to extreme stress: The roles of resource loss and resource availability. In M. Zeidner & N. S. Endler (Eds.), *Handbook of coping: Theory, research, applications* (pp. 322-349). New York: John Wiley.
- Hooper, C., & Humphreys, C. (1998). Women whose children have been sexually abused: Reflections of a debate. *British Journal of Social Work, 28*, 565-580.
- Hunter, W. M., Coulter, M. L., Runyan, D. K., & Everson, M. D. (1990). Determinants of placement for sexually abused children. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 14*, 407-417.
- Jaudes, P. K., & Morris, M. (1990). Child sexual abuse: Who goes home. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 14*, 61-68.
- Johnson, P. A., Owens, R. G., Dewey, M. E., & Eisenberg, N. E. (1990). Professionals' attributions of censure in father-daughter incest. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 14*, 419-428.

- Jones, L., & Finkelhor, D. (2001). *The decline in child sexual abuse cases*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Kadushin, A., & Martin, J. A. (1988). *Child welfare services* (4th ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Kalichman, S. C., Craig, M. E., & Follingstad, D. R. (1990). Professionals' adherence to mandatory child abuse reporting laws: Effects of responsibility attribution, confidence ratings, and situational factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 14*, 69-77.
- Kaufman, I., Peck, A. L., & Tagiuri, C. K. (1954). The family constellation and overt incestuous relations between father and daughter. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 33*, 266-279.
- Kelley, S. J. (1990). Responsibility and management strategies in child sexual abuse: A comparison of child protective workers, nurses, and police officers. *Child Welfare, 69*, 43-51.
- Kempe, C. H., Silverman, F. N., Steele, B. F., Droegemueller, W., & Silver, H. K. (1962). The battered child syndrome. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 181*, 17-24.
- Kendall-Tackett, K. A., Williams, L. M., & Finkelhor, D. (1993). Impact of sexual abuse on children: A review and synthesis of recent empirical studies. *Psychological Bulletin, 113*, 164-180.
- Larson, N. R., & Maddock, J. W. (1986). Structural and functional variables in incestuous family systems: Implications for assessment and treatment. In T. S. Trepper & M. J. Barrett (Eds.), *Treating incest: A multimodal systems perspective* (pp. 27-44). New York: Haworth.
- Leifer, M., Shapiro, J. P., & Kassem, L. (1993). The impact of maternal history and behavior upon foster placement and adjustment in sexually abused girls. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 17*, 755-766.
- Levitt, C. J., Owen, G., & Truchsess, J. (1991). Families after sexual abuse. What helps? What is needed? In M. Q. Patton (Ed.), *Family sexual abuse: Frontline research and evaluation* (pp. 39-56). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lustig, N., Dresser, J. W., Spellman, S. W., & Murray, T. B. (1966). Incest: A family group survival pattern. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 14*, 31-40.
- Macfie, J., Toth, S. L., Rogosch, F. A., Robinson, J., Emde, R. N., & Cicchetti, D. (1999). Effects of maltreatment on preschoolers' narrative representations of responses to relieve distress and of role reversal. *Developmental Psychology, 35*, 460-465.
- Machotka, P., Pittman, F. S., & Flomenhaft, K. (1967). Incest as a family affair. *Family Process, 6*, 98-116.
- Madanes, C., Keim, J. P., & Smelser, D. (1995). *The violence of men: New techniques for working with abusive families: A therapy of social action*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Maddock, J. W., Larson, P. R., & Lally, C. F. (1991). An evaluation protocol for incest family functioning. In M. Q. Patton (Ed.), *Family sexual abuse: Frontline research and evaluation* (pp. 162-177). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Margolin, L. (1992). Sexual abuse by grandparents. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 16*, 735-741.
- Martone, J., Jaudes, P. K., & Cavins, M. K. (1996). Criminal prosecution of child sexual abuse cases. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 20*, 457-464.
- Massat, C. R., & Lundy, M. (1998). "Reporting costs" to nonoffending parents in cases of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. *Child Welfare, 77*, 371-388.
- Masten, A. S., Best, K. M., & Garmezy, N. (1990). Resilience and development: Contributions from the study of children who overcome adversity. *Development and Psychopathology, 2*, 425-444.
- McIntyre, K. (1981). Role of mothers in father-daughter incest: A feminist analysis. *Social Work, 26*, 462-466.
- Paulson, M. J. (1978). Incest and sexual molestation: Clinical and legal issues. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 7*, 177-181.
- Pellegrin, A., & Wagner, W. G. (1990). Child sexual abuse: Factors affecting victims' removal from home. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 14*, 53-60.

- Raphling, D. L., Carpenter, B. L., & Davis, A. (1967). Incest: A genealogical study. *Archives of General Psychiatry, 16*, 505-511.
- Rascovsky, M. W., & Rascovsky, A. (1950). On consummated incest. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 31*, 42-47.
- Reidy, T. J., & Hochstadt, N. J. (1993). Attribution of blame in incest cases: A comparison of mental health professionals. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 17*, 371-381.
- Rhinehart, J. W. (1961). Genesis of overt incest. *Comprehensive Psychiatry, 2*, 338-349.
- Riemer, S. (1940). A research note on incest. *American Journal of Sociology, 45*, 566-575.
- Robertson, J., & Bowlby, J. (1952). Responses of young children to separation from their mothers. *Courier of the International Children's Centre, Paris, II*, 131-140.
- Russell, D. E. H. (1983). The incidence and prevalence of intrafamilial and extrafamilial sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 7*, 133-146.
- Rutter, M. (1985). Resilience in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry, 147*, 598-611.
- Ryan, P., Warren, B. L., & Weincek, P. (1991). Removal of the perpetrator versus removal of the victim in cases of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. In D. D. Knudsen & J. L. Miller (Eds.), *Abused and battered: Social and legal responses to family violence* (pp. 123-133). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Saunders, B. E., Kilpatrick, D. G., Hanson, R. F., Resnick, H. S., & Walker, M. E. (1999). Prevalence, case characteristics, and long-term psychological correlates of child rape among women: A national survey. *Child Maltreatment, 4*, 187-200.
- Sauzier, M. (1989). Disclosure of child sexual abuse: For better or for worse. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 12*, 455-469.
- Sedlak, A. J., & Broadhurst, D. D. (1996). *Third National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect: Final report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- Sgroi, S. M. (1982). Family treatment of child sexual abuse. *Social Work and Child Sexual Abuse, 109-128*.
- Survey of state dispels myths of child sexual abuse. (1992, January). *Lexington Herald-Leader*, pp. 1, 14.
- Tamraz, D. N. (1996). Nonoffending mothers of sexually abused children: Comparison of opinions and research. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 5*, 75-104.
- Tierney, K. J., & Corwin, D. L. (1983). Exploring intrafamilial child sexual abuse. In D. Finkelhor, R. J. Gelles, G. T. Hotaling, & M. A. Straus (Eds.), *The dark side of families: Current family violence research* (pp. 102-116). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Tjaden, P. G., & Thoennes, N. (1992). Predictors of legal intervention in child maltreatment cases. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 16*, 807-821.
- Trepper, T. S. (1986). The apology session. In T. S. Trepper & M. J. Barrett (Eds.), *Treating incest: A multiple systems perspective* (pp. 93-101). New York: Haworth.
- Trepper, T. S., & Barrett, M. J. (1986a). Introduction. In T. S. Trepper & M. J. Barrett (Eds.), *Treating incest: A multiple systems perspective* (pp. 5-12). New York: Haworth.
- Trepper, T. S., & Barrett, M. J. (1986b). Vulnerability to incest: A framework for assessment. In T. S. Trepper & M. J. Barrett (Eds.), *Treating incest: A multiple systems perspective* (pp. 13-25). New York: Haworth.
- Tyler, A. H., & Brassard, M. R. (1984). Abuse in the investigation and treatment of intrafamilial child sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 8*, 47-53.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information. (2000a). *Child abuse and neglect statutes at-a-glance*. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2000b). *Child maltreatment 1998: Reports from the states to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System*. Washington, DC: Author.

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2001a). *Child abuse and neglect state statutes elements*. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. (2001b). *Child maltreatment 1999: Reports from the states to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Vander Mey, B. J., & Neff, R. L. (1986). *Incest as child abuse: Research and applications*. New York: Praeger.
- Wagner, W. G. (1991). Depression in mothers of sexually abused vs. mothers of nonabused children. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 15*, 99-104.
- Wang, C. T., & Daro, D. (1997). *Current trends in child abuse reporting and fatalities: The results of the 1996 annual Fifty State Survey (Working Paper No. 808)*. Chicago: Center on Child Abuse Prevention Research.
- Wattenberg, E. (1985). In a different light: A feminist perspective on the role of mothers in father-daughter incest. *Child Welfare, 64*, 203-211.
- Weinberg, S. K. (1955). *Incest behavior*. New York: Citadel.
- Weiner, I. B. (1964). On incest: A survey. *Experta Criminologia, 4*, 137-155.
- Werner, E. E. (1984). Resilient children. *Young Children, 39*, 68-72.
- Wright, S. (1991). Family effects of offender removal from the home. In M. Q. Patton (Ed.), *Family sexual abuse: Frontline research and evaluation* (pp. 135-146). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Wyatt, G. E. (1985). The sexual abuse of Afro-American and White-American women in childhood. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 9*, 507-519.
- Zellman, G. L., & Faller, K. C. (1996). Reporting of child maltreatment. In J. Briere, L. Berliner, J. A. Bulkley, C. Jenny, & T. Reid (Eds.), *The APSAC handbook of child maltreatment* (pp. 359-381). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

*Rebecca M. Bolen, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at the Boston University School of Social Work. Her research focus is in the areas of child sexual abuse and female victimization, with more specific interests in nonoffending guardians of sexually abused children and factors related to risk of abuse. She has published two books, The Epidemic of Rape and Child Sexual Abuse in the United States (Sage), a collaboration with Dr. Diana Russell, and Child Sexual Abuse: Its Scope and Our Failure (Kluwer Academic/Plenum). She has made numerous presentations and has published several articles in professional journals.*