

THE USES OF POWER IN THE CHILD  
WELFARE SYSTEM: A STUDY OF  
THE FAMILY AND THE  
SERVICE DELIVERY  
SYSTEM

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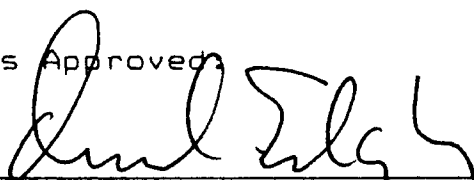
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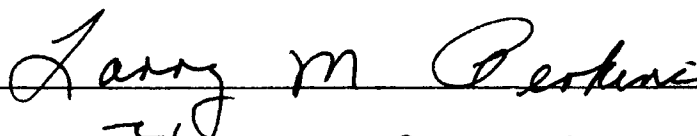
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## I. Introduction

Society is comprised of unique individuals dependent upon cooperation with each other in order to survive. This cannot be achieved without these individuals engaging in an interactive process. The interactive process is the avenue through which these individuals collectively determine the behavioral rules for it's members. The interactive process occurs when the communicators attempt to attach meaning to each others behaviors. An individuals' degree of power, as determined by the given relationship, directly impacts how one interprets the experience of the interaction. The interpretation of the amount of power held by the other, can become compounded as disproportionate amounts of power are maintained, by the acquiescence of one or the other to domination, during the interactive process. The acquiescence to domination means that one of the individual's participating in the interaction can, will, and allow the other to subjugate them without objection. The individuals each occupy varying roles of dominate and subordinate depending upon the unique context under which the communication is occurring. In many situations, these roles are not chosen but rather are predestined, based on the hierarchal meaning of the role to the participants. Every culture defines certain roles as being more powerful than others (i.e. a parent is more powerful than a child). This allows certain roles to have the ability to yield power and control to lesser powerful roles. The belief being that

certain roles perform tasks which necessitate the use of power to carry out the function of the role.

The purpose for the role, and subsequently the power given to the role to carry out that purpose, is legitimized by traditional and/or legal authority, dependent upon the communal values of those to which it is to apply. The individual personality of the person who will eventually occupy the role, is not involved in the assessment of the need for assigning power to the role. Therefore, the performance of the different persons occupying the various roles which have been developed, is a confounding variable. This may result in a misuse of power by the person occupying the role. This can lead to attrition of power to persons in the situational position to have their emerging moods and needs met. This may be in conflict with the original purpose of the role.

The definition of the purpose of the role may be clear, but the necessary and acceptable methods for accomplishing the purpose of the role, is not as well defined. The person occupying the role may be aware of the product expected from their role, but are unaware of how it is to be achieved. Therefore, the person may focus on the end result, and utilize any means available and/or personally deemed necessary, to achieve it.

Through the interactive process, there is a general consensus that government roles are powerful. The ability of the government to control the behavior of persons with a lesser amount power, utilizing almost any method deemed

necessary to maintain the behavior in reasonable order, is reckoned to be desirable. Government establishes laws, rules, and policies for the citizenry to follow. Adherence to the government is encouraged by enacting sanctions for persons who fail to comply to the governmental orders. This use of coercive power is condoned and encouraged by the governmental constituents.

Some of the most significant uses of power and control occur in less grandiose areas. They are less obvious and therefore, may be considered less important. These are the uses of power and control in the parental child interaction. However, this may be the most important as it is in this first relationship that individuals learn how to use power, how to acquiesce to power, and the desirability of obtaining power.

Some of the most basic usages of power and control are found in commonly accepted parenting techniques. Parents occupy a higher hierarchal role than children by the mere function assigned to the parental role. The nature of the parenting function is clear, to provide basic care, to nurture, to teach desirable values, and to discipline. In order to accomplish these tasks the parent needs to occupy a more powerful role than the child. This enables the parent to have the ability to assert their wills and desires over the child's.

Although the function of the role may be clear, how to enact the procedures of the role is unclear. If children simply acquiesced to all parental demands the task would be



easy. However, the child often reacts negatively to following the demands of the parent. Then, in order to have the demands met, the parent has to devise a method to sustain the more powerful role. The method some parents choose is to physically over power the child. The definition of the parenting role contains an acceptance of the use of a certain amount of physical control in persuading the child to conform to the parents desires. An excessive amount of physical control is considered undesirable and is defined as child maltreatment.

As child maltreatment is now defined as a social problem, there are many efforts to develop more effective measures of eradicating its existence. In response, the government is allocating more funding towards prevention programs aimed at arresting this problem. Parental stress relief strategies and the like are regularly telecast for this purpose, as the campaign to arrest child maltreatment realizes its' epidemic proportions. All states have enacted stricter Laws defining child maltreatment and the consequences for engaging in the defined acts. The State Statutes delegate the power to investigate alleged cases of child maltreatment to the Department of Human Services or equivalent agencies. In addition, such agencies are utilized for facilitating plans of treatment and care to the offender, the child(ren), and the family, to prevent further maltreatment.

The response by the government is not unwarranted as according to Oklahoma state statistics in Fiscal Year (FY)

1991 approximately 30,000 cases of alleged child maltreatment were reported, with a 35% confirmation rate. This is an increase of nearly 10,000 from FY 1990. The number of deaths attributed to child maltreatment also rose dramatically during this time period. In FY 1990, 18 children died (confirmed) as a result of child maltreatment. In FY 1991, this increased to 42 children. (Statistics, "State of Oklahoma," 1990 and 1991)

This is a study of the family and the service delivery system. I will be examining the process through which power and control are achieved and the uses of them in the relationships within the parental unit and between the parent and child. I will also be examining how power and control are used during the process of agency and court intervention. I will be seeking insight into how each person in and/or part of the process utilizes, or attempts to utilize, power and control to achieve their individual desired effect.

To gain understanding of child maltreatment This study will focus on three general research questions: 1) How does power develop within the family unit?; 2) How is power used by the system and the component parts?; and 3) What are the parallels between power use in the system and power use in the family?

During the time of this study, I was a social worker employed to conduct child maltreatment investigations for the State of Oklahoma. In that role, I was usually the first person to contact the family when a report, alleging

child maltreatment, was achieved. I would then investigate the allegation and make a determination regarding the validity of the report.

I believe that front line social workers are one of the most qualified persons to conduct research in this area, gathering data as they perform their everyday assigned duties. Presented here is a qualitative study using my client and agency interaction as my data.

To begin my research, a literature review was conducted in several areas to form a foundation for this study. These areas included: power and control; legitimacy and authority; Weber's theory of bureaucracies; child maltreatment dynamics; social work practice; and family dynamics.

The documentation of my thesis will begin with a literature review as outlined above. The theories which aided me building my paradigm, are then set forth. I then explain my methodology and source of data. The main body of my thesis presents two case studies, one of physical and one of sexual maltreatment respectively. Each case is presented in explicit detail. Included in the case studies are interviews of family members and the subsequent response by Child Welfare. The studies are presented in subsections with discussion offered directly after with a thorough account of how the power and control issues presented themselves. I supported conclusions drawn in the discussion with excerpts from over 100 other like interviews and situations. I conclude the study with

presenting the agency response, and examine parallels between the power and control uses found within the family and found in the agency response.

## I. Literature Review

### A. Definition of Power

Marx Weber stated, "an individual has power in a social relationship when he has the opportunity to impose his will on another, even over their resistance, whatever the reason for his opportunity. The power relation must be stabilized for the dominant person to command. This is achieved through various stages of stabilization, institutionalization, legitimization, concentration, and domination." Aron, Raymond and Elgar, Edward (1988).

Power is the probability that one person within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out "his own will" despite resistance, and regardless of the basis on which the probability rests. The concept of power is sociologically very comprehensive. All conceivable variables of human personality, position, and circumstance may put one in a position to impose his/her will on another.

Berle (1967), states that power and property are one in the same. He states that power is subjective, (an aspect of human experience) and objective, (a fact in society). The five natural laws of power are:

- 1) Power invariably fills any vacuum in human organization. As between chaos and power, the latter always prevails.
- 2) Power is invariably personal. There is no such thing as "class power", "elite power", or "group power", those classes, elites, and groups may assist processes of organization by which power is lodged in individuals.
- 3) Power is invariably based on a system

- of ideas or philosophy.
- 4) Power is exercised through, and depends on, institutions. By their existence they limit, come to control, and eventually confer or withdraw power.
  - 5) Power is invariably confronted with, and acts in the presence of, a field of responsibility. Berle (1967)

The birth of power is brought into existence by human beings, a philosophy, and a group capable of organization into institutions. The power concept must exist in the minds of the individuals, for which it was intended and for whom it effects at the time. Power then, is an attribute of humankind. Power is unequally distributed among citizens.

There are several theories which expose that the need for power or the readiness for aggression is instinctual or biological. Such theories postulate that aggressive methods to obtain power are a normal and pervasive aspect of human biology. Aggression, like the quest for power, is only repressed by extraneous threats of retaliation, circumstance, and by individual conscience or intellectual constraint. This constraint is internal and based upon the accustomed moral system or the institutionalized acceptance of the moral system. In fact, Bertrand Russell considered power as the fundamental concept in all social science. Gibbs (1989)

#### B. Legitimacy and Authority

The motivation of the citizenry to adhere to

authority, according to Weber, is "psychological insecurity". Faith as an extraneous control, abdicates individual responsibility in favor of dependence on a source of authority. In addition, a supernatural order underlies the moral legitimacy of general normative rules. (This parallels Durkheim's ideas of the sacred.) Weber postulates three types of legitimacy and authority: 1) traditional; 2) rational\legal; and 3) charismatic. Traditional is the belief in the legitimacy of what has always existed. The belief in supra-individual penalties guards against deviation from traditional norms. The belief in legality is the willingness to obey rules and laws which are formally correct and adherence is carried out in acceptable ways. Charismatic legitimacy is the emotional belief in the philosophy of an individual leader. One gathers a following and attempts to gain power to enforce his ideas. Weber (1947) and Stammer

For my discussion on bureaucracies, I will focus primarily on rational\legal authority. Although all forms play a role in this study, the other two will be discussed later. Authority can only be maintained by continual discipline of the followers. Submission to an order is determined by many individual motives, interests, and various levels of commitment in the adherence to the belief in legality. The strength in the commitment in adhering to legal authority is different for each individual. This difference is due to the unique reasons one feels obligated or not obligated to obey the rules. This obligation is

upon which the rulers can claim obedience from individuals.

'Imperative control' is the probability that an order will be obeyed by the intended persons. Coleman (1974) The intent is to habituate the individuals to a level of discipline under which they will routinely follow the command. Put simply, it is the successful issuing and obeying of rules.

### C. Social Life

In the introduction, I made mention of the influences of control in the interactive process. Before I begin discussion on the institutionalization of power, I would like to stress the significance of the influence of this process on social life. All areas and aspects of social exchange are infiltrated by power and authority. Individuals both exercise and acquiesce to power. As stated previously, many theorists believe this to be instinctual, a part of human nature, an inherent aspect of all societies. Interaction cannot be thought of as being absent of power. Power is a matter of practicality. Power is in the relationship between two or more people, not necessarily the quality of one. Power is multi-dimensional varying in degrees of scope, weight, domain, and cost. Baldwin (1989)

The first interference of power and control begins in infancy. The first time a child is regulated by his/her caretakers in imposing feeding and sleeping schedules which may be in conflict with the infantile desires, the parent



is exercising power. Parents control their children in an effort to provide effective parenting, which is the premise on which this study is based. In the parents effort to parent the child, the parents wants or wishes are perceived as more compelling or more "right" than the child's. The child is forced to believe in what his caretakers deem necessary in order to survive or coexist within the family unit. If the child's does not follow the wishes of his/her caretakers he/she is penalized in some manner. The penalty is dispersed in the form of punishment and rationalized by caretakers as discipline. The punishment is often dispersed in some form of physical or emotional pain, such as spankings or isolation. The child begins to adhere to the caretakers wishes, for fear of retaliation if the caretaker is disobeyed. The child may also do this in an effort to please the caretaker. The caretaker receives rewards for their exertion of power, if they produce a disciplined or 'habituated' child, which is socially desirable.

The interactive process is carried out in an effort to be social. Human beings are social animals; others justify and make meaning of the individual's existence. Roles are self analyzed and the amount of importance of the individual is based upon the impact he/she had on those around them. The confusion often comes in how to carry out the role because this is unclear. It is mostly achieved through trial and error. There is an expectation to effectively interact with the social environment. Human

cultural expectations include being social. A major part of being social involves the learning of acquiescing and exercising power and control appropriately. This includes adhering to the desires of authority.

If power is the essence of socialibility, it cannot be purely instinctual. When looking at power and control issues, a distinction needs to be made between something that is actually instinctual or biological, and something that becomes such a pervasive mode of co-existing, that it appears to be instinctual.

In discussing power and control issues it is necessary to discuss issues of violence. As attempts to gain power and control are often accomplished by violent means. Many sociologists lend innumerable amounts of time trying to unravel the social context of crime and violence. Durkheim postulates that crime is normal and healthy. Aron et al. (1988) Violence is a common, emotional and instinctual element of our culture. Marx states that violent acts, in their social contexts, may be seen as rational. Marx (1976) Acts of violence reveal the underlying texture of social relationships through which they discharge and share relationships. I am not going to discuss the abundant literature available on crime and violence, however, I do think it is important to understand that crime and violence, and power and authority, are linked by: 1) power and authority exist in the minds of people to control crime and violence; 2) power and authority could not exist without those who break the rules; 3) the method to obtain

power and authority are exercised through violent and often criminal ways; and 4) we give those in authoritative positions the right to use violence to control those who are violent and criminal. Gibbs (1989)

It is necessary to provide such linkages as the study which follows, is in regard to violence against children. Violence against a child can occur when the parents use of power and control over the child is resisted in some manner by the child, and precipitates the violent act to the child by the parent. Parens (1979)

Jack P. Gibbs (1989) believes that control itself should be and in fact is sociology's central notion. He asserts that if sociology was more concerned with the issue of control it would make applied sociology more academically respectable and further sociology's policy relevance. He states that attempted control is overt behavior by a human in the belief that; 1) the behavior increases or decreases the probability of some subsequent condition, and 2) the increase or decrease is desirable. Gibbs (1989) In other words, overt behavior is intended to have specific consequence. For Gibbs, power is the subject and control is the action. An individual is perceived as possessing power in direct proportion to the frequency with which he successfully exercises control.

Society is thus structured around persons, their actions, the events that befall them, the relations to other persons, their interests, and their intentions. Coleman (1974) Social life is dominated by power and

control relationships. Human patterns of hostile destructive behavior are determined by life's earliest experiences. Parens (1979) Power and control are synonymous with being social. The premise is that infants are not born with an aggressive hostile instinct; rather this becomes mobilized within the child by the experience of excessive displeasure which is perceived by the infant as too painful to passively endure. The degree of conflict is determined by the quality of the infants symbiotic life experience. The degree to which excessive displeasure and rage were felt by the infant will determine the degree to which hostile destructiveness is mobilized. A nurturing environment can create conditions in the child's life whereby the mobilization of hostile destructiveness can be markedly reduced. (Henry Parens, 1979)

Power is a part of human nature due to the inherent nature of its role, in nearly every culture. Baldwin (1989) As individuals are social they migrate towards other individuals and form human coexistent groups. The biological inability for infants to survive without tertiary care, puts human beings in a position to have to cooperate for survival. This survival need is instinctual as humans are part of the animal kingdom. Thus, power and authority are elements which originated from an instinctual need to survive, not as instinctual elements in and of themselves.

The studies of group organization has shown, that when a group forms, a system of domination by at least one

member of the group quickly follows. Organization into such groups was originally based on kinship or blood relationships, with the natural leader being the one that possessed the quality most needed for survival by the other group members. The legitimacy of the authority of a leader of such a group would be what Weber refers to as traditional authority. For instance, a man becomes the leader of a tribal group due to his ability to locate animals for hunting, and begins to enforce an allegiance by the tribal members due to his ability to provide a valuable commodity. The group begins to hold him in reverence and anoint him with special privileges and goods because of his talents. The leader enjoys this attention and strives to gain more power and goods. The persons bestowing him with such goods and honor do not object to having to go without because of the security in knowing the leader will provide for their survival. One can see how such a situation can easily be abused by the leader even though his position may be precarious. Droneberger (1971)

The first form of power and authority which organized into what we understand as a form of government can be seen in the days of the pharaohs before Christ. The first form of sacred power and authority can be traced to mythology and the belief in the power of nature.

For the most part of history, authority and legitimacy utilized traditional and charismatic means of control. It was not until the transformation of the feudal society (beginning in the 1600 c.) into the capitalist

society, the rational/legal authority was established. The development of the modern state parallels what was happening in society at the time which made this transition possible: ownership of property, the onset of technology, the division of labor, the movement of government into social and economic arenas, and the leveling of social and economic differences. Weber (1947)

In examining social life and the rational/legal legitimacy which is prevalent in our society, it is necessary to understand how this becomes indoctrinated in our souls. This may best be explicated by looking to Weber and his works on politics and bureaucracies.

#### D. The Institutionalization of Authority and the Bureaucratic System

On the institutionalization of authority Weber states, the individual's want of an utopianism tends to minimize the significance of authority. The coercive power and physical force in human affairs has been a conspicuous feature of a large part of modern social and economic thought. The bureaucratic machine is the only real alternative to a bureaucratic system of government, due to the social impotence and pacifism of the citizenry. The bureaucratic government is the only totally inescapable power in the state and economy. The administrative staff becomes entrusted to carry out the decisions made by the incumbent authority. Weber states, "everyday rule is primarily administration". Dronebeger (1971) The apparatus which operates bureaucratic government is the staff. The degree

to which outside forces effect this system depend upon their influence over the administrative staff. Weber depicts the developmental trend towards bureaucracy is that increasing bureaucratization diminishes the chances for the exercise of democratic public control. Bureaucracy leads to the demystification of the world, which in turn leads to the weakening of power of those that are suppose to be publicly accountable. Weber (1947) Weber did not have a single theory on bureaucracy, but instead saw it as a form of political and social organization.

The factors exposed by Weber which contributed towards a bureaucratic system of government were: 1) the development of a money economy; 2) the formation of large nation states; 3) the role of the state away from defense and Law and towards economic and welfare concerns; 4) capitalism which placed demands on the state to develop a form of organization that allowed rapid and predictable change; 5) the concentration of financial resources in the central state; and 6) the leveling of social and economic differences. Stammer

Weber states the consequences of this were that the bureaucratic system of rule becomes based upon the expertise and knowledge of those in power. Secondly, as those in power gain influence, policy making transforms to a private instead of public domain as, "Bureaucratic administration is according to its nature, always administration, which excludes the public. The concept of the official secret is manufactured by bureaucracy and is

defended with such fanaticism by it. The power position of a fully developed bureaucracy is always very strong and under normal conditions an overwhelming one." Weber (1947)

The more diverse and multifarious the institution, the more far reaching it's power. This is the very nature of a bureaucracy. Its' system is so complex, that the power apex is almost impermeable. This is the iron law of bureaucracies, and helps to further the secret of its component's actions or purposes from the public. In addition, this hierarchical form of government, leads to an immense amount of power and authority held by the person at the top.

For Weber, politics is the personal struggle for power. Political activity involves the building up of coalitions and popular following. It involves making perceivable compromises and being accountable for one's own ideas. Political leadership exists where one can find a politician at the apex of a state organization.

Droneberger (1971) A politician has the authority and skill to assert his own preferences and priorities despite the constraints of the bureaucratic government.

Peters (1981) states that functional divisions are indigenous to bureaucratic systems. The fragmented control divert attention away from those of the governmental structure to the problems of organizational survival. Political life becomes immersed in questions involving the organizational survival, therefore they appear to gain influence over policy and government. He maintains that



any type of administration can carry on day to day, but cannot survive radical change.

For Weber, bureaucracy was an extension of increasing rationalization. With the surge of capitalism all private individuals were forced to forfeit their identity, due to the movement of the organizational machinery. Weber was interested in the effects of this trend, on society in general, and how this trend would influence the existing beliefs. Knowing that the onset of capitalism would foster many irreversible trends, there was an anticipation of what the increase in rationalization would hold. The social organizational system moves away from individualism and self supportiveness, to the maintenance of the larger structure, this is a capitalist necessity. Weber saw no way under which modern technology could operate but in a bureaucracy. Therefore, as the need for highly specialized persons became apparent, the proletariat became obsolete.

The only form of legitimacy available to the bureaucratic system is rational/legal due to the structural components of such systems. The movement towards a bureaucratic system is increasing rationality. The legal norm may be established by agreement of the governed and/or the imposition on the governed. The laws are subject to the consensus of the dominant group, based upon the dominant group values and are intentionally established for those who transgress the values of the dominant group. The administration is the machinery which establishes these laws and policies reported to be the convictions of all.

The person in the position of authority occupies an office. His authority is limited or available based upon the elements of the office he holds. The group obeys the authority only because he or she represents the letter of the law. The group does not necessarily owe any obedience to the person who physically occupies the office, but the obedience is to the impersonal office itself and what it represents. The fundamental aspects of legal authority are an organization of officials bound by a set of agreed upon rules, the carrying out of functions necessary to the place one occupies within the inherent division of labor, the provision that the one in authority has the right to impose rules on the constituents, and the person in authority also operates and adheres stringently to the rules of the office himself.

The bureaucratic system theory operates in all formalized institutions. The bureaucracy from which this study draws is the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, (DHS), specifically the Division of Children, Youth and Family Services, (DCYFS), which is but one division within the agency.

DHS categorically fits the description of a bureaucracy. In the event that this may be questioned, I would like to briefly look at the internal structure of this organization, starting with the number of levels, or areas, of responsibility within DCYFS.

SUPPORT STAFF

FIELD STAFF

LOCAL SUPERVISOR  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
DISTRICT SUPERVISOR  
REGIONAL SUPERVISOR  
PROGRAM SUPERVISOR  
DIVISION SUPERVISOR  
LEGAL UNIT  
INTERNAL AUDITORS  
DIRECTOR  
STATE LEGISLATURE  
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

This is just one division within DHS. There are many different service divisions within DHS. All have similar hierarchies which then submerge at the higher apexes, of Director, State Legislature and Federal Government.

The public that is served by this bureacracy, most likely will only interact with the field worker and occasionally the local supervisor. Although, the whole system is responsible to each client. This has an important impact on the client and will be discussed in the following chapter.

In accordance with the rational\legal concept of legitimacy, the bureaucracy involved in DHS is a classic example of how the force of legitimacy operates. Employment with this agency mandates that the employees believe and uphold all the philosophies upon which the agency is based. (In fact, employees sign a contract stating they believe and will work within this philosophy.)

The employee is expected to know, obey, and carryout all policy and procedure that is pertinent to their position within the agency. This also includes State and Federal Laws. If an employee acts in such a manner as to disregard these policies and Laws, for any reason, they are reprimanded accordingly and may be dismissed from their position. The worker is also subject to personal lawsuit by the client, even if acting within agency guidelines, if it is found there has been a violation of Civil Rights. The individual commitment is to the letter of the policy and to the Law, as opposed to any member of the hierarchal system of authority mentioned above.

Even though knowledge of the policy, procedure, and the Law are crucial aspects to the role of the front line social worker, the worker has little input into the formation and/or implementation of them. Changes which directly effect the job of the social workers are often not delivered in a timely manner, and the expectations supersede the information needed to implement them. The secrecy of the bureaucracy that Weber stressed also operates within this system. Again the effect of this on the client will be discussed in the following chapter. The public is not apprized of the goals of DHS, the methods used to accomplish those goals, or the amount of power, authority and influence DHS or the employee holds. All DHS case information is confidential, and the inability for the employee to even state an individual is receiving services through DHS, especially DCYFS, shrouds the agency in

secrecy. The employees upholdment of this secrecy is very concrete. They do this in an effort to maintain more power over the client, in order coerce the client to adhere to the requests of the agency. The employees can also use this aire of secrecy for self preservation from public scrutiny. The secrecy is vital for the agency to carry out it's intended tasks. It allows for the agency to maintain a sense of authority, power and even fear over the persons of the community that it is intended to serve. As this country believes in the rational/legal form of legitimacy, this agency is able to operate in this manner, and is obeyed by the clients, as they are simply carrying out the mandates of the Laws upon which they are based. The clients of any agency will correctly perceive that workers have power because of their knowledge of the complexities of the organization within which they work and their ease to personnel with greater authority and prestige. Douglas and Gregory (1983)

The mandates of DCYFS in Oklahoma are found in the State Laws of Title 10 and the criminal statutes of Title 21. Title 21 under section 843 through 845, criminally define child abuse.

"Abuse and neglect," means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare. Harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare can occur through: nonaccidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse, as defined by state law; sexual exploitation or negligent treatment or maltreatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.

Title 10 gives DHS the right to investigate situations in

which a child may be in jeopardy of any or all parts of this definition. DHS operates within the framework that: 1) all people have a vested interest in the well being of the nations children; 2) children have the right to grow up in a noninjurious environment; 3) families are the best environment for this to occur; 4) if the family is unable to provide such an environment DHS will intervene to assure such an environment. During an investigation, the DHS worker is given the responsibility for assessing whether or not a child's health or welfare is in jeopardy. If it is in jeopardy, the worker then assesses the level of risk and the level of needed intervention. This information is then reported to the District Attorney's office and becomes part of a confidential record. The extent of intervention is dependent upon the level of risk to the child. This can vary from simple social service counseling, to voluntary services, to involuntary services which could include the removal of the child from the home. Throughout this process, DHS, or actually the worker, is responsible for the safety of the child.

This is a very powerful system for families. The Law gives the DHS worker the right to conduct the initial interviews of the child, reported at risk, without parental consent or even knowledge. The Law also gives this same person the authority to go into a home and demand a parent treat and provide for the child in accordance with the Law and DHS regulations, which are based on societal expectations. If the parent does not comply, legal action

can occur, without prior warning or knowledge.

This system of control could only be possible, if those that it set out to control believe in a system of rational/legal authority. Likewise, those that enforce this control, also have to be convinced of the rationality and legality of their own actions, even above any misgivings they may have as they carry out their duties. If this did not occur, this system would cease to exist, as it would not be obeyed or carried out with such vehemence, and any action taken by the authority would be inconsequential for the family. The onset of these types of agencies which are designed to control the family domain, directly paralleled the increases in social control that capitalism requires. Prior to this, the social view held that what occurred within one's family was only the families concern.

Although the functions and actions of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services will be examined in later chapters, it is necessary to expand on the brief information supplied above and lay a little more concrete ground work, in respect to protocol, involved when an alleged child abuse report is received. Any person can make a complaint regarding the alleged abuse of a child. The State of Oklahoma Title 21 section 846 is the mandatory reporting law, which specifically states, that any and all persons having knowledge that maltreatment occurred, are required by law, to report to DHS; failing to do so is a misdemeanor. The report is either taken by, or filtered

to, the local county office where the child is currently physically located. The local office responds to the report, in accordance with the level of risk to the child, within DHS policy. The level of risk is determined by various factors, including (but not all inclusive): 1) extent of injury; 2) location of injury; 3) age of the child; 4) life endangerment; 5) perpetrators access to the child; 6) past history of abuse; and 7) willingness of the non offending parent to provide protection to the child from the perpetrator. Once the risk has been determined the referral is prioritized and a time frame for response is assigned. The referral is then assigned to a social worker for investigation.

The investigation consists of interviewing and gathering information to substantiate, or conversely rule out the report. This involves: interviewing the child victim, interviewing any other siblings, interviewing the non offending parent, interviewing the perpetrator, interviewing collateral witnesses or any other persons, which may have pertinent information regarding the family situation; in that order. At any step this process can be disrupted if immediate protection of the child is necessary.

After all information gathering is complete, a finding is determined. There are three possible findings, under Oklahoma DHS policy. They are substantiated, uncertain, or ruled out. If the referral is uncertain or ruled out, a report reflecting the findings is submitted to the district



attorney, a confidential case record is maintained in the local office, and the findings are entered into the Central Child Abuse Registry. No further action is taken on behalf of the family and no DHS intervention is warranted. If the findings are substantiated, the level of risk to the child is again determined, within this category, and decisions are then made regarding the action taken with and against the family, in addition to the necessary paper work, as reflected above in uncertain and ruled out findings.

A number of possibilities can occur in a substantiated report. In order of severity they are; 1) social service counseling with the family; 2) referral to other helping agencies and/or services to relieve family stressors; 3) referral to other helping agencies and/or services to relieve family stressors with follow up by the social worker, regarding compliance with recommended services; 4) acceptance of preplacement voluntary preventive services with DHS and other helping agencies under contractual agreement with DHS; 5) acceptance of voluntary placement and preventive services with DHS and other helping services under contractual agreement with DHS; 6) involuntary preventive preplacement services with DHS and under direction of the court under contractual agreement with DHS and the court; 7) involuntary placement and services by DHS and the court under contractual agreement with the court and DHS regarding provisions to be met before the return of the child; 8) voluntary relinquishment of parental rights; and 9) involuntary termination of parental rights. At

level 4 and above, the process involves the construction of a formal case plan or treatment plan, aimed at correcting the conditions which lead to the maltreatment of the child. These plans may include such services as; counseling, parenting classes, day care, obtaining supportive income, intensive in home counseling, family visitation, foster care, institutional placement, etc. The family is included in the construction of the case plan and is given a time frame for completion of the case plan, to correct the conditions and facilitate family reunification and or permanency planning.

This is a brief overview of the functions of DHS and the protocol for family intervention. This sets up the foundation for this study. As the issues of study involve working with persons in a social agency setting, the literature review will end with an exploration of some of the literature available on social work practice and the dynamics of family intervention.

#### E. SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE AND INTERVENTION

"Resistance is more marked in relation to social agencies than in the give and take of everyday life. There is something in the way social agencies are administered that creates resistance to taking help from them. Whether social agencies create some of the resistances they encounter, when help is offered, has not been answered, and perhaps can't be. Social work is an inseparable aspect of the community and the best casework does not overcome the

barriers." ("Social Work") Through the interactive process, it has been learned that self sufficiency and self reliability is desirable, expected, and obtainable. Therefore, if a person is receiving social services they must be lacking in either self sufficiency or self reliability, which may be translated into a weakness of character. Social services magnifies the weakness by focusing mainly on addressing the weakness. For example, if someone has no job and cannot support his/her family, social services gives out food, money, etc. Social services does little to build on strengths, help them find a job or a better job, or give them the opportunity to receive training or an education to better their lives as a whole. By operating on focusing on the weakness it sends a message that this is all the person is about. Therefore, through the interactive process one learns that if they need assistance they will be more recognized for their deficits.

In addition, there is the element of whether or not such intervention actually alleviates any of the conditions which lead to the circumstances, which necessitated agency intervention in the first place. In fact, most studies which suggest that intervention, as traditionally administered, does not, and in many cases has had a deteriorating effect. [(Powers and Witmer, 1951, in 12 studies of delinquents, 3/4 deteriorated) (Levitt et al, 1959, in child guidance, 5 to 3 deteriorated after intervention) (Tait and Hodges, 1962, delinquent behavior

increased by 39%) (Miller, 1962, delinquent behavior increased) (Berleman and Steinburn, 1967, school problems, in the experimental group, increased 84.2%, over the control group) (Geisman and Kusberg, 1967, multi-problem families increased 10% after intervention) (Brown, 1968, multi-problem families behaviors increased 96% in the experimental group compared to 52% in the control group) (Cohen and Krause, 1971, wives of alcoholics developed more negative behaviors in the experimental group than the control group) (Blinkner, Bloom, and Nielsen, 1971, the protective services for the aged had a higher fatality rate in the experimental group than the control group) (Berlemen, Seaberg and Steinburn, 1972, intervention produced, rather than prevented, acting out behavior in delinquents).

These studies present a bleak diagnosis for the effectiveness of the social agency's intervention. In response, there is an effort to make some significant changes in how services are delivered. One can look at the alarming statistics, in regard to child maltreatment, to see how ineffectual social agencies are in impacting child maltreatment. Some may argue that society is only seeing an increase in reporting as opposed to an increase in incidence, however, it would make sense, if this were true, to see a marked decrease in the confirmation rate. Available data does not support this position. Additionally, I have spent a significant amount of time discussing this premise with many social workers, who have

been in the field for 20 or more years. Although, this is not clinically or statistically provable, these workers generally agree that the amount, duration, intensity, and severity of injury to maltreated children is worse now than it was 20 years ago. And in addition, they feel less able to achieve successes with the families of whom they are working.

The family dynamics, which make intervention in maltreating families very difficult, include a variety of factors. Most maltreating families contain very closed family systems, this is why abuse has been able to occur. These families are often socially and sometimes physically isolated. They are often based upon a stringent authoritarian parenting style. There is strong evidence that both sexually and physical abusive parents were physically and sexually abused as children. There is a high incidence of substance abuse, high levels of anxiety, and poor self esteem. There is a higher incidence of self-destructive behavior, multiple personality and borderline disorder.

The family caseworker's knowledge, and use of it in his/her work, rests on an assumption about the fundamental importance of family, and the crucial nature of efforts to improve it's functioning. ("Social Casework", 1964)

Each family member needs to be empowered, in order that all members see the intervention as satisfying their own individual needs. If this occurs than interlocking role relationships emerge, which are healthier and more accepted

by the family. Waller (1951)

### III. Theory

In building the paradigm for this study I have included literature on power and control, building of and maintenance of bureaucracies, social work practice, and family intervention. My theoretical framework includes elements of all of the above.

"Conditions become social problems when society decides they need improvement. Significant numbers of people or a number of significant people must agree that the condition violates an accepted value or standard and that it should be eliminated, resolved or remedied through collective action. Society is composed of different categories of people with similar income, education, ethnic background, etc.." Fischer (1976) Those in different strata, experience the same problems differently, and therefore, understand them differently. Similarly, people in different strata propose different solutions. This is one of the most pervasive reasons why it is so difficult to find a "cure" for social problems. Finding a blanket solution to child maltreatment is difficult because each situation is as diverse as the individuals within the population and each individual within the population would propose a different solution.

However, there has to be some guidelines for a systematic approach to the problem in order to secure "fundamental rights". In order to do this effectively, exploration needs to go beyond the action, or omission of action, and begin to attack the core issues which originate

in society, and manifest themselves in the intimate interactions between child and parent, that permit child maltreatment to occur.

The sources of legitimacy which act upon the parent child relationship is macroscopic and encompasses traditional, legal, and charismatic authority. The community assigned purpose of the parenting role and it's end product is paramount to the culture. Communal information on how this role is to be performed is scarce. However, the need for the positive performance of this role is ingrained. The determination of the success of the performance of the role is based upon the compliance of the child's behavior to the values of the culture. Compliance is a submission or yielding to those issuing the demand for obedience. If submission exists, there is an action to achieve it. The action to achieve submission is domination. As domination becomes necessary to achieve compliance, the domination has to have a force. The force is the amount of power and control assigned to the dominator. Society demands performance from it's roles and thus structures itself in a manner which encourages the use of power and control, between and among people, to manufacture obedience to the values of the culture. The ability of a dominate role to utilize power over a subordinate role is advantageous to society members.

To explore this concept, I have attempted to discover how and why persons obtained power positions during the interactive process. And how such influences manifest



themselves in the interaction between the parent and child.

"Power and control issues are introduced in infancy, and excessive amounts, lead to a view of the social world, which is marked by aggressiveness and hostility." Parens (1979) It is the proposition of this study that a child is not born with a penchant for power and control, but rather submits to power and control imposed by the caretakers for their survival. The child experiences pleasure when the basic survival needs are met. As the child develops, their needs mature simultaneously. The child learns that these more matured needs cannot be obtained by merely submitting to the parental demands. In order to actualize these new desires, the child relies on the information he/she has learned about the interactive processes occurring within his/her environment. The child observes others getting their needs and desires met by being dominant in the interactive process. The child collects and stores this information, realizing the more effective the domination, the more chance of getting the desire actualized. He/she then experiments with the techniques and learns which are the most prone to produce the desired result. As the child is triumphant, he/she becomes more independent. This budding independence of the assertion of domination, allows the child access to power and control over his/her environment. The ability to influence another, even over their resistance, to actuate their own desires produces pleasure for the child. This pleasure is parallel to the pleasure experienced formerly by the child

when the survival needs were met. Through this process he/she learns that domination is acceptable and expected in interactions within their culture. Power extends from being dominant. This then becomes the tool for communicating and associating with his/her social world.

The parent child relationship is the most unique and influential relationship in society. Children and families are among the most sacred and protected in this society, and at the same time one of the most abused. The parent to child relationship is the most influential relationship that any person will encounter, and is responsible for teaching a person the necessities of living; even if the teaching of such lessons were unintentional, or unintentional lessons were taught. In understanding abusive parent child relationships, it is important to understand these first two concepts; 1) all interactive processes have an element of power and control, and 2) the parent to child relationship is the most influential and pervasive relationship, for most persons.

The legitimacy in the parent child relationship encompasses all three of Weber's methods of legitimacy. It has aspects of rational\legal authority, as the parent has a legal responsibility for the child, which must be maintained, unless terminated by legal action. It is so legally binding. If the parent does not fulfill this obligation, the child can be taken from the parent. The legal responsibility of parents towards their children makes this relationship very unique. In addition, the

parent has societal expectations regarding their moral obligation to their children. The Laws do not allow for an easy disposal of this responsibility for parents, and even when it does occur it is truly looked on as a moral transgression.

The relationship between parent and child is given credence and significance by the mere fact that the child is offspring of the parent, part of the parent's body and blood. This is traditional legitimacy, extremely binding and influential. The parent-child relationship is valued highly in this culture. The traditional legitimacy is vital. Even in cases where the child has not been raised by and does not know the biological parents, there appears to be a need to reconcile with the biological parent and to complete the emotional legitimacy for the child. There are also very traditional, and often ceremonial, aspects of the parent child relationship.

There are folkways and mores which demand adherence. Society is structured around the concept of family, and how important the family is in raising productive offspring, thereby propagating a productive society. Family is revered, and has always existed in some form, as humans beings cannot survive without a caretaker. The existence of traditional authority and legitimacy solidifies this bond.

The rational/legal and traditional legitimacy, which exists, creates a situation in which the child may succumb to the parents desires, or wants, based upon their sense of

having to obey the parent, because they have to, or, it is the "right thing to do". The parent can also use these sources of legitimacy for acquiring stature over the child, or a sense of ownership or domination over the child. With this brings the notion of needing to control the child, or the right of the parent to exert their will over the child, because of the child's lack of status in the family and the larger society. The passage of the right of domination, can lead to exploitation.

Tradition has great importance, even when it is not ritualistically practiced. An understanding of tradition gives a feeling of knowing "where home is", a sense of belonging, or a sense of what's "right". This culture has placed self worth on the extent to which others act and react to us. Others reactions and actions make sense out of our lives and give meaning and importance to our existence.

The parent child relationship also follows the tenants of charismatic legitimacy, losing and gaining intensity as the parent and child move through life cycles, and not necessarily on the same wavelengths. This may be the most important source of legitimacy within the family, especially in abusive families. Charismatic legitimacy may have the most serious repercussions for its' followers. In order to have charismatic authority, the follower has to be involved in an emotional investment, and when this is exploited, the damage to the follower can be exceedingly painful. In the other two forms of legitimacy one could

adhere to them without necessarily incurring any personal emotional loss. In fact rational/legal legitimacy is very impersonal. Charismatic authority requires allegiance to a person or persons. It requires emotional investment. Charismatic legitimacy is not typically applied to the family nor did Weber explicitly intend it to be so. However, parents are very positively charismatic to their children. If they weren't children would not go to such great lengths to please them, protect them, or let themselves be influenced by them; parents have an intense amount of power over their children in this regard. Children are charismatically linked to their parents, or more accurately their mother, with father soon to follow, from birth. Parents have to do very little to win over the affections of their child and engage their child in a life long pursuit of parent pleasing. Parental affection and parental positiveness, play important roles in for the healthy development of their child. The charismatic influence parents have over their children, will greatly determine the type of adult the child will become, and thus is the importance of making sure parents are utilizing effective, empowering, and positive charismatic influence over their children.

Charismatic influence includes the total parental experience, from fulfilling the child's basic food, clothing, and shelter needs, nurturance, emotional support, discipline, positive role modeling, etc.. This study found charismatic legitimacy to be the most influential in the

parent child relationship. Charismatic legitimacy, as it applies to parenting, aids in understanding the pervasive emotional influence of parents over children and why children are totally dependent on the healthy delivery of this legitimacy. This understanding is pivotal in examining the the interactive process in abusive families.

In order to examine this process, an understanding of the fundamental importance of family, and the crucial nature of efforts directed at improving its' functioning, is crucial. The family needs to be approached as a group interacting and reacting in love and strife or in the words of Sumner "antagonistic co-operation". Times (1964) Waller stated, "The family is important in the life of the individual, because it get's him first, keeps him longest, is his major source of cultural imperatives, and prescribes him with emotional finality. It is important because it not only satisfies the wishes of the individual but it is instrumental in shaping those wishes into a form which only the family can satisfy. In our society the family furnishes the basic environment for personality." Waller (1951)

The understanding of charismatic authority, when examining abusive families, offers insight into why it is so difficult for children to reveal the maltreatment that is occurring. Traditional authority will aid in understanding why society is so reluctant to report suspected maltreatment. And lastly, rational/legal authority can aid in understanding why maltreatment is

reported at all.

"The family exists to satisfy the needs of its individual members (originally the parents) and perform certain essential tasks, from the point of view of society. To satisfy individual needs, interlocking relationships emerge; husband to wife, parent to child, and child to child." Waller (1951) All families utilize these relationships, to their own advantage, at some point. This occurs as domination and subordination are part of the interactive process as a means of getting individual needs and desires met. As interactions occur in this manner, there will be an inherent disequilibrium in power distribution during the exchange. This unequal distribution is not always parent over child. As stated earlier, as the child matures, their needs and desires mature. To actualize their desires, they utilize the methods of domination they have formerly learned. Patterson and Hops (1972) did a study of violence in the home and keyed what they called "coercion spirals". "The child misbehaves, the parent threatens, the child behaves even more obnoxiously, the parent threatens harder, and so on, until finally the weary parent gives in in order to get peace. If parents consistently give in, they eventually train up a little monster who will escalate tantrums, coercions, and even violence to any length in order to force the parent to stop demanding better behavior. On the other hand, parents may resort to physical force in order to win out against the annoying or crying child. The

child, being smaller and weaker, will have to submit to greater force in the end. Since the child is, in this instance, the one to give in consistently, the parent is the one trained to act like a monster. The parent, in fact, becomes a child abuser. Battered babies often unwittingly initiate a coercion spiral by refusing to be quickly comforted when crying." Patterson and Hops, 1972.

Part of the premise for this study is that social workers are in the best position to gather information to aid in finding a solution for this society defined problem. I gathered data for this study in that role. Therefore, in conducting this study in this manner, I had to give special consideration to the possible influences of my role. In effectively understanding the family as a system, one needs to understand and recognize the chaos, even the most effective intervention, creates for the family. The worker needs to also be aware of how relationships and communication are carried out within the family. In addition, credence should be given to how the "system" (intervening agency) operates and what "lessons" the family is learning and if this differs from the intentions of the intervention.

To aid in understanding this concept, I included in the former chapter, information on Weber's theory of bureaucracies. Social services are bureaucracies (as previously stated) and carry with them the liabilities of a bureaucracy. The bureaucracy can be ineffectual, in human services due to these inherent difficulties. The most



difficult being that bureaucracies are mechanical and impersonal entities attempting to work with people. Social agencies are comprised of a lot of administrators and committees which engage in elaborate discussions of what should be done; and a handful of field workers carrying out the tasks. The field workers are trained in their particular agencies policies, and mandates of federal and state laws. They learn sociological theory and evolution, and how to write research papers in school. They learn very little on how to motivate, educate, and redirect people. And even though major issues with families involve effective parenting techniques, very little education and training focuses on these areas.

What then is the goal during family intervention? The defined goal for the worker is to attempt to aid the family in establishing new interactive techniques which empower all family members, and assure that all the family members needs are met. This is to be done by applying impersonal policy and law, which does not take into account the traditional and charismatic influences occurring within the family.

The theoretical assumption, derived from the literature review, is that domination and subordination are central components of the interactive process. That this culture has identified various dominant roles, parents over children being one of them. That when a role is dominant it yields inherent power over subordinate roles. That through this process one learns how to assert power over

another to get their needs met. That one of the necessary needs of the parent is to force their children to be obedient to the cultural values. These given to the family through Weber's explanation of traditional and legal legitimacy and are maintained by the family through charismatic legitimacy. In maltreating families there is such a disproportionate amount of power, that the only person who continually gets their needs met is the maltreater.

The intervening agency, being a bureaucracy, primarily focuses on legal authority. In focusing only on legal authority, it does little to impact the manipulations of traditional and charismatic legitimacy, by the caretakers, over their children. Traditional and charismatic legitimacy are most influential in the family. The children learn how to get their needs met in the manner in which their parents have demonstrated. Therefore, a bureaucracy operating in only legal authority can do little to impact on the cyclical occurrence of future maltreatment.

#### IV. Methods

In my study I examined power and control in the relationship within the parental unit and between the parent and child. I gathered my data from personal interviews with parents and children while conducting routine child maltreatment investigations. These interviews were conducted between February 1990 and September 1991. None of the interviews with clients included questions directly related to power and control issues for the intent to build a data base for this study. Rather, routine interview protocol was followed for the purpose of validating an alleged child maltreatment incident. The data was analyzed to find similarities among responses, in order to reveal core issues behind child maltreatment. After having conducted my first initial interviews I began to see the consistent emergence of power and control issues, at which point I added the information of how power was achieved by whom and how.

The interviews were conducted either in my office, at the child's school, or at the family home, depending on the needs of each individual situation. All interviews in this study were conducted by myself, with no other persons present. The analysis drawn from this study was based on the responses from over 100 interviews with parents and children. I present two case studies, one of which the maltreatment issue is physical maltreatment, and one of which the maltreatment issue is sexual maltreatment, presenting pictorial account of how power and control are

obtained.

The study specifies the interviews as to non offending parents, offending parents, child victims, and their siblings who were not targeted in the specific incident under investigation. In the case studies, information is supplied as to the setting of the interview, and how (if at all) different settings within the same case afforded different information. Particular attention is paid to verbal, as well as nonverbal cues, used by the interviewer (myself) and the subjects. Throughout my interviews, I was very self aware of how my communication influenced the respondent (as is important in this line of work). The setting is of importance in both determining how power was achieved and by whom. I have compared how elements of power differ according to location of the interview. I searched for power issues within the parental unit to gain insight into how the offender came to have control in the family and how he/she sustains this in order to be able to victimize other family members. Lastly, I have looked at how the non offending parent and the child legitimize and accept the power and control of the offender. In discussing this portion I also have included the benefit to the family of the power and control to maintain the order.

I have focused on three general research questions: 1) What kind of environmental and social issues are used to obtain power; 2) How does power develop within the family unit and how is it sustained; and 3) How is power used by the "system" and it's component parts and how that usage is

detrimental to resolving conflicts, which eventually lead to the maltreatment of a child.

I have used a systems approach in my analysis between what is occurring in the families and what is occurring in larger society, specifically within the agencies designed to tackle the maltreatment issue within the family. In so doing it is then important to include the typical (or mandated) agency response to abusive families, which has been formerly included.

I have used a qualitative approach for presenting my data. In my next chapter I will pictorially present two cases, in sections which are divided by interviews and/or important events. After each section, I discuss the content of meaning of what was observed and/or stated. I have inserted quotes from other interviews to formulate a reflection on the sameness' that have occurred across interviews.

Due to the protection and confidentiality of Child Welfare records I have only made some basic indexes to identify the respondents, they will be denoted as follows.

Identifiers	Symbol
Parents: Mother	M
Father	F
Stepmother	SM
Stepfather	SF
Maltreater	*
Age: 16-25	1
25-35	2
35-50	3
over 50	4
Ethnicity is not identified.	
Children: Male Victim	MV
Female Victim	FV

	Male Sibling	MS
	Female Sibling	FS
Ages:	0-2	5
	2-3	6
	4-5	7
	6-9	8
	10-12	9
	13 and over	10

Ethnicity is not identified.

Setting:	Office	O
	School	S
	Home	H
	Other	N

Additionally, quotes are labeled as to complaint issue either physical abuse (PA) or sexual abuse (SA).

## V. Case Study 1

The case studies will be presented in segments, which are numbered in order for the reader to clearly recognize the divisions. After each segment is presented (which may be an interview or event which occurred in the case) is a discussion section. The discussion section also includes supporting information from other case interviews or events to further illustrate or describe how the same forces were occurring in differing cases.

### Section 1.

The first case is one of physical abuse. The incident under investigation was substantiated and the child was removed from the home. The actual incident involved the maltreater punching the child in the stomach with a closed fist.

There was external bruising but no internal injury. The child was a male in age category 5, there were no other siblings in the home. M is in age category 1, \*F is in age category 2.

The intake information and the first interview which formed the initial foundation for evaluating the safety of the child yielded the risk factors to determine the immediate safety response. The following are the initial risk factors which necessitated removal: the age of the child, severity of injury, if the injury was intentional, the inability and/or unwillingness of the non offending parent to intervene, the demeanor of the maltreating parent

at discovery, the isolation of the family, the inability and/or unwillingness of the non offending parent to separate from the maltreater and provide a safe environment for the child during intervention, and reports of past physical discipline.

The first interview

M placed a hang up 911 call to the local police. The police responded and went to the residence. They were informed by M that \*F had "punched MV in the stomach" after MV failed to listen to \*F requests to stop playing with the remote control for the television. M stated \*F carried MV upside down into the back bedroom and "threw" him into his crib. MV cried for approximately 5 minutes and then M thought he had fallen asleep. Although M thought that the child may have been seriously injured, she informed police that she did not go to check on him, as \*F "could have gotten mad at me too. He hates it when I interfere when he's disciplining MV." M additionally informed the police that this was not the first occasion that \*F had struck the child. She further stated that \*F had struck her in the head with the telephone and unplugged it. This is why her call to the police had been disconnected. She stated she was calling the police to find out where she and \*F could get counseling. She initially denied that she was fearful for herself or for MV. The police then contacted Child Welfare and I responded.

Upon entering the home I observed the home to be immaculate, with no remnants that would foretell a toddler



was living in the home. M and \*F were seated next to each other on the couch, holding hands. M asked me if she could get me some coffee, to which I declined. \*F asked who I was and why I came. I introduced myself, my organization affiliation and my purpose. \*F then laughed nervously and stated there was no reason for me to be there, "it was a simple misunderstanding", that he had already cleared up with the police. I informed him I still needed to make an assessment of the situation. I then asked to observe the child. \*F stood up and remarked that MV was sleeping and did not need to be disturbed. He then questioned me as to why I needed to see MV, and stepped toward me. His expression became more serious and somewhat threatening. The police told \*F to sit down, but he didn't. He stepped toward me again. To see if I could de-escalate him, I sat down in a nearby chair and explained to him that because I received a report from the police regarding the possibility of injury to a child, it was my job to check out the situation, and \*F and M could assist me by telling me what had occurred that evening and by letting me view the child to make sure he was alright. \*F continued to insist there was no reason for me to check the child. At this point I began to insist that I check the child. Due to the seriousness of the complaint, I would have to secure that the child was not in need of medical attention. \*F stated that I was being ridiculous and I could go in and see that the child was just fine.

MV was in his crib lying awake, as I lifted up his

shirt I observed red marks on his stomach, directly above his navel (these marks later formed slight bruising). The child made no attempt to resist me, nor did he acknowledge my presence. The child could not be interviewed, as he was nonverbal. I observed that the child averted my eye contact, when I tried to talk to him gently, to ease any fear. I picked him up and brought him into the living room where the parents were still sitting. Neither parent advanced toward the child nor spoke to him. He sat on my lap quietly throughout my interview with the parents.

I asked what had occurred that evening to which M replied, "It was a misunderstanding, \*F didn't mean anything, he had such a hard day and I just didn't realize", \*F interrupted and stated, "I think you can go now, as you can see MV is fine. M really didn't see what happened. I never touched him. We were just playing. You know, boys gotta learn to be tough, so sometimes I play a little rougher than I probably should". When \*F spoke, his voice tone had a driven quality, his face was red, and he was very agitated. Occasionally he would insert inappropriate laughter, which would startle me. M spoke slowly and softly. \*F invited me to look around his house to see how well he had provided for his family. He would tell me often, that he was a "great father", doing all the things "normally done by the mother". \*F never let himself out of sight of M, even as he tried to show me the house. M was always very cautious of what she said and how she said it. She would look at \*F before she would address me

or answer my questions. It was a slightly nervous uncertain look, as if she was trying hard not to make it look as though she was being careful about what she said. Many times \*F would interrupt and answer for M. Several times I had to say to \*F that I had asked M the question. This angered \*F and he would give me a look of disgust. M would hesitate then answer my question. When I would ask a pointed question, \*F would attempt to divert the conversation by saying, "such a beautiful, bright child could not come from an abusive home", or that he was a "good father". Whenever \*f would say something about how good a father he was, he would glance at M, who would reaffirm this. He would then make some comment about how M needed to work on this or that, to become a "better mother". M never contradicted \*F, or made comment to his insults. Neither parent inquired as to whether or not I had observed any injury to MV.

During this interview M did not give me the same information she had given to the police officers who were still at the residence. She stated she had not meant to dial 911, she was simply trying to get a number for counseling, as she and her husband were having marital difficulties. When asked what difficulties they were having, \*F would interrupt and state that everything had been blown out of proportion. I then asked M if \*F had struck her that evening, previously she told me she had fallen. She again denied he struck her. She also denied he had punched MV in the stomach or carried him upside down

or threw him in the crib, as she had told the police, who were still present. The only concession M made in regard to \*F was that \*F "was sometimes a little rough". She maintained that he took care of the house, the child, and her. M stated that \*F was so overwhelmed by all his responsibilities and she was not understanding enough. I thought that I might get different information from M if I could interview her alone. On this occasion they refused to be interviewed separately, which is often the occurrence when interviews take place in the family home.

In initial interviews, it is important to pay attention to subjects, words, and interviewing techniques which generate uncomfortableness for the interviewee. This will often give insight into personality characteristics and into areas which may need further investigation. This is more than just mere anger, which is usually always present, (if the family is not angry or nervous in some way given the nature of the intervention, there is cause for concern). In the above case, any question and/or statement directed to M, which suggested that alternative discipline techniques should be tried, \*F would become angered. He would immediately tell me what a great father he was. Also, every time I used the word "Daddy" he would correct me and say "Father". This could symbolize an authoritarian approach to parenthood which centers on respect for his position.

As stated previously the house did not have any foretell signs that a toddler lived there. The lay out of

the house became of interest to me as \*F was showing me his home to convince me that everything was "wonderful". In the living room there several breakable items at reach to a toddler. The children's books were located on the highest shelf in the book case, (which I later learned from M was so that MV would have to get assistance to get his books). All of MV's toys, in his bedroom, were in locations to which MV was not able to access without parental assistance. It was a three bedroom home, with two of the bedrooms directly across from each other and the third bedroom located at the other end of the home. The parental bedroom was the one at the opposite end of the house, even though it was the smaller of the three.

It readily became apparent that the accuracy of information from M was being tainted in the presence of \*F. \*F would not cooperate with separate interviews, and even if he had, I was concerned for M's safety if she revealed any incriminating information. I had to separate the parents, if there would be any chance of getting more accurate information from M. (At this point neither the police nor I had taken the authority to force the parents to succumb to separate interviews. Unfortunately this had to be accomplished by taking protective custody of the child. As will be explained later, it is preferable to gain cooperation from the family without legal intervention. This then became the next step.) I inquired if M had a relative or friend with whom she and her child could spend the night, or if \*F had a place he could go, in

order that a more thorough assessment be completed; \*F refused to leave his home and M stated she knew of no one with whom she could stay. As \*F began to feel threatened and began to recognize the intention of my wanting to separate him from his wife and child, he became irate. He began pacing, first in front of M, giving her menacing looks and stating this was all her fault, and then in front of me. I attempted to intervene by assuring him that this was only temporary until more information could be gathered. This did not appease him and he demanded to know what more I needed to know. I informed him the child would need to be taken to the emergency room, to which he abruptly interrupted me and stated "Absolutely not". I also informed him I wanted to talk with each of them separately, as I had received contradictory information, to which he also refused. His pacing seemed to serve as a way for him to gather his thoughts and formulate a plan. As he appeared to also be becoming increasingly agitated and hostile, I began questioning him again in order to distract him.

When I attempted to ask him of the normal parenting routine and methods of discipline which were used, \*F stated "You're just trying to pin something on me, I'm too smart for your games". Shortly thereafter, \*F stated he would now have to ask all of us to leave, as we were "trespassing". He became increasingly hostile and eventually had to be restrained by police, as I told him we were not leaving. He was subsequently arrested for

disorderly conduct and obstructing a police officer and served 3 days in jail. (During these three days was when I got the majority of my information from M). After \*F was taken from the residence, M began to cry and stated she needed to stay at the residence and wait for \*F to return. I could not convince her that he would not be returning that evening, but he may be released that following day. I implored M to protect MV and herself by not allowing \*F access to MV, during the investigation, by initiating a restraining order, with my assistance. She refused. I offered to take her and the child to the domestic violence shelter, she refused. She also refused to accompany me to the emergency room with MV as "\*F might return and he would go crazy if he came home and I wasn't here." At this point, I explained the child would then be taken into protective custody, if she continued to refuse protective intervention for her and her child. But this could be avoided by her securing a living situation, by either of the afore mentioned possibilities, for her and her child. She continued to refuse. At this point the child was taken into protective custody and removed from the home.

#### Section 1. discussion

From the beginning the divisions and roles within the family were very clear to me. The parents presented what they felt was a united front, with \*F planted firmly at the helm. The structuring of the house and the items within the house showed the emphasis on the rules and power

structure within this family. \*F made the child dependent on him; to obtain anything pleasurable, the child would have to seek out the parents assistance. The child's toys were placed in such a way that even the simplest forms of independence were not allowed. The choice of the bedroom location also displayed parental authority, by the distancing of the child's bedroom from the parental bedroom, specifically considering the child's age.

This refusal in allowing the child to have even the smallest element of independence is an extremely high risk factor for future maltreatment, which is exasperated by the child approaching the age of independence and defiance. In this situation, that information was readily available to me, simply by examining the living environment along with other factors which contributed more soundly to this assessment. In other cases, this is not so obvious and more attention needs to be paid to the interaction and the verbal communication. Often parents speak of an aspect of being a good parent is being in control of the child's behavior. \*F 2 0 PA "She wants to be in control and I'm not going to let her. She needs to know who's boss. She kicked me, so I kicked her back harder"; \*M H 3 PA "She challenged me. It was for her own good, I had to win this battle"; \*M 2 PA "He didn't want to go, so I had to take control and drag him in"; \*F 3 0 PA "I did it to scare him. He needs to be scared of me so he'll listen"; \*M 4 0 PA "As soon as he knows I can't whip him anymore, he will be out of control"; \*SF 2 H PA "Before, I would tell him to do



something and he wouldn't do it. He use to not respect me, but now he does"; M 1 H PA "when she said 'No', he hit her. She needs to listen to her father"; \*F 3 H PA "He got backhanded for talking back to me, he is to shut up when I talk to him. He done wrong I really don't care why". It is also possible to identify issues of control without the parent making specific reference to them. \*SF 2 0 SA "She can't do anything for herself I have to do everything"; \*F 2 H SA "She is confused and anyway she came to my room. Shit, I even have to get her out of her own lie. She screws up everything"; M 1 H PA "He thinks it's funny to get her confused, and then spanks her for lying, I guess it makes him feel smart or something"; \*F 3 0 PA "I got a board and busted his butt. He was all big and tough until then". The power issues become very dramatic when the parents statements are analyzed simultaneously. M 1 0 SA "I know he has done other things to other kids, but I thought if I let him do those things to me he would not bother her. They are really close."--same case--\*F 2 0 SA "Everything has been messed up. It's me that is the real parent, I do everything for her. I bathed her, I potty trained her. Leaving her with her mother is going to screw her up. Nobody knows, anymore, how to raise girls. She needs to know it is her daddy that she is suppose to depend on to teach her about life". The interaction between the child and parent can reveal control issues, as when the parent superimposes over the child's play, what they think the child should involve themselves with, sport they should

play or ignores the child's requests. More subtle interactions occur when the child reverts nonverbally to the parent for approval to engage in an activity or type of play. In very small children, even if a parent verbalizes that they do not control the child, asking the parent to join the child in free play can give the observer information about the control dynamics within the relationship.

M choosing \*F over her child, was expected, because of her obvious fear of \*F and her dependence upon him. This is very often the common response by the non offending parent. One may want to speculate that this is an attempt by the family to stonewall the social worker, in the hopes of preventing removal of the child. However, even when it is explained to the parent that the child will be removed, if they make the decision to stay with the maltreater and/or the child is actually removed, neither usually significantly impacts the parents decision to continue to remain with the maltreater. This also occurs even when the maltreater is not present and the non offending parent can take the child and be placed in a safe place, without initially having to deal with the offender. The power of the offender over the family is particularly strong in this area. If the non offending parent chooses to part with the maltreater, the immediate response to protect the child is often abandoned, when the parents begin communicating with each other and/or when the remaining parent feels they can make it on their own. This can be obtained by the

maltreater from his spouse, either by the spouse knowing of the maltreater's predictable response or by the unpredictability of the spouse's response. Either of the responses will motivate the non offender in what appears to be his/her unwillingness to protect the child. However, the most accurate assessment is that due to conditioning he/she is unable to protect the child even though the child may be taken from the home.

The other immediate question may be why did M inform the police of what had occurred and not me. The answer is twofold. First of all both parents were unprepared for the police as \*F did not know they had been called and M may not have expected the police to respond to the hang up call. They did not have the time nor the opportunity to come up with a plausible explanation for the 911 call other than M knowing it's purpose. Secondly, \*F's utilizes a dominate authoritarian interaction with M, therefore, it would make sense that M would feel more compelled to succumb to the innate authority of two male police officers. I was unable to bring out this yielding to authority characteristic for M, as the police officers did. In the long run, this was beneficial to both her and I.

\*F's response to both myself and the police in retrospect was predictable. Persons who so strongly possess the need to utilize power and control assume that this can be asserted over anybody. His initial attempts to use this came in the tone of his voice and his mannerisms. He tried to persuade me with charisma, that everything was

fine. When I wasn't persuaded, he needed to up the ante by confronting me and just giving me bits and pieces of the truth, so I would think he was giving me all the information. For a brief period of time he assumed this worked and was thereby surprised of my wanting more information. His next approach was to use subtle physical intimidation, by standing up and pacing in front of me and M. It was obvious that this worked on M so he expected it would work on me. As I pressed further he again upped the ante by asserting himself as the authority of the house and I was the invader. If there was not sufficient concern for the child's safety, this may have been the end of our encounter. When this again was unsuccessful, he resorted to the ultimate attack by attempting to physically attack, and this was up ended by the police.

In most child maltreatment cases it does not go this far, however, persons with very strong issues with power and control are extremely difficult to de-escalate. Often times the only way to de-escalate them is by consciously yielding to their sense of power and control, and once they feel empowered, to proceed with the interview on their terms. Referred to as a "constructive coercive interview".

Another control issue, which was apparent in this situation, was the social isolation of this family. M could not offer any friend or relative with whom she could stay. An initial combat from the reader may be that the family would be embarrassed or maybe didn't want friends and family to be involved. Most families want the social

M's demeanor in the first interview was very subdued. She readily offered intimate details of her relationship with \*F. She also offered many details of both their families of origin. What I had learned from M was that she came from a sexually abusive home. Her father was an alcoholic, who is currently in recovery; her mother was a stable person in M's life until about age 13. When she was 13 years old her parents got a divorce, after which her mother began abusing drugs, and was prostituting for a short period of time until she died of a drug overdose when M was 15. Between the ages of 13 and 15, M had made several suicide attempts. the last of which left her partially paralyzed, (she attempted to kill herself by shooting herself in the neck). Due to the drastic nature of her suicidal attempts, she was in and out of inpatient treatment facilities until age seventeen, when she went to a foster home next door to \*F mother's residence. This is when she first met \*F. He was 28 years old when they first met. M has little communication with her father except that she receives a \$2000 dollar a month maintenance payment from him.

M states that she became friends with \*F, and that when she moved away to go to college, \*F volunteered to move her from the east coast to Oklahoma. He helped her to get settled and then M stated that they had sexual relations which ended up in a pregnancy. They decided to get married and remain in Oklahoma for her to attend college.

M has no contact with any relatives. She states her mother's side of the family doesn't speak to her because they blame her for her mother's death. Her father has no contact with his relatives, so she knows little of his family. She has one older sister whom she contacts occasionally but states they do not have a close relationship.

M views \*F as her savior, she is charismatically drawn to him. She views herself as unlovable except by him. She even feels her child as being more attached to \*F than herself. She truly feels that if it were not for this man, she would be unable to care for herself or her child. Thus the reason for appearing to choose her relationship with \*F over the safety of her child. She assumes she will eventually get back her child but if she loses \*F he may not return. Additionally, she firmly believes that without \*F help, she will not get her child back.

As persons often define themselves as others represent and respond to them, M at this point probably would be incapable of taking care of herself and her child. Her definition of self is what \*F tells her she is and from the information about her history, it is evident that she was not presented with the life experiences which would enable to her to achieve a good sense of self.

\*F and other persons who dominate relationships with power and control have to actively seek out persons who would allow this to happen. Not only was M physically incapacitated into a depowering lifestyle, her life

experiences placed her into a subordinate role. The historical information received on \*F showed a life time of using and getting away with the insubordination of others. He has a conflicted and over enmeshed relationship with his mother. He had a juvenile and adult record of deviant sexual conduct, including voyerism and exhibitionism. He had received psychiatric treatment periodically from age 16 to 20. He was also a prime suspect in a rape and battery case. It was reported that both as a juvenile and as an adult he would often go out late at night and walk the streets. He had no relationship with his father as an adult, but it was reported that his father was abusive to him as a child. M was not his first serious relationship. He had been engaged, which ended when he was suspected of the rape mentioned above. Although he was suspected of many sexually oriented crimes, he was never convicted. It was reported that his mother rescued him from most run ins with the law. He also served briefly in the military and received a discharge for psychiatric reasons, (military records could not be accessed).

Although M stated that she felt that she had a primarily good relationship with \*F, information was located that at one point she had issued a restraining order against him. In this restraining order she wrote that \*F was physically abusive to herself and MV on many occasions, and that he had forced her to have sexual relations with him against her will. She also informed me that he would lock her in her room or remove the batteries

from her wheel chair when he was upset with her.

## Section 2. Discussion

The history presented in the above section is very startling and is a dramatic picture of what occurs, to a somewhat lesser degree, in many abusive families. Issues which occur with some consistency in abusive families are: history of physical abuse in the parent's childhood home; alcohol and drug issues; social isolation; absence and or discord in the attachment with biological family of parent; high stress; authoritarian style parenting by the maltreater; view primary role of parent as "controlling" child's behavior; and subordination of other family members. What makes this discussion unique is that I am not only looking at the symptomatic issues but how this power comes to be. The allusion of charismatic authority that the maltreater has over the family to legitimize his actions is paramount. This appears to be a primary issue of how the maltreatment perpetuates.

This could aid in explaining why the parent so stringently objects to the request to discontinue the use of physical discipline and in addition totally objects to the child having the knowledge that physical discipline is no longer allowed. Parents will often refer to this loss of control during the interview process. \*M 2 H PA "I can discipline my kids as I want. I'll smack them or whip them if I think they need it. You take that away and they really will be wild"; \*SF 2 0 SA "A girl needs to know that



if she comes on to a guy she will get what she deserves. That's what I taught her, it wasn't abuse, it was a lesson" (FV in age category 2); \*M 2 H PA "She was acting like the mother"; \*F 4 0 PA "...need a strong hand. If my father hadn't whipped me like he did I would be out smoking dope or be in McAlister, whipping kids keeps them in line. If he thinks I can't do that any more, you might as well keep him, because I won't be able to do anything with him anymore"; \*M 4 0 PA "If you all take him, I don't want him back. I won't be able to control him. He'll know that he can get away with anything." \*SF 3 0 PA "If you don't discipline your kids you will have a problem later" \*M 2 H PA "I spank my kids when they need it. We leave a paddle around the house for a reminder." M 2 H SA "You have no right to interview my kid without my permission."

This control doctrine is accepted by the victims. They express dislike for the method but most of them voice that they feel the parent as the right to control them. Most children recall abusive incidents with a blase' attitude, their affect is often more foretelling than their statements. MV 2 S PA "Dad slapped me because I was banging on the wall. I get spankings all the time." FV 10 H PA "My dad hits me with his hand but not very hard, it's O.K." FV 7 S PA "You can never move, that makes her more mad, you get it harder then." MV 9 S PA "I told her it hurt and she hit me harder. They usually use the belt on my back because it hurts me more and they want to make sure I feel it." FV 8 S SA "He covered my mouth because I was

screaming, he didn't care that I couldn't breathe." MV 8 H PA "I don't like it because she never gives me hugs or says she's sorry afterwards. If only she'd say she's sorry." FV 10 S PA "My dad slapped me in the face and punched my in the eye because I said I was leaving." MV 10 S PA "When she tells him to stop he hits us harder."

Children often make such statements with little affect and express no initially evidenced trauma over their parent's discipline method. They will talk of the maltreatment in negative terms using words like "whuppin...beating...spanking..etc."

Those statements above being only excerpts from interviews, make it difficult for the reader to imagine the child's affect during the interview. Many times, children will show the worker severe injuries including bruising, bite marks, burns, lacerations, etc. willingly and without emotional outburst. They generally undertake this portion with complete compliance, and usually do not try to invoke a sympathetic response from the worker. The child often makes remarks about how they would like the physical discipline and/or sexual molestation to cease but they rarely remark directly about any wrongdoing by the caretaker.

Additionally, statements like those above, are often quickly tempered by the child with statements about how they provoked the act to occur, or how the maltreatment does not occur that often, or how they usually don't receive injuries. The child often owns the responsibility

of the maltreaters actions. The manner in which the child tempers the statements, making excuses or rationalization of the parents action, gives information that the child may inherently know that the maltreatment was unacceptable. Or they may assess that the interviewer believes the acts to be unacceptable. When interviewing a child, any interviewer reactions could potentially influence the subsequent statements made. It is therefore important to being the healing process for the family, at intake. The child needs to receive the message from the interviewer, that there is a separation between the person and the action of the person. The message the child needs to hear is, just because the maltreatment (action) may be "bad", does not equate to the person being "bad".

### Section 3. Joint Parental Interview

After F got out of jail I requested that both parents come into my office for a joint interview, this had previously been tentatively scheduled with M. F contacted me about 30 minutes prior to our appointment and requested that I come to their home. I insisted they come to my office. This made F agitated and he commented that my intentions were to get him on "my turf" so I could have more power over him". He would often make statements of how he will refuse to "play my game". This, in a way, was an accurate statement, as I had learned from my first interview and subsequent interviews with M, that I needed to converse with F in a setting that was less familiar to

office. This made F agitated and he commented that my intentions were to get him on "my turf" so I could have more power over him". He would often make statements of how he will refuse to "play my game". This, in a way, was an accurate statement, as I had learned from my first interview and subsequent interviews with M, that I needed to converse with F in a setting that was less familiar to him and thus less empowering for him, in order to accomplish the mandates of my job. An office setting can be intimidating to a lot of parents, additionally there are ways to structure the setting both physically and emotionally that cannot be done in the parental home. There are also benefits to an office setting for the parent if one parent feels powerless in their own home. An office setting further lends more authority to the interviewer, if this is what is trying to be accomplished. This also may need to occur for safety reasons for the worker. Parents are usually more comfortable discussing issues within their own familiar environment. They are often hesitant to come to the office because it adds a more formal air to the process as opposed to the worker being in their home, which they perceive as more informal and thus less intimidating. This will be discussed in more detail below.

They finally agreed to come into my office, but were nearly 20 minutes late. I let them sit in the waiting area for an additional 10 minutes. I was attempting to subtly send the message that my time was valuable and I would not be manipulated in this manner. I then proceeded to let

them know at the onset of the interview that I wait no more than 15 minutes for clients, then cancel the appointment if I do not receive adequate notice they will be late. I led them to an interview room. The interview rooms can be set up in advance, in accordance with the needs of the interview. For example in conference style, without chairs if the interviewee is a child etc. In this case, I had four chairs, one of which was larger and placed behind the desk, the other three were in front of the desk. The desk was several feet from the door but was diagonal to the room, therefore my chair was closer to the door than the desk. This allowed for easier access to the door for me than for the parents. This is not an unusual configuration of the room with hostile clients. For safety purposes, the social worker needs to be able to leave the room quickly if needed, additionally this prevents the client from being able to stop the social worker from leaving the room. F immediately sat in the chair behind the desk, when asked to sit in front of the desk he slowly got up and then took one of the remaining chairs and positioned it at the side of the desk. As he did not block my exit from the room, I proceeded with this arrangement. M positioned her wheel chair in front of the desk.

In the initial stages of the interview, F was very congenial even trying to be friendly with me. He stated that he believed by now that I had probably learned the truth and would soon be returning his son and dropping the case. I didn't confirm or deny this, leaving F somewhat

confused about my intentions. However, this statement led me to believe that M did not inform F that the court had filed a petition alleging the child to be deprived and had no intention of returning the child to the home at this time, (M was aware of this). This could mean that either M was afraid to tell F or that she hoped or believed this wouldn't occur and that F could prevent this from happening. Given my previous discussions with M, I concluded the former. F began his discussion with his usual statements, of this being a misunderstanding, he being a good father, and of how such a "bright, beautiful child" could not have been the product of an abusive home. He attempted to say this as forthright as possible, although it was easy to tell he was uncomfortable as he would often insert nervous inappropriate laughter into his conversation. M was very guarded with her statements, indirectly talking with me through F. She averted eye contact with me which differed from our previous conversation. F always looked at me directly and intensely, even when he was not speaking.

I confronted F about the maltreatment of M and of MV, telling him straight out that his former explanation of what had occurred that evening was inconsistent with the police report and the injury to the child. This angered F. His face became red, he moved closer toward me, and his voice became strained. Initially he tried to conceal his anger, accusing me of playing games and wanting his child for myself. I informed F that bruising had appeared on MV

the day following the incident which were consistent with MV being struck in the stomach. F hesitated, turned and glared at M. I leaned back in my chair in hopes that M and F would exchange words which may lead to a partial confession. This did not happen. F asked to speak with me privately.

As I escorted M out of the room, I informed her that I would be talking with F about the statements she had made against him. I told her again that I would provide protection for her by arranging a placement at the domestic violence shelter, she declined my offer. I waited for several minutes before reentering the room. When I returned F was pacing and talking to himself, although I could not discern what he was saying. He quickly regained his composure when I entered the room. I seated myself on the desk opposite the side F had sat back down in. This confused him and he looked at me with a puzzling glance but remained where he was seated.

I began my discussion by praising him for the good job he had done taking care of his wife, home, and child; and that I understood the intense amount of stress he was under. I asked how he managed to do all he does and yet still maintain an even temperament. He had said just this to me on several other occasions which I had previously left unresponded to, so he was perplexed by the statements I was now making. He responded quite modestly that sometimes the pressure does get to him and he does get angry. I made him believe that I was shifting more blame

for the incident to M for not trying to be an equal partner in the relationship. He agreed this bothered him and stated she doesn't do as much as she could, in fact he thought she was quite "lazy and incapable". This began a lengthy discussion on everything he does and everything she doesn't do, leaving out any issues related to her challenged physical condition. By the end, he clearly thought I was softening to him. I could tell this by his relaxed posture in his chair, the strained edge in his voice was lessening, and the defensive responses were decreasing. Eventually, he felt comfortable enough to tell me he had "hit her" on a couple of occasions. He initially refused to admit that he had struck her that evening, but he eventually admitted to this, as I displayed no alarming response to him being physically aggressive with his wife on other occasions. He then began questioning me about my own family, whether or not I was married, had children etc.. Normally I would have made a patented statement that my personal life is not in question, but this time I answered differently. I gave him a small amount of information, enough for him to think that we had built a certain level of trust, but not enough to jeopardize the nature of my position.

I still had not gotten a confession on the physical aggression toward the child. I assumed he would be more guarded in giving up this information. I now had a simulated trust platform, but still did not feel he was ready to disclose this information. I transitioned into



talking about MV by stating;

"So sometimes when your really angry and under pressure because M isn't being an equal partner, you can get physical. What does she do?"

(\*F) "She really doesn't do anything because I guess she knows she deserves it."

(Me) "In other words she thinks it's justified in a way, and it's O.K. for you to respond in physical ways in your home when your angry?"

(\*F) "Ya, I guess so."

(Me) "Then I guess it is fair to say that you might respond in physical ways to your son when your angry or feeling pressure at some point."

(\*F) "Well I guess I might, who knows, but that doesn't mean I have."

(Me) "Have you ever thought of hitting your son?"

(\*F) "Ya maybe once or twice, but I always stopped myself."

(Me) "Always? And how did you do that?" Then I stood up abruptly, before he had an opportunity to answer, and stated I would return momentarily. I left the room for about 5 minutes. When I returned I stated, "Sorry, now where were we? Oh ya, you were saying how sometimes you might become angry and hit your son, but sometimes you don't? When you choose not to hit him, how do you stop yourself?" This usage of reframing the content of his statements eventually lead to a partial admittance of he

using physical discipline on MV on the night in question and in the past. However, he utilized much minimization and rationalization for his behavior, and truly did not see his actions as inappropriate. I also requested that F provide me with references who knew of his parenting ability. F was a step ahead of me, and already had prepared such a list, which included over 25 names, one of which was Oral Roberts.

After the above conversation I asked M to join us. I informed M, in front of F, that he was making progress in that he was owning up to his actions and had collaborated her recall of the events of the evening in question. This surprised F. But he did participate in a discussion with me and M about alternative methods of discipline, as well as alternatives to aggression between he and M. At the end of this conversation, I believe that F thought the the ordeal was over and MV would be returned. When he was informed this would not occur at this time and was explained the process for the return of the child, he became extremely hostile and threatening. My assessment of his anger included a component of what he thought to be a violation of trust between he and I. M made no attempt to subdue his anger but conversed with me about what she felt were the positive aspects of this plan, but this only enraged him more. He became extremely loud and our discussion was interrupted by my supervisor and another male supervisor who escorted him out of the building. I was not pleased with the interruption as I felt that this

crisis may have been productive if I had been given more time to work through his anger with him. It also, unfortunately, was pivotal in setting up a more adversarial relationship which prevented me from obtaining anymore information from either parent.

### Section 3. Discussion

When obtaining initial and subsequent information, it is useful to interview the parents separately and consecutively. This gives the worker the ability to utilize the knowledge gathered in one interview, for the next. The parents do not benefit from this knowledge as they are not sure what information the other parent contributed. It is also useful in validating sameness' in the information presented, which lends credibility to the statements of both.

A useful technique for interviewing is the constructive coercive interview process. The worker gathers all information available before interviewing the designated maltreater. The first information is obtained from the reporter. Then the victim is interviewed, followed by any siblings or child members of the household. The non-offending parent is next. Then the identified maltreater. Any collaborating persons and/or references are interviewed last. Unless in the worker's judgement, a collaborating person may have information which is needed before interviewing the child or the caretakers. This process arms the worker with as much information as

possible before interviewing the maltreater. This enables the worker to ask the appropriate questions and assess the validity of the answers against information already obtained. Presenting all information to the parents in a joint interview is useful especially if their statements conflict. Although, in doing this you may have to consider safety ramifications, for either one of them, depending upon the circumstance. If safety is controlled, this is useful for making assessments on how the parents resolve the conflicting statements between them. This lends to assessing the power structures within the home, and gives insight into how differing information is reconciled.

If it is necessary to deplete some of the power issues developing between the family and the worker, control of time and setting may be important. In the joint interview, F was attempting to control the interview by asking me to come to their home. He wanted the interview to occur in a comfortable setting to him, hoping the result to be that I would feel less at ease due to unfamiliar surroundings. Additionally, their being late may have been to send a message that they did not consider any discussions with me to be important. Thereby potentially leaving me to question my own authority, as in this case, I may have been unable to yield them to my legal authority. They, themselves, may not have done this consciously. My leaving them to wait for me, reverses this control and invalidates their attempts at controlling the time and decreasing my authority. To enforce my power, I informed them that I

wait no more than fifteen minutes for clients who are late, without notice. Then I cancel the appointment and that they can hold me to the same standard. Most families respond positively to this approach, as it sends a message that I respect their time and expect them to respect mine. This aids to equalize the power.

Location of the interview is a variable of control. As in above, F wanting the interview to occur in his home grants him more power, an interview in my office grants me more power. Anytime a worker goes to the clients location the client will be empowered with familiar surroundings. Workers are encouraged to conduct as many interviews as possible in clients homes, schools, etc. Making a client come to the worker reverses this, and should be avoided if possible. The exceptions are if there is a safety concern a need to be demonstrative about the power differences, the worker needs access to special equipment (two way window, or video tape recorder, etc.), or if previous home interviews were unsuccessful.

Manipulation of the setting within the location can also be a variable of control. Setting can be manipulated by physical space, location and type of furniture, color of room, display of authoritative paraphernalia, distance between interviewer and interviewee, etc. If the interviewer is trying to extract information from an interviewee in the least intrusive manner as possible, the goal would be to make the setting as comfortable for the interviewee as possible, even if the interview occurs

outside the home. For instance, with children one would try to arrange the setting so that the interviewer is at the child's eye level, so as to dispel intimidation by size difference. With very small children, sitting on the floor with them can be a way to achieve this. With adults, one can sit next to them (like a round table approach), which empowers each member of the discussion without giving one more power or control, like sitting at the head of the table or behind a desk can produce.

Power and control techniques manipulated by the interviewer can also be empowering to the interviewee. For instance, when the interviewee becomes angry and stands up to overpower, the interviewer can sit down, making it appear that the interviewee is in control, but at the same time not succumb to the attempts to overpower, thereby calming the interviewee without he/she feeling this has occurred. In the this case, I made the setting such that it placed me in an authoritative position, seated behind a desk. I also chose to put the parents back against the wall, so my authority position would be in their direct focus line. This was necessary to equalize the divisions of power as \*F had an extreme self sense of elevated power. F tried to change the setting by assuming the authority seat. This is unusual, but did show how pervasive his need for control was across settings. It also gave me another piece of information of how he may have successfully manipulated his home environment to enhance his control. Much like how he had structured his home in order to

control MV as noted in section 1. He slowly erodes any socially appropriate attempts of power and control by his wife or child and places himself at the apex. This shows the continuance and consistency of the pervasiveness of his control needs and his inability to subdue this desire even when it may be in conflict with his intended actions.

I then chose to learn how he would react to my taking away what little control he may have had in this situation. One may question at this point what relevance this has for the maltreatment issue. It is generally accepted that parents and people, in general, perform at their best in front of an audience. Most people save their more horrendous behavior for home. Very few parents would take a belt to their child in the middle of a shopping mall, but wouldn't think twice about doing it at home. The same concept applies here, if F reacts aggressively toward an authority figure when he/she subtly manipulates the environment to take away his control, the assumption is that he would react with greater emotion and severity if that control is being actively tested at home. In this case he initially became startled, then increasingly angry as his level of comfort (he being in control) was slowly being eroded away. Thus the assessment of his need for power and control was cemented during this interview. That being his need was consistent and pervasive across several settings, which in turn creates substantial risk to a young child, especially one that is entering the developmental stage of testing parental control.

The next issue of control becomes whether or not the non maltreating parent has any effect in equalizing and/or de-escalating the power and control effects. What was gathered, to this point, is that M is unable to effect this in any substantial manner within her home. The same question then arises, is M unable to effect this across settings? From the original averted eye contact at the beginning of the interview, and her avoidance, unwillingness, and/or inability to intervene when F got out of control at the end of the interview, indicates that she has little or no control over F. But bear in mind that she did offer good information, engaged in purposeful eye contact, and displayed appropriate genuine emotion when F was not present. Additionally, she did attempt to seek assistance for the protection of the child (even though it was not sustained) when she was unwilling and/or unable to intervene on his behalf, herself, by calling 911. Thus at this stage, it may be assumed that M has a limited ability to seek protection for her child, even though she is not willing to be the protector, but has virtually no ability to protect herself. She assumably only has the strength to summon protection but does not have the ability to follow through or take responsibility onto herself for the protection of the child. Additionally, it is found that M is able to assert some control, in settings outside the home, when F is not present. Thus F becomes a primary variable in her inability to assert control. She likewise is unable to assert control in her home, even when F is not



there. This probably is due to what the home signifies for her, this being, he is in control in the home.

The family home, commonly thought of as the place of refuge, may then only hold that significance if the domination in the home isn't suffocating for the insubordinates. As the situation above shows, the home was a place in which M was controlled, therefore it is not a haven for her in the sense of feeling empowered, even in her dominators absence. This is similar to what child victims sense within their home. Children who are maltreated in their home often do not feel comfortable revealing the maltreatment in the home setting. So while this may be the most empowering location for the parents it may at the same time be the most depowering location to interview a child victim and/or an adult victim of domestic violence. A victim may feel more empowered to reveal the abuse in their school setting. This should not be construed to say that victims of child maltreatment do not feel comfortable in their own home regarding other activities, this is only in regard to the maltreatment. And also what the home signifies for the child in regard to the maltreater, the child may be unable to "tell" the secret on the maltreater in "his/her" home. Thus it becomes less of a violation if revealed outside of the home environment. It has been my experience that if the situation leaves no other alternative than to interview a child in their home, letting the child choose the location of the interview may empower the child to reveal more

information, as the child will most likely choose the place they feel most comfortable. This place is often the child's bedroom, as bedrooms become their place of refuge within the family home. Often, has been the case, where the child does not reveal the maltreatment within the home but then upon re-interview at the school, will reveal details of the maltreatment not previously offered. This could be a factor in why nearly half of referrals come from school personal, as a good majority of maltreatment is revealed by the child at school.

To open up the setting to be more conducive for empowerment, the worker needs to dispel with any traditional signs of authority, the desk, the briefcase, etc.. The opposite, if the alternative is desired. Manipulating the setting within the home can be done but is more difficult, by choosing to sit in the living room on the couch rather than sitting at the kitchen table. Some things, not much thought about by the worker, which can greatly effect the interview are like inadvertently sitting in "dads" chair at the table, which can be unsettling to the family, or sitting in a child's chair which can diffuse any power. Many times the worker may sabotage an otherwise productive interview by unknowingly committing such a fao pau.

Attire can also be crucial in establishing control. When a worker goes into an interview, they should dress professionally, but not overdress so as to create an authoritative effect. Also, underdressing can simulate

disrespect for the client and thus be equally depowering.

In the joint interview, different information about power was revealed when the parents were together, separated, and then together again. I have already discussed the most obvious. The less obvious which can often be missed can be as important. Intonation in voice, facial expressions, and body movements can give information about when the interviewee is feeling discomfort or elation, even when their verbal response is contradictory. For instance, as F would talk to convince me of the greatness of his fatherhood, his face would turn red, he would shift in his chair, and he would maintain intense but yet inappropriate eye contact. Each of the conversations we had on this issue would intensify these nonverbal reactions. His response should not be misread to conclude he was trying to convince me of something which wasn't necessarily true or not being believed, but that he was sensing a loss of control over what he perceived as my negative judgement of these facts. When a person, for whatever reason, gets a sense that what they are trying to project to the world is being rejected, they experience a loss of control and power over their audience and this raises their anxiety, which then is reflected in their nonverbal communication.

#### Section 4. Interaction with the child

I had many interviews like the one discussed above with the parents during the initial case planning stage,

after which the case was transferred to a foster care worker for ongoing services. The last section of this case will present miscellaneous occurrences of importance. The parents interaction with the child is crucial in understanding the power dynamics within the family. The following presents interactional information from three separate parental visits with the child, all of which I observed. These visits occurred within the first three weeks of the life of the case. There appears to be no convincing reason to separate the visits as there was no dramatic differences between the activities in these first visits.

Each of the visits began with about the same scenario. MV would arrive several minutes prior to the parents. MV appeared to be of average toddler development except for a slight speech delay. Upon seeing his parents he would hesitate, and on a couple of occasions hide shyly behind the foster mother's legs. After brief encouragement, he would go to his mother's wheel chair and climb into her lap. When MV would hesitate in going to his parents, F would roll his eyes, look away and state to M that "They are making him afraid of us". After going to his mother, first F would comment about how unusual it was for MV to go to his mother first, and then again state how the foster parents must be saying something to make MV afraid of him. We would then proceed to the visiting room with MV riding on his mother's lap. Immediately upon entering the room F would search through MV's diaper bag, and make comments

about how poorly it was packed and how dirty it looked. During one of the visits F found a candy wrapper in the bag. He became so enraged and obsessive, the visit almost had to be terminated. He would also take off all MV clothes and inspect him from head to foot, under the auspices of having to change his diaper.

MV displayed little emotion to \*F, he did not smile or come to him for play or nurturance, (this was noted as unusual as both parents acknowledged \*F to be the primary caregiver). When \*F tried to hold or carry MV, the child would squirm in his arms and whimper to be put down. \*F did not respond to the child's distress nor cease his actions. \*F would continue to hold MV and would tighten his grip in an attempt to force affection from MV. \*F would get more agitated as MV would try to wiggle out of his arms. I would intervene after a short while and request that \*F let the child down. This would only reaffirm his suspicions that we were "turning the child against him."

\*F did not allow MV to explore his environment or engage in self help activities. \*F would intercept attempts by MV to pick up a new toy, select a book, or engage in a physical activity. \*F did not overtly halt the activity, but would rather select an alternative book, or pick up the toy before MV, and would then proceed to play with the item with MV with \*F directing the play. \*F would become irritated if MV would exert independence in play. This would yield a response from \*F that the child's

activity with the toy was incorrect. \*F constantly stated, "No, you have to move it this way...boys don't play with dolls...your too little to play with that...let your father show you how to do it". These statements were in response to age appropriate play by MV. At one point in the third visit I attempted to get \*F to engage in special play with MV, but he couldn't and wouldn't participate. (Special play is when time is set aside for the child to totally direct the play with no imposition from the parent except to prevent injury and/or property destruction. The parent is to follow the child's lead. The intent is to foster the child's imagination and self esteem.)

In watching the interaction, I observed MV to make attempts to direct his own play. When \*F would redirect MV's play, MV would become visibly frustrated by whining, grabbing the toy, turning away from \*F and becoming aggressive with his play item, often throwing it with disgust when \*F interfered. This would subside after a brief period of time, and MV would succumb to watching \*F play with the item and then would occasionally insert play to parallel \*F's activity. Only when play was participated in, in this manner, would the two be able to play without a clashing of wills. Occasionally, M would remark that \*F should "Let MV try to do it by himself", but this was quickly abandoned with a disapproving glance or \*F would comment, "Who usually plays with him, not you, I know what my son can do." Even though M made some futile attempts to poise that she valued MV's independence in play, her facial

expression was much more relaxed and prideful when the two were cooperating in play. Additionally, she would comment on how well they got along, how good a teacher \*F was, and would compliment MV's "nice" behavior. M also did not move to comfort MV when he was distressing over an activity of \*F, either in play or when \*F tried to hold him. She would wait until \*F ceased his activity and then would comfort MV out of sequence. I was unsure as to whether or not the child perceived this as a late comfort to his distress or an act of independent nurturing by his mother.

It was quite apparent that the main purpose of the visits for mother and child were to make sure \*F was pleased and that his emotional needs were met by the child. Every act of MV which complied with \*F's expectation came with much adoration and praise from both parents. Normal acts of following direction are included, but more specifically acts of showing dependence in self help. For instance, during one such visit the parents brought a fruit snack for MV (because they were concerned that MV was not receiving nutritional meals in the foster home). When the fruit was first presented, MV reached into the bag to get a piece to feed it to himself. \*F abruptly grabbed the piece of apple from MV's hand and held it offering him bites. The child received praise from both parents for letting \*F feed the apple to him. When I offered the suggestion that children need to begin learning to feed themselves by self feeding finger food and that this was the start of enabling a child to learn to feed themselves, \*F retorted, "I always

feed MV. Are those foster parents letting him feed himself? He's not ready for that." I later learned from M that \*F always fed MV, they do not allow him to self feed finger food and or use utensils. Except for when \*F is not around, she would allow MV to feed himself because she knows it is "good for his development", but did not encourage \*F to do the same.

\*F would actively discourage MV from exploring his environment. He would choose the items of play for MV, and then bring them to him, displaying them in a semicircle around him. His demand on MV's attention was too excessive for MV's age. If MV wandered away from play, \*F would continually redirect him to the item he chose for the child. MV displayed little resistance to \*F's redirection.

The play itself was excessively rough, (wrestling, tickling, and play fighting) often to the point of making MV upset. Although, \*F would state this was an unusual response for MV, I assessed this interaction quite differently. The observation made was that it was \*F who was responding to MV differently in an attempt to demonstrate to me the closeness of their relationship. There were some positive aspects of the relationship which were noted, independent of the attempted staging by \*F. MV followed the directives of \*F, he listened to him intently when they were engaging in appropriate play, particularly \*F's animation when reading to MV. However, there was an observed tenseness in MV's actions when the loudness or pitch of \*F's voice increased. There was no obvious



display of fear, but MV became watchful with a slightly grimaced expression and his actions slowed. Occasionally MV would appear to freeze momentarily until \*F continued reading. \*F was unaware of any change in MV's affect when this occurred. If M was aware of the change of affect, she did not respond either to MV or to \*F.

The play was not imaginative nor creative. The child was not allowed to pretend with objects out of their normal context or purpose. Both parents would redirect MV if the play was inconsistent with the "normal" purpose of the toy. Often making comments about him being "wrong" or would say "don't do \_\_\_\_\_ you do \_\_\_\_\_ with that". For instance, during one visit he was making something on the toy stove and choose to use match cars as the food item. His parents quickly told him that cars we not for eating and to take them out of the pan. This caused MV to cease his play.

For some reason, which I was unable to figure out, \*F did not want MV to wear hard soled shoes. He tried to convince me that shoes were not "good for his feet". I think this may have just been a quirk or fetish of \*F's. M was unconcerned about whether or not MV wore hard soled shoes or not. She simply stated, "Someday he'll have to wear shoes, no use arguing the point now".

#### Section 4. Discussion

The most striking and pertinent observations that I made from watching the interaction between the child and his parents were the following: 1) \*F's inability to engage

in "special play"; 2) M's unwillingness or inability to respond timely to MV's distress; 3) both of the parents constant attempts to subvert any assertions of independence by MV. None of these above is atypical to families wherein control is a major issue in parenting. In this case it was a little more demonstrative than usually observed. A parent's inability to engage in special play with their child, even for a short period of time, is a good indicator of the rigidity of the parenting. I would like to note that many parents routinely engage in special play with their children but do not necessarily label it as such if at all. Simply explained, it is interacting with the child within the child's imaginative context. Most parents who do not see benefit in participating in special play, assess it to be in conflict with their goals as a parent, which is to control the actions of the child, and thus do not play in this manner with the child as a routine part of play. Even in interview situations, a controlling parent will take time out of the discussion to redirect the child's play to what the parent thinks it should be, even when the play is not in the least dangerous to the child or anything else and/or annoying in any manner.

Assessing interaction with a nonverbal child is more difficult than when the child is able to make statements or offer more discernible emotional expressions to give more insight into how the child is perceiving the interaction. A child of this age will generally only have a few ways of expressing stress, the sources of which may not be able to

be identified by the adult observer. Also, given MV's age, this is probably the first noticeable signs of MV trying to assert his independence. Even though there are displays of independence at birth, often parents don't recognize it as such and don't react to it so directly. This is a common age group for children to suffer physical discipline because they are developmentally capable of defying their parents directives. Prior to the toddler stage, parents often refer to the child as "fussy . . . colicky . . . difficult" etc., they most often do not refer to the behavior as defiant and in need of reprimand. (Albeit there are many deviations from this but this is often associated with the parent assigning more matured reasons for the child's behavior or having unrealistic expectations regarding the intent of the behavior).

Both parents allowed the control to occur, \*F mostly through his actions and M mostly through her omission of action. The child did not turn to his mother for comfort when distressed, nor to his father. MV appears to have learned that his parents are most happy, thereby life is more happy for him, when his parents are in control of his actions. The parents lack of ability to be flexible in visitation (keep in mind that there are often days or weeks between visits), can give a flavor of what life at home is on a consistent basis. Additionally, it is probable that MV has received little direction from his parents to assist him with the frustration of independence, therefore, his ability or even propensity to turn to his parents for

direction and/or comfort in such situations does not occur. And it is also probable that he has learned that independence is undesirable and therefore is in conflict with the natural progression of his development.

During the course of my interaction with the family other information was revealed regarding the control issues present within the family. The parents were often seen trying to follow the foster parent home after visits. (Although in some cases the foster parent is encouraged to have direct contact with the family and in having visitation occur at the foster home; \*F was extremely volatile and unpredictable, therefore, there was a concern for the foster parents safety and the threat that he would try to take MV). \*F frequented the District Attorney's office and the judges office, after he felt he received an "unfair" decision in court. He became so obnoxious and threatening that he had to be escorted out of the court house on a number of occasions, incidentally, during most of these times M would be waiting for him in their van. Additionally, he would often drive past my residence at night or follow me around town, in what I concluded were attempts to manipulate me through scare tactics.

In many cases, the interaction between the child and the parent becomes paramount in assessing the influence factors of control. This mostly reveals itself during the course of the life of the case, which may expand months, this is beyond the scope of this study. However, initial assessment techniques are able to grasp when the control

variable is present and can give some indication of the severity and pervasiveness of these issues within the family system.

## VI. CASE STUDY 2

When I began this research, I had some basic ideas of some of the dynamics which might be present based upon my experience working in the area of maltreatment. What I did not expect to find was that the actual form the maltreatment took was not nearly as important as the underlying similarities of power and control found within the families, regardless of the maltreatment issue. Power and control were present and prevailing in both physical and sexual maltreatment. The subordination of and domination over children are more at the root of maltreatment than any other indicators. Persons interviewed for this study crossed several ethnic groups, all socioeconomic classes, possessed varying levels of education, included both urban and rural. This information revealed itself as the information gathering stage was in progress. I believe one of the reasons we do not theorize physical and sexual maltreatment as having the same root causes is because, to some degree, most parents utilize techniques of physical aggression over their children. The same is probably not true for sexual maltreatment. We do not want to believe that we are all capable of sexual maltreatment, but may all agree that we may be capable of physical maltreatment of our children under certain circumstances. We would like to think that sexual maltreatment more readily involves some kind of psychosis on the part of the parent, rather than just another outlet at attempts of controlling and overpowering the child in

order to achieve domination. This concept is now readily acceptable when it comes to rape. It is commonly accepted that rape is a violent crime and not necessarily sexual in nature. And lastly, physical discipline is generally accepted by society as sexual abuse is abhorred, therefore society finds it necessary and comforting to perceive it as more evil and stemming from very different causes, such as sexual dysfunction. Therefore, I am presenting a case involving sexual maltreatment to explore power and control issues present. I will draw comparisons between the two maltreatment issues, as it relates to the power and control issues present.

As stated, the maltreatment issue in the second case study is sexual maltreatment. The victim is a female in age category 10. The maltreater is her stepfather, who has been in the family constellation since FV was three years old. SF is in age category 3. The incident of investigation was sexual intercourse evolving over a number of years from escalating sexual molestation. According to the reporter, the mother was aware of the molestation as the child reported she had previously informed her mother on numerous occasions. The child revealed the maltreatment to another student who in turn informed a teacher. The teacher questioned the child. The child stated her stepfather had been engaging in sexual intercourse with her on a regular basis for the last couple years. She also informed her teacher that she had told her mother about previous sexual molestation by her stepfather. The child

was revealing the maltreatment at this time because she feared she was pregnant and if her mother found out she would be angry.

### Section 1. Initial Interview

The first interview took place at the school with FV. The room we were given by the school was not very conducive for interviewing. It was a counselors office, with various educational materials, a desk, and two chairs (one in front of the desk and one behind). To help make the room a bit more comfortable I requested another chair be placed in the room, so I could sit next to and at eye level with FV. I was initially surprised to find how willing FV was to partake in the interview. She came into the room and acted as though we had been long time friends. She was smiling, sat down very close to me even moving her chair closer to mine. Her affect was light and bouncy. FV touched my arm and put her hand on my leg frequently as she spoke.

After telling FV who I was and my purpose, she stated she knew I was coming to talk with her about her stepfather (the school counselor had informed her that a social worker would be coming out to talk with her after she had revealed the allegations). I started by asking FV basic demographic questions about her family, school, etc.. I asked her about the relationships she had with each of her parents. Until I began asking particular questions about the relationships within her family, FV's affect remained light and seemingly enjoying our conversation. She would recall



memories of her and her mother doing things together, indicating she had a very close "good" relationship with her mother and her sister as they "do things together a lot and hardly fight at all". When I asked how she got along with her stepfather, FV began almost instantaneously sobbing uncontrollably and stated, "I'm going to be in so much trouble", I asked why she will be in trouble; she responded by asking "what will happen to someone if they have done something they shouldn't have"? I stated that would depend on what that something was, and told her "Let's not worry about what will happen before we even know what happened." Throughout the interview FV was very gregariously emotional. She would quickly go from sobbing and wringing her hands nervously to laughing through her tears. The interview was long and drawn out as many times I would need to stop my questioning to deal with the emotions she was experiencing. FV would often grab my hand or lean over to hug me when in these emotional episodes. I would reassure her and gently prod her to continue to respond to my questions. (The response above is atypical to most interviews with children, although it is not unusual for them to cry, it is unusual for them to reach out to the worker so quickly and dramatically in these beginning stages for comfort. In fact, workers are often instructed not to touch a victim as the response could have a negative impact. Also, I have done many interviews wherein the victim will recall the incident with no perceivable affect at all.)

FV did not appear to become emotional to one particular aspect, but it was more the general demeanor of the interview from the point at which the stepfather was included in the questioning. FV's interview did not require me to really question her beyond saying "What happened next?" and prodding her to continue her statements by reassuring her, once the interview had gotten to the point of exploring the maltreatment issue.

FV made the following statements: "He used to touch me a lot when I was littler. . .like pat me on the butt . . . hug me real tight and rub my back. . .under my shirt. . .he used to ask me to sit on his lap. . .he would get all hard and stuff, although I don't remember if I knew what it was then but I do now. . .I do remember that I felt funny about it. . .when I started getting boobies and stuff then it got lots worse. . .he would try and feel me and say he was making sure I was wearing a bra. . .he teased me a lot about that. . .he would feel under my shirt I never quite understood that cause he could see the strap in back. . .then the other stuff started. . .every wednesday my mom and sister would go to church but they would never bring me, even when I asked. My mom would say 'no you stay home with dad'. . .that's when it would happen mainly. . .he would come in and say like 'where's my dinner?'. . .then when I gave it to him he would always act like he was mad or something. . .then he would send me to my room. . .I would stay there and then he would come in and apologize saying he had a bad day or something. . .that's when it happened.

. .he pushes me on the floor and tries to do that. . .you know, put it inside of me. . .his dick. . .he would do it hard and it hurt. . .sometimes I would tell him to stop or I'd cry but he would just put his hand over my mouth and tell me to be quiet. . .he makes me wipe it up after. . .off of him and me. . .with a towel. . .he would just pull my dress up and make me take my panties off. . .I don't really know if his pants were on or off. . .because I would shut my eyes when it happened. . .I told my mom a couple of times. . .she seemed like she was mad at him and she said she was going to do something about it but she doesn't and she still won't let me come to church." I asked her why she had chosen to talk about it now, as she had indicated it had been occurring for some time. She responded by saying she was pregnant. Upon further questioning regarding this, I found she only suspected she was pregnant because she had "funny feelings in my stomach like somethin's moving around" and that she was "a couple of days late with my period". I suspected she was not pregnant due to her recall of the last occurrence of her menstrual cycle and the impossibility of her feeling fetal movement. It was later confirmed that she was indeed not pregnant.

During the interview I would often ask how her recall of a particular event made her feel. Her responses were somewhat childlike, she would say they made her feel "yucky" or "icky". However, when asked how she and \*SF got along outside of the molestation she would say they got

along well, that they played games together, and that he thought she was special and pretty. She had a difficult time answering questions as to how the molestation got to the stage it did, that being intercourse. She would make general statements about the history as indicated above.

I then interviewed her female sibling in age category 9. This child denied any sexual maltreatment of herself by \*SF, and additionally denied any knowledge of sexual maltreatment of her sister. She did, however, confirm that on Wednesday evenings she and her mother went to church, leaving FV with \*SF. She did not have any explanation as to why FV or \*SF did not go to church with them.

In regard to the relationships within the home she stated that her mother likes her best and her stepfather likes FV best. When asked why she thought this, she responded that she does more things with her mother and her sister does more things with her stepfather. She also stated the FV gets more privileges like, "always get to ride in the front seat" and gets more "new things" from \*SF. She believes this is the case because FV is "prettier and smarter" than herself. (This was interesting as FV has some mild cognitive impairment, and her sister was very bright, according to school personnel).

#### Section 1. Discussion

As stated in the first case study, children often feel more comfortable and thereby more empowered disclosing maltreatment to the social worker in the school setting.

It is commonly known by social workers, that the job becomes more complicated and difficult during the summer months when the majority of interviews have to take place in the home. I do not know if FV would have or not have revealed the maltreatment if I had interviewed her at home. I have interviewed children that have revealed the maltreatment while at school and then recant or fail to confirm the allegations when interviewed at home. And/or fail to disclose the maltreatment while at home but upon subsequent removal and/or reinterviewe at a different location (that may be due to a variety of other evidence gathered), are willing and able to disclose. This is more true for sexual maltreatment than physical maltreatment.

FV's demeanor was not atypical to reactions commonly received upon interview. Some attempt to hide feelings or offer enough information for the worker to suspect maltreatment, without the child offering the full story does occur. The first, often because the child is unsure how the worker will react, and the second, because the child does not totally break the secret, thereby not being disloyal to the maltreater. The emotional response by the child upon questioning is very unpredictable. The child's affect should not be weighted very heavily when attempting to make an assessment of the validity of the molestation nor the trauma of the molestation to the child. Not giving up the secret is an extremely crucial aspect of the sexual maltreatment, and this remains in line with Weber's charismatic authority. It is the emotional commitment to

the person that allows for the following of the subordinate.

Therefore, it is important for the interviewer to understand that the child may have very fond feelings for their maltreater, and except for wanting the sexual maltreatment to stop the remainder of the relationship may be related as positive. This is often revealed in the child's statements as not wanting the maltreater to get in trouble or the family to be divided. FV 7 S "you won't put him in jail will you?"; MV 5 O "I love my mommy. If she goes away who will take care of us?"; FV 10 S "please don't tell my mom she will not be able to take it. \_\_\_\_\_ has taken real good care of us. He doesn't hit us or nothing like that. He won't have to go to jail will he?". This is very different than other sexual crimes wherein the victim desires the perpetrator to have repercussions for the crime.

Children often recall events with graphic detail. They can often give sensory statements for most aspects of the molestation: sight, smell, taste, feel, much more than adults. I believe this is partly due to the introduction of new stimuli to the child by the maltreater and partly due to the manner in which children see the world. This is particularly true for younger children. They may describe things as: FV 4 "yucky and mushy". . . MV 5 "mixed tongues" . . . FV 6 "this yucky white stuff came out and went all over" . . . FV 4 "he peed on me" . . . MV 6 "pussy guts came out" . . . FV 5 "it was real hard and real big, it was

like a great big stick". Children who have been sexually molested can give explicit detail with proper questioning. When a child is able to give information about an assault utilizing the senses the probability that the molestation did in fact occur is extremely high. But again, the child will not necessarily have negative feelings for the maltreater just to the event.

The positive feelings the child has for the maltreater may keep the secret intact for quite a long time, and this may be a less curious aspect of the molestation than how the molestation began and was able to sustain itself so long. The majority of cases that I have investigated sexual maltreatment had occurred continually over a long period of time. They were not one time occurrences. The maltreatment builds up slowly, rarely does the first encounter begin with sexual intercourse. The maltreater needs to obtain the child's trust prior to initiating sexual contact. The maltreater is probably not aware that he/she is actually doing this for the specific purpose of later sexually abusing the child (except for in cases where the maltreater is a pedophile). The most basic of which is time and attention, which is most often given out of genuine caring for the child. Appropriate forms of affection, hugging, holding, kissing, etc. begin to accelerate over time and increase in frequency and intensity and provoke sexual arousal in the maltreater. The actual point at which appropriate touching is replaced by inappropriate touching is difficult for anyone,

especially the child, to pinpoint. Although the child may relate feeling uncomfortable, it is hard for the child, even with the aid of a competent worker, to reconstruct the relationship to gain insight into how the situation developed. Attempts to reconstruct this with the child above is contained in section 4.

The catalyst which propels children to reveal the maltreatment is often because the child is concerned about an auxiliary effect of the maltreatment; like concern about pregnancy, concern that another sibling is being targeted, concern that "everybody knows". In one case the child had been shown a film at her church youth group about sexual maltreatment and was sure that "everybody was looking at me and they found out". In younger children the maltreatment is discovered in more what may be termed as "innocent ways". They being the child is acting sexually provocative, making sexual statements, or has matured sexual knowledge. In these cases, the referral information presents more symptomatic behaviors which could possibly be rooted in sexual maltreatment. In other cases the younger child reveals the molestation in graphic terms as if describing a trip to the zoo, as they are unaware of the "wrongness" of the molestation. In each case, each shows unique control on the part of the maltreater utilizing the child's age or "innocence", using the child's loyalty, or using their position, to overpower the child in order for the maltreatment to continue.

In this case, FV indicated that she had told her



mother that the sexual maltreatment had occurred in the past. If the maltreatment is divulged by the child to someone whom they feel they can trust and help doesn't occur, the child receives the message that the maltreatment is going to be allowed to continue. This contributes to their already sense of powerlessness. A child rarely reveals maltreatment more than once. The victim feels powerless to stop the maltreatment because their "confidant" did nothing to stop it and unknowingly or knowingly approved of it by continuing to place the child in situations where it could occur. F S 7 SA F "I didn't want to stay with my daddy, I told her that, but she said I had to go anyway." M H 7 SA SF "I thought she knew, but I hoped she didn't, because she always let him pick me up (from school)." F S 10 SA F "She wouldn't even let me explain why I didn't want to go with him all the time. I felt like that was her way of telling me I had to."

## Section 2. Interview with mother

After I had interviewed the two children, I went to the family home to interview their mother. The home was located in a rural section of a neighboring town, although the home was not affiliated with a farm. The nearest neighbor was approximately 1/4 mile away. The house itself was in good upkeep but the lawn was littered with various articles of trash and an abandoned car consumed a good portion of the small front yard. The inside of the house was clean but cluttered, and was sparsely furnished with

modest and somewhat tattered furniture.

I introduced myself at the door and asked if I could come in to talk with her. She invited me in and asked me to excuse the "mess" in the house. I inquired if \*SF was at home and she stated he was working. I told her that Child Welfare had received a concern about FV and I needed to discuss it with her. She invited me to sit with her at the kitchen table. She sat down first, at one of the side chairs, and I sat at the head of the table. M asked what had happened. I told that I had just come from the school as I had spoken with her children. (I was surprised that she did not comment on this. The typical reaction from parents is that they become upset that the social worker had questioned their child without their knowledge. And usually conversations begin with explaining to parents that the law gives the agency the authority to speak with children without parental consent.) I began by asking her about her relationship with her children. She stated she had a "great" relationship with both of her girls. I asked her about the relationship between \*SF and her children. She responded "He treats them like they were his own. He loves them girls to death and they love him too. Why, is there a problem?" In an attempt to get as much background information as I could prior to divulging the maltreatment issue, I diverted her attention by inquiring how long she and \*SF had been together. She stated she had lived with \*SF a couple of years and then they got married, they had been together for a total of 10 years. She stated she had

been married to the children's father for about 4 years, and neither she nor the children have heard from him for about 5 years.

As I had information from FV that M knew about the sexual maltreatment, I inquired if FV had ever indicated or told M she was having some difficulty in her relationship with \*SF. M denied FV having ever told her or otherwise indicated any problems with \*SF. I asked her again, how they related to each other. She again stated they acted like a real father and daughter. I asked her to explain what that meant. Her response did not offer much clarity to her initial response. They were generalized, like "well like a father should. . . he cares for her and takes care of the family". She could not be specific on what she felt a father was and quickly lost tolerance for the conversation. She started to question me about my purpose for interviewing her children. I then asked if she and her younger daughter went to church on Wednesday evenings leaving FV alone with \*SF. M stated that sometimes this happens but then sometimes she takes FV with her. I asked if there were occasions when FV asked to go to church but was not permitted to go either by M or by \*SF. M denied this ever happening and began to get angry stating; "Hey what's going on. What have we supposedly done to FV?" Before I could even respond to this question M stated; "That girl lies a lot, we've always had problems with that, it's like she's missing something up there (pointing to her head), the school can tell ya too." She

then stated that neither her or her husband ever hurt FV. I informed her the allegation did not deal with physical maltreatment and then informed M of the sexual allegations made against \*SF.

I did not give details of the maltreatment. M slumped down in her chair with a heavy sigh and stated, "That's just not true, somebody's trying to make trouble for us." "Who told you this?" I then stated that FV had confirmed the allegations, M responded, "I don't believe it, she's lying", M then lit another cigarette and paused, "It is physically impossible." I asked her to explain. For the first time M stood up, she walked over to the counter and put out her cigarette, then with another heavy sigh came over and sat back down stating, "\*SF is 8 1/2 inches long and six inches around when he is stiff, he would have tore FV up". Initially I didn't know how to respond and said nothing. There were a few moments of very uncomfortable silence. Then M stated, "We even have a difficult time when we do it, and I have had two children." Again, I was lost for words and just looked at her silently. M again filled the silence and stated, "FV has a few screws loose. She told me \*SF had done this before. I talked to \*SF about it and he said he didn't do it. Then FV told me later the only reason she said it was so I would leave \*SF. . . .see he used to beat me up, he doesn't do that anymore, but FV was just trying to protect me. . . . she was lying then and I'm sure she is lying now."

I then said, "I thought you told me that FV never

indicated there was a problem in her and \*SF's relationship?".

(M) responded, "She hasn't".

(Me) "You don't consider the possibility of sexual abuse as a problem?".

(M) "I told you she lied about that, she even admitted it, so, no, I guess I don't consider that no problem. And anyway that happened a long time ago."

(Me) "You say that FV said this before to protect you, and said she was lying. So why do you think she is saying it now?".

(M) "Maybe she screwed some boy and she thinks I'll find out about it, or maybe she's mad about something. I don't know, but I do know \*SF didn't do anything."

(Me) "How do you know that for sure? You said yourself that they are alone together on wednesday nights."

(M) "Because if something was going on I'd know it and like I said FV would be bloody or something would be wrong with her like she couldn't walk or something, but nothin' like that is going on."

I was unable to get M unfixated on the dimensions of \*SF genitalia and the injury she would incur and to look towards the possibility that sexual maltreatment had occurred. I informed M that action needed to be taken for the protection of FV and her sister. I recommended that she have \*SF leave the residence until at least the investigation could be completed, and then at that time we would discuss what options were available. M would not

agree to this. I inquired of relative resources for the two children. M refused to consider any relatives as resources because she refused to entertain the thought the molestation had occurred. I tried to convince M that there was a good possibility the allegations were true based upon my interview with FV. I told her I believed FV. (I did not give her details of my conversation with FV as I was concerned she would discuss these statements with \*SF before I had the opportunity to interview him. This would give him the chance to construct a story to counter the specifics of the allegations.)

At this point I had not secured a custody order on the children, as I was awaiting the possibility of a protective response by M. I informed her that I would be discussing the matter with the District Attorney at which time a decision would be made regarding possible removal of the children from their home. M responded calmly "If this is what FV really said, I don't want her here anyway. You can take her and put her in one of those foster homes, that will teach her a lesson for lying." I informed M that I would be back in touch with her regarding the decision made by the District Attorney. M then asked if I would have to talk with \*SF about this? She stated she didn't want me to talk with him because of all the problems it had caused him last time and "he was so upset that FV said this before, I think if he knew she was saying it again it would just kill him." I told her I would need to speak with him about the allegations as part of my investigation.

I left the residence and subsequently secured a custody order for both children. I called M back and told her the children had been taken into custody, that her and \*SF would be required to attend the custody hearing the following morning, and that I would like to interview \*SF directly after the hearing. M responded with very flat 'okays' to my conversation, and never inquired about the welfare of her children.

## Section 2. Discussion

The primary issue for the spouse in a sexual maltreatment case is whether or not they can or want to believe the child. Many spouses may have suspicions that maltreatment has or is occurring even before it is identified by the authorities, but have refused for many reasons to do anything to stop the maltreatment. The inability to protect the child is much like in a physical maltreatment situation, but the inability to believe the child is more typical of sexual maltreatment. This appears not because of an approval for the behavior by the spouse, but because of the implications and shame surrounded around sexual maltreatment. The shame comes more from the generally accepted myth that sexual maltreatment is an individual problem of the offender and not a family systems problem. Sexual maltreatment is seen as a deviant disgusting act by the general public whereas physical maltreatment is only seen in this way in it's most severe form. Even then, people take light of how they may have,

from time to time, felt they may have been capable of such severity. Whereas, most people would not be willing to state the same about sexual maltreatment in it's least severe form. Therefore, it becomes far easier to say the child is making up a story than even to begin to acknowledge that it may have occurred in their family. It is simply too difficult and painful to accept.

Additionally, in physical maltreatment we do not expect the non offending spouse to abandon their relationship with the maltreater. In sexual maltreatment it is often a pervasive (even though it may never be said) presence. The non offending spouse may feel they are being asked to choose between the maltreater and the child. Even if the non offending spouse does choose to believe the child, the child often recants previous statements and/or the non offending spouse chooses not to believe the child at a later date when the family begins to feel the pangs of what disclosure cost the family. Often times this is the loss of companionship, loss of financial support, loss of friends, and loss of a parent. The non offending spouse will often state that they cannot choose to protect the identified victim because "I have other children to think about", "How am I suppose to take care of my family if he has to leave?". Other children in the family often become angry with the victim and the remaining parent for "breaking up the family" and causing other family members to lose a significant member of the household, resulting in their lives being seriously altered. It then becomes



easier not to believe the sexual maltreatment occurred and instead take the stance that there is something wrong with the child that led them to make such statements.

M did not attempt to assert any power methods over me, her standing up and becoming angry, was a result of anxiety not overpowerment. Her affect, disbelief, and defensiveness were an initial reaction to the information I was providing. Her continued use of these items were used to persuade me, which may be seen in this case as trying to control the situation. This was in hopes of me seeing her as calm and in control, therefore I would not suspect that what she was saying was not entirely accurate. She wanted me to believe that this could simply not have occurred in her family. Her lack of affect is fairly typical in parent and stepparent sexual maltreatment. The parent (most often the mother), will openly react angrily when the accused is outside the parental dyad, including her own familial close relatives like brothers, grandfathers, exhusband's, etc. It seems that when it involves their spouse, living in the same home, the mother assumes the maltreatment as a direct reflection on her. The defense may be more of herself than the maltreater. I often hear mothers say something like "Me and my daughter have a great relationship. We talk about everything, she would have told me if it was happening." It is also difficult for the mother to believe that their child would tell a stranger and not them about the maltreatment. Again, they see this as a judgement of their relationship with the child and subsequently their

maternal effectiveness. In my experience, the less affect in the initial response by the mother, the greater likelihood the maltreatment occurred and the greater likelihood she knew it was happening.

Specific to the above interview, it is important to try and get as much background information on the family prior to revealing that the allegation involves sexual maltreatment. Experience has taught me that if the sexual maltreatment is revealed up front, the parent is less likely to share additional information about the family system which is crucial in making a family assessment. I have often heard statements which propose they will not give me any information because I will use it against them. Parents sense of persecution is not relieved if told that such information will lead to a better assessment of the family strengths or something similar. This can be attributed to the general population's distrust of human services. If the information is received initially, it can be incorporated into later conversations in assisting the family in developing a safety plan. Additionally, the worker will not establish any trust in the first five minutes of conversation, to even enable the parent to want to give more information, if the conversation begins with perceived accusatory language. Such a tactic of "laying all the cards on the table" up front will lead to an extremely short, unproductive conversation. Given that the worker usually doesn't know the parent, the initial reaction by the parent, once the allegation is revealed, is

unpredictable. It is better to have some sense of who the parent is before bumrushing them with the allegation. Lastly, by taking the time to find out a little about the family, the worker may be able to utilize this to empower the parent, by bringing the strengths of the family to the fore front, to engage the parent in a safety plan after the allegation is revealed. Again, this is achieving power through knowledge, but to be used to empower the family not the worker.

It is fairly typical for the non offending spouse to claim "I'd know if something is happening". This is not only a defense mechanism for the parent to distance themselves from the maltreatment but also buys into the ever so popular adage of the female being responsible for the male's sexuality. This again is seen by the mother to be a direct reflection of her parenting ability. It is very unusual for the mother to place blame on the male spouse and run in to rescue her child. She almost immediately assess' her own culpability, and sees the maltreatment as her deficit. The "I'd know" covers this for her. Contrarily, in the few female offender spouse interviews I have done, the male spouse does not see this same sense of culpability. He directly places all blame on the "psychosis" of the female offender.

One also needs to examine the dynamics of the emotions that the mother is experiencing as she hears this news. The shock and the denial, when the mother is confronted, even if the mother may have known, may produce such a

anyone, including my husband, ever did anything like that to my child, I'd \_\_\_\_\_". The blank runs the gamut from killing to castrating, but this is not the response from incestuous families. The question then becomes why not? Why is this mother unwilling to come to the "rescue" of her child? Why does she seemingly choose to stay with a man who sexually molested her child(ren)? I believe the answer may become a little clearer as the interview with \*SF is presented.

### Section 3. Interview with stepfather

I held the interview with \*SF in my office after the court hearing which sustained custody of both children. I would first like to point out that this is not the ideal circumstance for interviewing an alleged perpetrator as far as timing within the process. I will discuss the reasons in the discussion section. However, in this particular circumstance, I had no other options. Therefore, \*SF was fully aware of the allegations against him and the flavor of the court in belief of those allegations prior to my interviewing him. I initially thought that this would negatively impact my ability to "get a confession" (which is ultimately the goal of the court infringed upon the social worker). And in that respect, the impact was negative. However, I was able to ascertain valuable information from \*SF about the functioning of the family and his ability to maintain power and control, as he attempted to convince me of his innocence.

I chose to interview \*SF, in one of the interview rooms which displayed posters and the like for the campaign to empower children and society to say 'No' to child maltreatment. The presence of such paraphernalia is useful in presenting a pro-child environment. This could possibly reduce the period of time during the interview where it would be anticipated that \*SF would attempt to convince me that sexual maltreatment in general didn't exist. \*SF had presented in the court hearing and in our initial greeting as being demure, soft spoken, and nonconfrontive. He was polite, respectful, even holding the door open for me as we passed through the hallway to the interview room. I smiled and accepted his gesture with a friendly "Thank you". He was acting a role that I believe he thought would typify him as a "nice southern gentleman", and not that he may have been in many ways. However, he also appeared a little awkward and uncomfortable in this role, as if it may have suited him in other circumstances but he was trying too hard to make it seem real.

We entered the interview room and he sat in a chair positioned in front of the desk. As he sat down, he smiled and stated "Wow, you got a hard job. Do you all always have to believe the kid even when you know their lying?" From his demeanor in court and at my office together with his initial statement, it was fairly easy to tell that he would attempt to convince me that the child had a different agenda for making the allegations. His calm, rational exterior, he hoped, would demonstrate his willingness to

children to be home to greet him, dinner ready, and the house clean. He stated that FV is better at these duties than M. He additionally added "FV will make someone a good wife someday". He stated that he usually doesn't have to punish FV as she normally does what she is told, he stated her sister was "feisty" and as having "a smart attitude".

During this conversation \*SF needed little prompting from me to continue with his story line. I would simply nod my head knowingly and urge him to continue. When he appeared to be finished, I stated; "In talking with M she indicated that church is very important to her. Do you usually attend church with the family?".

He stated "That's really not my thing".

(Me) "Do M and the girls go to church or do the girls stay home with you.".

(\*SF) "Usually they all go, except for on wednesdays then me and FV stay home."

(Me) "Why?"

(\*SF) "Because FV doesn't like to go on wednesdays".

(Me) "What do you all do then?"

(\*SF) "Well, just the usual, eat dinner, watch a little T.V., I make sure she does her homework."

(Me) "When was the last wednesday you two stayed home alone together?"

(\*SF) "Just last week I guess."

It was important for me to make sure not to become overzealous at this point. \*SF had been fairly comfortable talking to me up to this point. What he was unaware of was

overzealous at this point. \*SF had been fairly comfortable talking to me up to this point. What he was unaware of was that he was giving me information which was corroborating the child's statements on when the maltreatment occurred. If I were to jump in with talking about the maltreatment issue at this point I probably would have lost him. So I backed away from this issue and tried to gain more insight into his relationship with FV.

I stated, "Was it very difficult for you to form such a good relationship with the girls given their difficulties in their relationship with their own father?"

(\*SF) "I guess at first it kind of was. FV was a lot easier to warm up to me than her sister. FV needs a whole lot of attention. I just started doing stuff with them."

(Me) "Are you comfortable showing the girls physical attention?"

(\*SF) "I used to be, but then FV accused me of doing something like this before and I've really backed off since then."

(Me), acting surprised, "Really".

(\*SF) "Ya, you see a couple of years ago me and her mother were having some problems, and I guess FV thought I was going to do something to M, so she made up this story about me messing with her so her mother would leave me. But then she admitted she was lying. But I still try and keep my distance."

(Me) "Why would she say something like that?"

(\*SF) "Well you know T.V. has them shows about that

stuff and I guess she thought she could say it. FV has a few screws loose anyway so it really didn't come by much of a surprise."

(Me) "Ya know, M said the same thing. What do you all mean by a few screws loose?"

(\*SF) "Well, she likes to make up stories for attention, like boys are messing with her at school and stuff. They're all lies. Besides who would mess with her anyway? She's not much to look at." I paused and said nothing, \*SF filled the silence, "I know that sounds kind of mean, but you've seen her. I still love her anyway, like my own kid. But you can't blame me for her looks. I ain't her daddy in that way."

(Me) "So why would FV lie now, if you and M are getting along well?"

(\*SF) "I really don't know. Me and her mom were talking about that last night, we don't know what she's mad at."

(Me) "I think she's mad at you".

(\*SF) "Me? What did I do to her?"

(Me) "I don't know, you tell me."

(\*SF) "I already told you we don't know".

(Me) "Maybe 'we' don't know, but you probably do."

By this time \*SF was fidgeting, and although he was trying to remain calm, was becoming agitated. It was as though for the first time in the interview he felt that I was not believing him. There was a period of silence.

(\*SF) "I didn't touch her."



(Me) "I think you did."

He slumped back in his chair and then stated in a forlorn manner, "Sometimes I drink a little more than I should, and I have blackouts".

(Me) "Are you saying that this may have occurred during a blackout?"

(\*SF) "No, I don't think so, but I guess I can't say 100 percent for sure."

(Me) "I believe FV is telling the truth, and I believe you sexually molested her."

\*SF stared at me for a while and then stated "I won't be accused of this again."

(Me) "Are you willing to leave your home so the girls can return?"

(\*SF) "No, because you can't prove anything." He then he abruptly got up, stated he would see me in court, and left the room.

### Section 3. Discussion

My interview with \*SF revealed many classical indicators in perpetrators of sexual maltreatment. He attempted to present a demeanor as distance from what he considered the demeanor of a sexual offender to be (that for him was being calm, rational, demure, etc.). Many offenders either present this, or try to show how outrageous the accusations are by becoming extremely defensive. What many offenders don't realize, is that a good worker knows that it is just such a calm, caring,

demeanor that an offender needs to gain the necessary trust to molest their victim. The offender needs to be able to show the child what a "nice guy" they are to enable molestation to occur.

Other classic indicators include, his estranged relationship with his own father, the role reversal of mother/daughter within the family, and the openly, though often unknowingly, degrading of the child. It is very typical that the offender will indicate that the child is lying. Some say that molestation may have occurred but that they are not the offender, and many say the child is saying this to cover up some awful thing the child did. \*SF and M both indicated that FV "had a few screws loose". In actuality, the child did act unusual in that she was very physically clingy and talked incessantly. However, this could have been a result of and/or a defense mechanism to the sexual maltreatment itself. Many offenders will utilize the technique that the child was provocative in some way to them and thus they were somehow less culpable for the acts than the child was. This is the same defense used in rape cases. (The victim was behaving or dressing in such a way that was interpreted by the offender as a sexual advancement regardless of what the victim said after the advancement was made.) It is not a surprise that this rationalization would occur in child molestation cases because it is allowed to be an issue in rape cases. It becomes just as preposterous in sexual maltreatment cases as the offender tries to convince the worker that a three

year old was sexually provocative. It is now commonly known that rape is a crime of violence and domination, not sexuality. The power element is also pervasive in sexual maltreatment, and does resemble the tenants of rape in this manner, except that the victim of caretaker sexual maltreatment is charismatically linked to their offender.

The interview revealed another interesting aspect in his conversation about his previous marriage. He had been married to two women with two female children in about the same age group (at least when he became involved with them). Research indicates, that child molesters often seek out women with children of the sex and age of preference, and/or whom they will be able to manipulate by becoming involved with their mother a couple of years before the child reaches the age of preference in order to gain the trust of the family and also to make themselves indispensable to the family. This makes sense as it is often not likely plausible that the perpetrator can just enter into a family and sexually assault a child without that child revealing the maltreatment. The offender has to establish trust within the family system in order for this to occur, and developing trust often takes some time. Thus the trust becomes one of the mechanisms to achieve power and control within the family.

This is one of the primary reasons why sexual maltreatment by a caretaker is exceedingly devastating to the victim, because of the manipulation of trust by the offender. The offender utilizes the trust that is

established as power and control over the victim. The offender is truly surprised when they learn that their victim has revealed the secret. The offender will often remark with "I can't believe she told you that about me. . . I thought we had a good relationship. . .we always got along so well"; before making statements about the inaccuracies of the accusation. Often times the victim will also receive preferential treatment by the offender. In some cases it is simple things like special gifts, more candy, getting to ride in the front seat, or being called by a special pet name. In other cases, like the one above, the privilege came in the role reversal with the mother. FV received praise for doing domestic chores better than her mother. FV took great pride in her abilities in this area. Younger children often talk about how "Daddy loves me more" . . . "Daddy says I'm so pretty" . . . "It makes my daddy feel good when I sit on his lap". These statements are egocentric to the maltreater. Children talk about how such things make daddy feel, not how they make themselves feel. The maltreater's needs become paramount in these discussions. The maltreater will also interview in an egocentric manner, centering feelings and situations back to himself. Little empathy is ever expressed for the child. Additionally, the non offending spouse will focus on the maltreater's feelings, not those of the victim. The maltreater builds, within the family, the sense that his own needs and feelings are more important than anyone else's in the family. Family functioning then becomes

tinged on how satisfied the maltreater is within the family environment, and thus establishes his/her emotional power over the family. The maltreater is charismatically linked to the family and holds charismatic power over the victim and the spouse. The explanation and rationalization of events becomes a distant second, as far as social work intervention is concerned. The key is in reducing the family's need to maintain the maltreatment, in order to maintain the egocentric charismatic family head. If this family head is disintegrated, the family will go into chaos. The foundation of the interactive process occurring within the family has been shaken. The family may not perceive themselves as able to function under these circumstances. In order for the equilibrium of the family to recover, they have to reestablish the power of the family head. The family will use whatever method they perceive as the most efficient to accomplish this.

One of the quickest ways to accomplish this is to deny that the maltreatment occurred, using some unmet need by the child as the cause. An explanation of such would be, "she's got a few screws loose" (like in the case above); "she was mad"; "she watched some movie. . ." or the like. This focuses the attention back to the victim and a way from the maltreater.

#### Section 4. Miscellaneous Information

As the investigation and subsequent court action continued. \*SF maintained his denial of sexual

molestation. M continued to reside with \*SF and both of their anger at FV escalated. Their defense was that FV was mentally unstable and was making these allegations for attention. The parental constellation bond grew stronger, and both related that this experience had brought them closer together. They believed they were "taking on the system" and that everyone involved, primarily me, were going to be sued.

I did observe that neither parent was able to offer much in way of references because neither had any close relationships outside the immediate family. Both remarked on estranged relationships with their own parents, even though M's mother and stepfather resided in the area. M initially refused to give information about her mother in order that she may be contacted as a placement resource. I received the necessary information from the girls. M had one sister whom she contacted occasionally but was not close to. The family was physically (as mentioned previously) and socially isolated. Although both had been married previously, neither knew or were willing to provide, information about former spouses. The biological father of the girls was not able to be located.

M became very detached from the girls very quickly. She did not even wish to visit them initially. As I had gotten the information from FV on the whereabouts of her maternal grandmother, I contacted her for information and as a possible placement resource. The grandmother eventually provided placement only for the younger sibling

over unspecified objections of M. The grandmother refused to provide placement for FV stating her reason being that she "simply couldn't accommodate both of them". The grandmother offered me little information about M's childhood and/or information about the situation within the home. The former she felt was "In the past and none of my business" and the latter was "none of her business". She did state that she "never liked \*SF" and thought his relationship with FV "seemed a little odd". But never felt she should interfere because the "girls appeared to be well taken care of". Although not explicitly stated I did make the assumption from my conversations with the grandmother that she did not believe the allegations.

There was only one occasion in which I got firm information that M knew of the ongoing sexual molestation of FV. During one of the first visit M had with FV, she made the statement that she was "sorry" for what was happening.

FV responded by saying "you finally believe me?"

(M) "I didn't mean that I believed you I just meant I'm sorry for what you're going through."

FV started crying and stated "But you knew, I told you. Why didn't you do anything like you promised?".

(M) "He's my husband. He takes care of all of us. Sometimes you have to take the good with the bad, that's life". This conversation was later used in court to confirm M's knowledge of the maltreatment.

## VII. AGENCY RESPONSE

The agency response in the two case studies presented was primarily the same. One would think that the technique for intervention would be very different especially considering the seemingly immense differences between the two case scenarios. The following is a brief synopsis of what occurs in child maltreatment cases relayed in how it operated in these particular cases. The initial issue was the safety of the children. The way of achieving this was the same in each case; the removal of the child from the home because there were no other options available. Even though the non offending parent in both cases was given the opportunity to protect the child prior to removal and neither choose to do that, (at least in the traditional sense of what is considered appropriate by the agency/court), does not negate the fact that few alternatives were available. Both cases demonstrated the power of the agency to intervene and overcome any capacity for the family to construct their own safety plan. The choices were very limiting, either the offender leave or the child will be taken. The agency creates power for itself and the court when it limits the worker and subsequently the families options by imposing it's own resolutions which may not coincide with what the family may create.

There are times, as indicated previously, when the worker solicits the cooperation from the parents in locating a relative or friend resource who can provide a



safe place for the child. Often times the family may not choose this option because it is embarrassing or uncomfortable for them to inform a friend or relative of the intervention. If the family does not choose this option, they may be assessed as not putting the needs of the child before their own. Which is a curious factor to consider because that is a most likely an obvious issue in the maltreatment itself. If the family was unable to do this on a ongoing basis, how then should they be expected to come to this decision when they are in the midst of crisis, confusion, and anger, without proper guidance? Most people make their worst decisions under these circumstances. Time is not given to the family to adequately assess and to help solicit an appropriate plan due mostly to time constraints on the worker and the court process.

The worker is similarly disadvantaged. Even if the family is able to propose a reasonable safety plan, the ability of the worker to anticipate the strength of the plan is suspect because generally they will not know the players and/or have enough time to be able to judge the players, even if available before the decision has to be made. And added to this is the subconscious and/or conscience assessment by the worker/court that the parent is not able, due to the fact that maltreatment occurred, to effectively devise a safety plan. As one can see in both cases presented above the decision of the current risk to the child needs to be made with expediency. Plus if the

option to utilize a friend and/or relative is made, the worker may not have enough information to be able to assess whether or not this is truly a safe place for the child to be. And if a mistake is made, the worker then becomes liable and responsible to the family and the court for their decision. The worker is then left with having to impose a often disagreeable plan of safety on the family. Therefore, building on the power issues already established by the intervention.

The other element to all this is the power that the court yields on the worker/agency. Often the parent is judged by behavior unrelated to the inherent ability to parent. These could include a great number of things, like past history with the court (unrelated to child care issues), suspicion of alcohol/drug usage, the extended families prior dealings with the court and/or agency, etc. The expectation of the court is for the worker to share similar views of the parent (in informal processing), and thereby to reach the same conclusion of parental incompetence. If the worker disagrees and opposes the posture of the court, this could have repercussions on the ability of the worker to get other things accomplished in court. It becomes a trade off, often at the sacrifice of truly developing creative approaches for individual cases.

As one works within this system one soon recognizes the plans of treatment and care begin to suspiciously resemble each other. One can not often differentiate between case plans no matter what the original maltreatment

and/or risk factors which were identified within the family. There are several reasons for this. Limited resources can greatly effect the alternatives for treatment for the family. The judicial system can stagnate plans as they are often unwilling to accept or consider nontraditional plans. The inability, either due to lack of insight or lack of time, for the worker to accurately assess the treatment needs of the family. The imposition of the hierarchy within the agency to present treatment to families in the conventional agency mode to aid in avoiding any speculation for the failure of a nontraditional plan. (It doesn't seem to matter that the traditional plans aren't working either.) And lastly, the intense need of the community in general to punish the parent and rescue the child.

It is probably not necessary to give details of the plans for each of these cases that were set up to remedy or reduce the risk to the child in order for them to return home. Suffice it to say that in both situations the parents were required to receive psychological evaluations and follow recommendations of the evaluation (primarily to attend counseling aimed at resolving different issues occurring within the family), attend parenting classes, and visit the child on a regular basis. As stated previously these are the main focus of almost every treatment plan offered to families. Even in areas where more resources are available, the resources generally fall in either the therapy or parenting category.

These treatment plans are often developed by the social worker with little input from the family and are then imposed upon the family by the court. They become legally binding and whether or not the child returns to the home is based upon the successful completion of the plan. The problem is how does one measure successful completion? What factors have truly changed or need to be changed in order insure the child's safety? And can the factors that placed the child at risk really be resolved within a couple of months, a year, etc.? And lastly, at what point does one decide the family will never be able to change those risk factors? These are all questions that the social worker has to answer, and all have a distinct element of the worker being able to accurately predict the future.

Therefore, the reasoning why hiding behind traditional methods of intervention is preferable no matter what the case situation. The agency is under less scrutiny in the event of a tragedy if they can hide behind how something was done successfully in many other cases without incident as opposed to a "radical" idea that failed. Little attention is paid to the fact that parents may be more likely to institute changes if included in the problem identification stage and the problem solving stage. The parent would more likely be invested in a plan that they helped develop, are in agreement with, and are emotionally committed to. Utilizing this method to engage families is a logical approach as this study has shown the merit in abusive (and non abusive families) being charismatically connected. Engaging them in the treatment process in this

manner not only empowers the family but makes use of their existing strength to charismatically link. The agency would only be making changes in the goals not in the means for obtaining them, which would make more sense to the families. This would call for the agency/court to surrender a large portion of power and control that they now unrelentingly secure.

One of the issues that I would like to expose in this chapter, are the power and control issues present in the agency response, which the reader may find suspiciously similar to those same issues identified within the family. When a new worker begins in the area of investigations, one of the first questions the worker usually asks, is what he/she should do if the family refuses him/her entry into their home. The answer is usually something like utilizing their social work skills in convincing the family it is in their best interest to allow the worker to do his/her job. And if that doesn't work, one can threaten that state statutes allow for a child to be taken into custody for interview purposes if the family refuses to do so voluntarily. First of all, I have never been denied entry into a family home, this is typical of most social workers, and additionally, have only been asked a hand full of times for my identification card. It is not that they have welcomed me with open arms, the families tolerated my existence because of the power I possessed due to the job I was performing. It is the position and the purpose that was honored not the person performing the task. As it is

when the family follows the requests of the worker and/or the court. This is not to say that the social worker may not become an integral part of the case plan and even liked or revered by the family in time, but initial compliance is due to position, that which in part resembles compliance of the child to the parent.

The imposition of a higher power's demands over the parent sustains the compliance and when the demands are not adhered to, it can be likened to a child's disobedience to their parent's directives. If the parent does not comply, the agency/court can impose a consequence reflective of punishment in parenting. This consequence is most often the increase in time the child will remain out of the home with the ultimate consequence being the loss of parental rights. It can also be reduced visitation or additional programs added into the treatment plan, all which the parent equates as punishment. In fact, when such consequences are administered parents will often say things like "Why are you punishing me?" or "Why are you doing this to our family?".

The element of compliance that is obviously lacking is the charismatic authority, for it is the charismatic legitimacy that lends the "want" of the compliance. This element has been very much missing in the agency response. The emotional aspect of compliance is needed and this escapes the agency response. The family is not empowered to have an emotional investment in the treatment planning stage to warrant it to become an emotional commitment. The

parent is emotionally committed to having the child returned (in most cases), but the means often do not intersect the goals for the parents. This mismatch creates an atmosphere that is counterproductive for the parent in investing in the tasks which would fulfill the goals of lowering the risks to the child. The response by the family often becomes one of feeling persecuted against, and then they perceive the agency as punitive. The parents often see the agency as only seeing the negative aspects of their parenting venture and then in a sense rebel against the plan proposed by the court/agency. The social worker is thought of as someone wanting to "keep their child" or being "on their back". Parents most often will reflect upon their work with the agency as nonproductive and punitive. Most would agree that the agency is looked upon with contempt by those who have been involved and those who haven't. Parents feel the system has taken away their right to parent and raise their children "as they see fit". This type of parental response solicits the response by most social workers that the parent is uncooperative, incapable of change, and doesn't care about their child. Those uninvolved with the agency often typically respond to the perceived inadequacies, know someone whose family was "ruined" due to alleged false accusations, or think the agency is too "easy" on parents.

It is a well known concept that a child will more likely learn, benefit, and understand a directive from a parent if the avenue for achieving the parental goal is

positive for the child. As opposed to the same parental goal being achieved at negative costs to the child, this is whether or not the outcome in both cases is positive for the child. For example, let's say the parental goal is to get the child to eat his/her dinner, and for simplicity the food is one of the child's favorite. The child is being obstinate about eating, not because of any particular aversion to the food. The goal of eating his/her favorite food will be a positive experience for the child if the parent can just get him/her to eat. The means of accomplishing this can take several forms: 1) the parent can just give up at the onset, not accomplishing either persons goals; 2) the parent can beg, plead, or cajole, creating a negative tense atmosphere for both parent and child even if the goal is accomplished; 3) the parent can threaten and punish, creating a negative atmosphere for both even if the goal is accomplished; or 4) the parent can give the child choices and input on all or some areas surrounding the goal (i.e. how much, where the child could eat, on what plate, with what spoon, etc.) thereby creating a positive empowering resolution for both and accomplishing the goal.

If it is a generally accepted concept that children respond more positively to the last approach and are more likely to comply with learning the tasks that are essential, does it not also make sense that adults will be more apt to learn under those same conditions? Performance and proficiency are often assessed on how the individual



accomplished the goal within a certain dimension or structure. One would not be able to do this without some indication of the structure and manner in which the job is to be done and then given the tools to perform it. It is unreasonable to tell a child to tie his/her shoe without the child having the physical ability and the know how of accomplishing this. But unfortunately, this often typifies the system's response to assisting the parent. The agency/court informs the parent that in order to get their child back, and/or prevent the child's removal they have to become "better" parents. A plan is then imposed whose intent and way to get there often escapes the parent. The parent is then evaluated in accordance with successful completion of plan whose purpose is misunderstood.

The goals between the agency and the parent are very different. The agency goal is to sufficiently impact the risk factors identified in the home in order to reduce the likelihood of further maltreatment thereby returning the child home. The parents goal is to get the child back and the agency "out of their lives". The incongruencies between the goals sets up dynamics which are ill at ease with each other and generally unproductive. The parent views the agency as "punishing", the agency views itself as "helping families and children". Families are dispersed into other programs to assist them in "correcting" their past mistakes. Mistakes that they may see as appropriate parenting, as they were not included in the "problem" identification stage. The outcome? Parents perceive the

system as saying they are bad parents thereby zapping their power over their children and their own lives and replacing it with the agencies power and control over them. I would conclude this as a very difficult situation to become successful and empowered for either the child or the parent.

In discussing the power issues present in the agency response it is crucial to remark upon the training social workers receive to do their job. Most inadequacies in worker performance come in lack of experience. The skill that is necessary for effective social work comes from on hand knowledge of what works and what doesn't, mostly through trial and error, not something the general public would like to hear. The worker does have a knowledge base of "red flags" to look for (see appendix B, C, and D), but many variables are not so easily identified. It takes a lot of skill to be able to adequately gather information to make a family assessment. This, for the most part, is obtained by utilizing effective communication skills which are sharpened over time. With the average worker burnout being 2 years, it is easy to see how many mistakes are made. In addition, the phenomenal task of wading through the power issues within the family, the system, the court, and the worker's own position can be overwhelming. The task of protecting other's children from themselves and the stress of having to make decisions of life and death magnitudes based on the superficial elements available is staggering. Resorting to methods whose primary tenants are

to overpower and force into submission seem logical, safe, and comfortable, even though they may not be effective.

## VIII. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In presenting these two cases I have looked at how power and control is central to child maltreatment, no matter what the maltreatment issue. The justification of the maltreatment whether or not explicitly stated by the family is rationalized power. This was explored in the case studies and was universalized in the quotes of family members of other cases.

The maltreaters power within the family was crucial to the maltreatment, and the rationalization by all families members was to maintain the equilibrium within the family, which allowed the family to function. All three of Weber's sources of legitimacy apply to the power issues occurring within the family. Traditional and legal legitimacy permits the power variable to exist, and charismatic legitimacy keeps the family members invested in it's existence.

Traditional and legal authority define the function of the roles of the family in their raising of the children. This role is raising children who are obedient to the values identified by the culture. Children occupy a submissive role to the parents more dominant role. As the parents attempt to get their children to conform to the values of the culture, they often use the influence of their more dominant role. In abusive families the maltreater exploits the inherent power of his/her role, over other family members, to get their emerging desires and needs met. Included in this, is the desire or need of

the parent, to have the child be obedient to the values of the culture. This is a parental need only as the young child has not yet learned that this is a need. Through the interactive process, the child learns the importance of power and it's usefulness in getting their own needs met.

The agency response does not serve to address the central issue of the maltreatment even if it is identified. The agency enters into a family which utilizes extreme techniques to gain power within the family and in effect, imposes a greater power over the most powerful within the family system. Legal authority prevails and is legitimized within the premise of the intervention. At the same time, little attention is given to the two other legitimizing forces occurring with as great of weight in the family, traditional and charismatic authority. In not addressing these, the intervention strategies fail to resolve potentially two thirds of the problems areas.

In maltreating families, the maltreater is given too much power by the family. Giving more power to other family members is imperative. More equalization of power enables other family members to be able to assert their needs without risk of maltreatment. Diminishing the maltreaters power enables him/her to recognize the importance of the needs of other family members. As domination and subordination occur throughout the interactive process, culturally, each family members needs to learn how to assert and/or yield to domination without exploitation.

Simultaneously, the intervention agent needs to recognize that in order to equalize the power within the family system, the family in general needs to be empowered. If the agency only overpowers the family with legal authority, this cannot be accomplished because no new empowering methods have been demonstrated. The agency has simply reenforced the domination and subordination that is already occurring within the family.

The cultural script of overpowering another to get one's own needs met permeates both the family and the agency. The agency methods of getting parents to comply with treatment parallels the methods used by parents to foster compliance from their children. Even persons who are not involved with the agency may experience the tertiary effects of the power held by the agency and may comply out of fear of agency involvement. Parents attempt to obediate their children to their perception of the values identified by the culture and/or to satisfy their own parental needs or wants, by using overpowering techniques parallels the agency's techniques when working with the family. Parents accomplish their goals by utilizing physical, sexual, and/or emotional domination or threat of domination over the subordinate child. The agency utilizes action or threat of action of legal domination over the parent. The end result of subordinating another to the dominate and more powerful command to achieve the goal of the dominate is the same for both. Parents who lack the ability to obediate their

children using methods that are currently permissible by the culture resort to methods increasing in severity to subjugate and consequently overpower the child to gain compliance. The more proficiently the parent is able to do this, the more power they will gain. The agencies undefined purpose is to obediante parents to parent their children in a socially acceptable manner. Power is built into the bureaucracy of the agency. The agency forces compliance out of the parents by using the rational\legal power of the agency and the court. The more proficient the agency is in gaining strength through rational/legal legitimacy the more powerful it becomes.

Empowering the parents to solve their own problems safely involves: 1) Asking the parent what they are willing and able to do to provide protection for the child while investigation continues or services are accessed; 2) Asking the parent who you can talk with who knows how the family usually functions, what kind of care is given, who is available to you to help secure a safety net?; and, 3) Asking the parent from the beginning to be involved in the problem solving, and utilizing existing positive parental strategies to facilitate change. There's an enormous difference between "what are you willing/able to do" and the imperative of "I have all the power and this is what you will do."

This initial entry into the family will set up for one of the three following scenarios:

PROBLEM + CLIENT + DIAGNOSTICIAN + SERVICES =  
SOLUTIONS (shared problem solving)

OR

PROBLEM + CLIENT + JUDGEMENT/PUNISHMENT = ALL POWER  
AND CONTROL (agency/District Attorney/court)

OR

"SAVE" CHILD AND DESTROY FAMILY

The mission is how creative the worker can be in engaging the parents in their own diagnostic assessment and their own remedial plan. This involves components of analysis from the perspective of object relations (i.e. how does the worker relate to the parent and the problem from a power and identity perspective). First person statements equals, power and control; questions equal enabling shared power.

The other dimension that is terribly troubling is what happens to empower the child? If the worker or the court sees removal as empowering a victimized child to take or gain some control to stop the maltreatment, what happens in reality? The child is utterly powerless over most components of his/her life: parental "progress", visitation with the parent, placement, peers, etc., this has already occurred within the family. The agency focus' on "nobody has a right to do that to you" and often forgets the predicate: "so we'll do this to you".

If self esteem is central to parental constructive problem solving, what does passing judgement on the parental effectiveness do for the parent? Do people who do not value their own self worth value the worth of others? If a parent is stuck in adolescent issues or needs



(Kohlberg and Erikson), then where will the priorities lie and how will that impact parenting and what is the inevitable result of condemnation/judgement from a social worker? It is tragic when the worker/court fails to separate behavior from the person and condemns both. Are the parental mistakes seen as a confirmation of their already sense of worthlessness (which the agency has identified for them) or are they presented as opportunity for growth? In many cases the most effective role of the worker is to free the parent from old developmental scripts and empower them to meet their own needs, constructively, and therefore those of the child.

There are certainly times when situations warrant the removal of the child, but consideration also needs to fall around what is done to the child emotionally after the rescue, the parents potential and the security of the bonding. In looking at empowering both the child and the parent, how does one practice relationship and communication skills between separated people? The children are the casualties of the haste to save them. One nearly never succeeds in "helping" a child unless the parent is helped to meet their own needs and develop new problem solving strategies. Addressing the child's immediate safety is of course critical, but quality social work has nothing to do with punishing, it has to do with generating growth and change, and that is almost never achieved with aversion behavior modification. Its' achieved with positive phototropic motivation with the

worker providing the direction, an effective alternative to meeting needs and deficits.

The power of eminent domaine assumes all other avenues for compromise/resolution have failed to meet fundamental mandates. The court is often instituted by the worker not because all other efforts have failed, but because they want to up the ante, punish the family for not following their mandated treatment plan, and/or to send the subtle message that the agency is a force to be reckoned with. The agency in and of itself has a truly inflated ego. DHS only has the power in the mandate of investigating responsibility of child maltreatment. DHS has no power by itself to force parents/families to follow case planning, unless the court is already or can be involved if the family fails to comply. This is contrary to what the public in general and most families involved in the system believe or are led to believe. The most effective power is shared when used to establish a relationship with the family wherein trust is established and the parent voluntarily chooses to work to protect the child and resolve problems.

Therefore, given this information one has to ask if the agency/court in its' pursuit of establishing power and control over the family really aids families and empowers them to effectively parent their children. Or if the agency/court actually perpetuates the abuse cycle as it empowers itself to establish power and control over the families it is designed to help.

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APPENDIX A.  
Definitions

Legal definitions of physical and sexual maltreatment.

Oklahoma statute Title 21 section 843, 844, and  
845(B)(1),(3), and (4); respectively:

"Beating or injuring children. Any parent or other person who shall willfully or maliciously injure, torture, maim, or use unreasonable force upon a child under the age of eighteen., or who shall cause, procure or permit any of said acts to be done,"

"Ordinary force as a means of discipline not prohibited. Provided, however, that nothing in this Act shall prohibit any parent, teacher, or other person from using ordinary force as a means of discipline, including but not limited to spanking, switching, or paddling. Laws 1963"

"`Abuse and neglect,' means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare. Harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare can occur through: Nonaccidental physical or mental injury; sexual abuse, as defined by state law; sexual exploitation or negligent treatment or maltreatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or medical care."

"`Sexual abuse' includes rape, incest and lewd or indecent acts or proposals, as defined by law, by a person responsible for the child's welfare;"

"`Sexual exploitation' includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution, as defined by law, by a person responsible for the child's welfare or allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the lewd, obscene, or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child in those acts as defined by the state law, by a person responsible for the child's welfare;"

APPENDIX B.  
Indicators of Physical Maltreatment

<u>PHYSICAL INDICATORS</u>	<u>BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS</u>
Unexplained bruises or welts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-on face, lips, mouth</li> <li>-on torso, back, buttocks, thighs</li> <li>-in various stages of healing</li> <li>-clustered, forming regular patterns</li> <li>-reflecting shape of article used (belt buckle, cord, etc.)</li> <li>-on several different surface areas</li> <li>-regularly appear after absence, weekend or vacation</li> </ul>	Wary of adult contact Apprehension when other children cry Behavioral extremes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-aggressiveness, or</li> <li>-withdrawal</li> </ul> Frightened of parents Afraid to go home Reports injury
Unexplained Burns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-cigar, cigarette burns, especially on soles, palms, back or buttocks</li> <li>-immersion burns (sock-like, glove-like, doughnut shaped on buttocks or genitalia)</li> <li>-patterned like electric burner, iron, etc.</li> <li>-rope burns on arms, legs, neck or torso</li> </ul>	
Unexplained Fractures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to skull, nose, facial structure</li> <li>-in various stages of healing</li> <li>-multiple or spiral fractures</li> </ul>	
Unexplained Lacerations of Abrasions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-to mouth, lips, gums, eyes</li> <li>-to external genitalia</li> </ul>	

APPENDIX C.  
Indicators of Sexual Maltreatment

<u>PHYSICAL INDICATORS</u>	<u>BEHAVIORAL INDICATORS</u>
Difficulty in walking or sitting	Unwilling to change for gym or participate in phy. ed. class
Torn, stained, or bloody underclothing	Withdrawal, fantasy, or infantile behavior
Pain, swelling, or itching in genital area	Bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge for age
Pain on urination	Poor peer relationships
Bruises, bleeding or lacerations in external genitalia, vaginal, or anal areas	Delinquent or runaway
Vaginal/penal discharge	Reports of sexual assault by caretaker
Venereal disease particularly in pre-teens	Change in performance in school
Poor sphincter tone	Regression to earlier types of behavior such as thumb sucking, bed wetting, etc.
Pregnancy	Sleepwalking
	Difficulty in eating and sleeping
	Drug usage
	Indirect allusions to problems at home



APPENDIX D.  
Characteristics of Child Sexual Abuse Perpetrators  
And Sexually Abusive Families  
Steven Wells, PHD.

Characteristics of Perpetrator

1. Victims of maltreatment themselves
2. Report distant or absent or abusive relationships with their father
3. Problems with impulse control
4. Very controlling
5. Very manipulative
6. Authoritarian
7. Rigid
8. Poor/problematic peer relationships
9. Feelings of isolation
10. Underlying mood of emptiness, shame, low self-esteem

Dynamics of Sexually Abusive Families

1. Deteriorating marriage
2. Role reversal with unrealistic expectations
3. Imbalance of power
4. Enmeshment-little or no toleration of individuality
5. Rigid family system-little or no ability to adapt or change
6. Rigid moral structure
7. Other factors often common to chemically dependent families: "secrecy", "isolation", "role reversal", "co-dependency"

VITA 2

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