Journal of Trauma & Dissociation ›

Volume 14, 2013 - Issue 3

1,421 Views | 32 CrossRef citations to date | 26 Altmetric

Articles

Ongoing Incestuous Abuse During Adulthood

Warwick Middleton MBBS FRANZCP MD

Pages 251-272 | Received 17 Aug 2012, Accepted 01 Oct 2012, Accepted author version posted online: 06 Dec 2012, Published online: 29 Apr 2013

Cite this article https://doi.org/10.1080/15299732.2012.736932

Sample our Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing & Allied Health Journals >> Sign in here to start your access to the latest two volumes for 14 days

Full Article | Figures & data | References | Citations | Metrics

Reprints & Permissions | Read this article | Share

Abstract

Individual cases of adult incestuous abuse have surfaced repeatedly in the lay and professional literature of the past 1.5 centuries without it occasioning systematic investigation, such as the reporting of a case series of individuals subjected to such extreme abuse. Yet substantial numbers of patients with dissociative identity disorder at the time of presentation report incestuous abuse continuing into the adult years, and for many the abuse is ongoing. Data relating to a series of 10 such incestuously abused women are presented. These patients were sexually abused from a very early age (typically from before age 3), with the manipulation of their sexual response a key component in conditioning an enduring sexualized attachment. Shame and fear were also used to ensure compliance and silence. The women, when able to speak of it, describe the induction by their paternal abuser of orgasm at an early age, typically around the age of 6. The women have high indices of self-harm and suicidality and are

prone to placing themselves in dangerous reenactment scenarios. The average duration of incestuous abuse for this group of women was 31 years, and the average estimate of total episodes of sexual abuse was 3,320. Most women do not feel that they own their body and experience being “fused” to their father. Their mother was reported as an active participant in the sexual abuse or as having done nothing to protect their daughter despite seeing obvious evidence of incest. The fathers, despite a propensity to use or threaten violence, were generally outwardly productively employed, financially comfortable, and stably married and half had close church involvement. However, suicide and murder occurred within the 1st- or 2nd-degree relatives of these women at a high frequency. All 10 had been sexually abused by various groupings of individuals connected to their fathers.

Keywords:

incest adulthood dissociative identity disorder

Acknowledgments

A version of this article was given as a plenary presentation at the 6th World Congress for Psychotherapy on August 27, 2011, in Sydney, Australia.

Related research

People also read | Recommended articles | Cited by 32

Incestuous Abuse Continuing into Adulthood: Clinical Features and Therapists’ Conceptualisations

Kate McMaugh et al.
Journal of Trauma & Dissociation
Published online: 10 Apr 2024

Information for

- Authors
- R&D professionals
- Editors
- Librarians
- Societies

Open access

- Overview
- Open journals
- Open Select
- Dove Medical Press
- F1000Research

Opportunities

- Reprints and e-prints
- Advertising solutions
- Accelerated publication
- Corporate access solutions

Help and information

- Help and contact
- Newsroom
- All journals
- Books

Keep up to date

Register to receive personalised research and resources by email

Sign me up

Copyright © 2026 Informa UK Limited Privacy policy

Cookies Terms & conditions Accessibility

Registered in England & Wales No. 01072954
5 Howick Place | London | SW1P 1WG