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Ongoing Incestuous Abuse During Adulthood

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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

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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.

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