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Extreme adaptations in extreme and chronic circumstances: The application of “weaponized sex” to those exposed to ongoing incestuous abuse

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines Kluft’s construct of “weaponized sex” through the prism of long-term clinical and research involvement with individuals subjected to ongoing sexual abuse during adulthood, a group that by definition has been exposed to more sexual abuse and for longer than any other defined victim population. Examples of the same sort of phenomena described by Kluft are repeatedly observed in therapy with members of this population, but usually not in a dramatic form. As might be anticipated, in order to survive, when an individual is closely attached to a long-term and extreme abuser, the sort of enduring ambivalence carried by the victim towards

their primary abuser is manifested in compartmentalized states that wish their abuser dead, while other states in equally compartmentalized ways maintain the attachment via the use of sex—by continuing to be sexually involved with their primary abuser (usually their father), by fantasizing about sex with their abuser, by being sexually involved with those who co-abused with their father, or by staging reenactments with individuals whose sexual behavior re-evokes the abuse by the absent (or deceased) father. The process of healing means that inevitably some manifestations of the responses to such abuse spill over into therapy.

KEYWORDS:

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adulthood

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