



Father-Daughter Incest: With a New Afterword

Judith Lewis Herman

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Through an intensive clinical study of forty incest victims and numerous interviews with professionals in mental health, child protection, and law enforcement, Judith Herman develops a composite picture of the incestuous family. In a new afterword, Herman offers a lucid and thorough overview of the knowledge that has developed about incest and other forms of sexual abuse since this book was first published.

Reviewing the extensive research literature that demonstrates the validity of incest survivors' sometimes repressed and recovered memories, she convincingly challenges the rhetoric and methods of the backlash movement against incest survivors, and the concerted attempt to deny the events they find the courage to describe.

Father-Daughter Incest: With a New Afterword Details

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From Reader Review Father-Daughter Incest: With a New Afterword for online ebook

Marie-Claire Dassen says

Heel boeiend. Met name het niet kunnen loskomen van de relatie en de verwarrende gevoelens die kunnen optreden. (deed me ook denken aan die Engelse dame die werd geïnterviewd in het de documentaire van Paul Therroux over de slachtoffers van die Engelse televisiemans. Zij gaf aan misbruikt te zijn door haar grootvader, maar daarover niet boos te kunnen zijn omdat ze daarmee alle goede herinneringen aan hem zou kwijtraken, en dat was het enige plezierige dat ze in haar jeugd had). Gelezen op Kindle.

Heidi says

Very interesting report on research that was conducted in the US in the late 1960s. Incest is viewed from all angles (offender, victim, family, society, health care workers). Different approaches are described on how to try help all parties involved. Astonishing how different society as a whole was only some 50 years ago. I read this book because recently a well known Flemish writer made public that she was sexually abused by her father as a child. She said reading this book was an eye opener for her.

Susan says

I confess. I did not actually finish this book, so my rating isn't really fair. However, I have now quit my job and lent it out, and it's not something I'm likely to return to for...you know, leisure reading. So, here's my abbreviated review:

I was looking forward to this book because of the extreme competence of Judith Herman's TRAUMA AND RECOVERY, which I consider a must-read for anyone doing trauma work. I was hoping this book would be equally helpful in working with incest survivors, since I felt somewhat out of my element. I don't know if this book would be helpful or not in this area. I never got past the second chapter. It was grueling. Herman spends the first chapter painstakingly convincing the reader that incest is a real problem, though detailed case examples and heartbreaking statistics. Apparently the book was first published in the 1980s, and maybe the prevalence of incest really was in question back then. I really didn't need to be convinced of this--I'm already a believer--and I probably should have skipped the beginning and moved on to practical application and treatment. As it was, I just gave up on the book. I guess I just want to warn the next person who attempts to read this.

Melody Newby says

My heart hurts.... it hurts so much especially after reading this amazing yet heart wrenching text. I would urge everyone to read this book and read it as soon as you can.

"Female children are regularly subjected to sexual assaults by adult males who are part of their intimate social world. The aggressors are not outcasts and strangers; they are neighbors, family friends, uncles,

cousins, stepfathers and fathers. To be sexually exploited by a known and trusted adult is a central and formative experience in the lives of countless women."

My heart aches and yet I don't want to turn my eyes away from what is a significant common occurrence: childhood sexual abuse. This book focuses specifically on father-daughter incest. The writer and a friend of hers discovered many of their clients in their clinical practice to have been sexually exploited or seduced by a father, step father, uncle, brother....However, the writings on this subject were very few and some toxic to the nature of this relevant social issue (for example, placing blame on the victim and dismissing women's memories of a traumatic event).

The book was comprised of three parts. The first part definitely pulled me in as a Cultural Studies lover. A discussion of literary and academic/psychological instances of father-daughter incest. Cinderella is known as a story which vilifies step mothers and women in general. In other versions of Cinderella, her mother dies and her father begins to pursue her romantically. He is the villain.

Freud discovered that many of his hysterical female patients recounted memories of being sexually assaulted by their fathers, however, he retracted this statement. He refused to identify fathers as sexual aggressors...especially since they were respectable men in the community. Thus, he developed the seduction theory in which the woman fantasizes about her father sexually and therefore become hysterical.

The second part of the book discusses the writer and her research partner and colleague's case study group and research findings.

The patterns identified among women who have been sexually assaulted by a trusted male adult (women are significantly less likely to sexually exploit a child) depict a very traditional and patriarchal family structure. The father is overly dominant and the mother is passive and powerless. Sometimes, the mother is incapacitated in some way whether due to illness, loss of reproductive freedom (a mother who has had too many children, possibly due to religious beliefs that forbid birth control) and dependent on the father. She may be vulnerable.

Herman points out that feminism is key to effecting change by removing the current toxic patriarchal structure and introducing a societal model of power where the sexual division of labor among men and women are equal. Historically, the women's movement has been deeply involved with the rights of children (women's rights also advocated for the child labor laws we now have today).

The structure of the nuclear family needs to change. Although it is indeed changing with single mothers heading more and more households, fathers must share in the childcare duties equally. The logic is that men who have taken a nurturing role in their children's development are less likely to exploit them.

The topic of the family secret is common among incest survivors. Daughters hold the family together by keeping the incest secret: that her father fucks her. Once the secret is out, often there are dramatic events to follow. Women have often been blamed especially under older psychotherapy theories (Freud for example) with the question, "So, what did you do to seduce your father? What did you do to deserve it? Did you send the wrong signals?" There is this ideal of the the all-powerful alpha-male Father figure who can do no wrong that tenaciously grips our society.

The daughter is often confused since she often received special treatment from her father and actually enjoyed his presence-in many cases. Another significant pattern found was the estrangement of the mother from the daughter involved in the secret of incest. The mother-daughter relationship has been identified as

important in the healing process of an incest victim. Women who have been sexually abused are angry at their mothers for being unable to protect them. Some mothers of victims avoided such information, while others either didn't know or were aware and did nothing. These women had lost power themselves and remained dependent on an aggressive, and dominant man. Often the mothers failed to protect their daughters because she could not protect herself from these types of men.

Mother and daughter must explore reuniting and working on a healthy relationship together during the healing process. On a larger scale, women must unite together to fight patriarchy.

The last section of the book involves therapy options and the coming out of the incest secret and how it is received by the public, the laws surrounding father-daughter incest and the involvement of community organizations such as the police, social workers, and religious institutions.

There is discussion on the perpetrators. These fathers range from a variety of ethnic and professional backgrounds. They are often aggressive and prone to violence and see women and children as property. They deny to their death beds that they had ever touched their daughters, when in reality most incestuous fathers had sexually molested other children outside of the family as well.

"For every Saturday our father beat us, we were given the chance to ask his and God's forgiveness the very next day. For God, the Father, and our father seemed to be one. At the very least, our father, from up high in his pulpit, in his black velvet robes with the purple satin vestments, projected the image of God to us. We hungrily accepted Christ into our hearts and our mouths. Communion was a problem because when my father said, 'This is my body which is given for you', and put the bread in his mouth and commanded us to 'Eat ye all of it,' I felt sick and confused, not remembering all those times he'd forced his body into my mouth."

I enjoyed the discussion on the advantages and the disadvantages of private therapy vs group therapy. Herman appears to support group therapy over private therapy. In some successful models of group therapy, there are three phases. The first phase, the victim learns to talk about her memories and her experiences. The second is a form of psychodrama where victims relive and act out past childhood memories, allowing themselves to feel the pain again. The last phase is the 'aftercare'. Sometimes this involved confronting abusers.

Often incest victims closed the circle of self help by helping other women. The victims transform from victim to survivor at the end of their therapy journey. A common statement among survivors is that, the memory of incest will always be there but after therapy, it just doesn't bother them that much anymore.

Now that we have progressed so far with the assistance of sexual abuse survivors, it is too late to ever remain silent.

There is so much more to this book. Read this. In all honesty, I cried when I started writing this review....I am not an incest survivor myself but the thought of the magnitude of such a crime and how it harms children and women moves me to tears. Men are affected as well although Herman points out that boys are sexually abused primarily by *men*.

Ashraya says

This was difficult to read, but absolutely worth it.

Lily says

This book is a must for practitioners who work with survivors of incest. Though it was first published in 1981, it still gets the dysfunctional family dynamics common to incestuous relationships right.

This is also an excellent source for survivors, when they are ready.

Kelley says

Incredibly interesting. Judy Herman is brilliant.

danielle says

this book was difficult to read due to nature of the subject. however, if you can get past that you learn a lot about the typical family structure that incest occurs in, characteristics of the father and the mother if she is present, and typical characteristics that children who are being sexually abused will display.

the book describes how to respond to news of incest. Herman firmly believes that the father should be removed from the family rather than the daughter and talks about the importance of maintaining normalcy for the daughter, re-establishing a stronger mother-daughter bond if possible, and in very specific and well monitored situations re-incorporating the father back into the family.

Sara says

This book was difficult to read because I know someone that has been through this situation, but it also helped me to understand some of her actions and why she had some of the psychological reactions she did. When you know someone that has been through this situation, that makes this book difficult to read, but it will help you to understand. It is also a book that, from a clinical perspective, would likely help someone that works with clientele that have experienced this type of abuse, which is sadly the most common type of sexual abuse that is perpetrated upon women.
