

INCEST

By Mohsen Sobhy Naguib.

ABSTRACT

Incest is almost universally recognised, but everywhere prohibited. It occurs in all social classes although it tends to be concealed in the higher socio-economic groups. The most common form is brother-sister incest but father-daughter incest is the most prevalent type coming to attention. The incestuous father has been described as emotionally deprived, tends to be maladjusted at work, sometimes alcoholic and may have poor sexual adjustment. The wives have been described as dependant and infantile and may push their daughters into a mothering role including sexual partnership with the father. Marital disharmony and rejection are usual features. The involved daughters may collude in the incestuous liaison, and later they frequently develop personality problems, and become promiscuous following termination of the incest. The usual pattern in these cases is the father beginning incest at about the age of 40 with his oldest daughter and subsequently engaging his younger accessible daughters.

Brother-sister incest usually occurs in the absence of adult supervision and the older participant tends to be the brother. Other forms of incest have been less frequently reported. In law, incest is almost universally considered to be an offence.

Proper concern should be directed towards the protection of the child but incest should also be viewed as a symptom of family pathology which may require family therapy.

Incest is a subject which is very rarely discussed in Egypt, probably because the practice evokes strong social disapproval. Thus patients may be extremely reluctant to admit to incestuous relationship, and the psychiatrist himself may experience personal difficulty in introducing the subject for fear of causing extreme social embarrassment and humiliation.

Taking a wider view of the subject we can see that we are not unique in this respect and J. Henderson (1975) in a review of the subject wrote: "Although there is convincing evidence that incest is a universal pre-occupation of man, frank and open discussion of it — at least outside modern professional circles — particularly does not occur. Even in the psychiatric and psychoanalytic literature".

The attention devoted to the subject of incest falls far short of its importance as the kingpin of psychodynamic formulation, and, indeed, of its importance as a clinical syndrome.

DEFINITION AND HISTORY

Most definitions of incest describe it as the occurrence of sexual relations between blood relatives. The Oxford English Dictionary defines incest as "a sexual intercourse between persons regarded as too closely related to marry each other" (sixth edition, 1976). In an attempt to give a simple and more scientific definition Henderson (1975) proposed ; "incest denotes intimate physical contact accompanied by conscious sexual excitement between individuals within the same socialisation unit other than husband and wife or the cultural equivalent, or between individuals who are close blood relatives".

A vast quantity of evidence has been gathered amply to document the almost universal recognition of incest. Incest has been described in virtually all periods of history and in all types of civilizations, D. Rappliag (1967).

There is evidence in the Greek, Roman, Egyptian and Persian mythologies that in some cultures, sexual relations between members of the same family not only occurred but were sometimes required, H. Maisch (1973).

In Greek mythology, Zeus is alleged to have murdered his father, Uranos, married his mother, Hera, and fathered by her a family of lesser gods. Mention can be made also of the tragic marriage of Oedipus to his mother, Jocasta; and Electra who had incest with her brother, Crestes, to revenge the murder of their father, Agamemnon, by their mother, Clytemnestra.

Looking at our own ancient history, we can conclude that some forms of incest were accepted within the Royal families of classical

Egypt. Cleopatra was a notable example. She was the child of a succession of brother and sister marriages and eventually married her younger brother Ptolemy III.

EPIDEMIOLOGY

Incest is almost universally recognised but everywhere prohibited. Henderson (1975). It is regarded as taboo by most primitive societies. In a recent review, R. Buglass (1979) wrote; "Incest is one of the oldest crimes. In earlier times it was considered to be an offence against God, and carried the death penalty in some countries".

Early in the twentieth century it was thought that incest occurred mainly in remote rural areas among backward people, or was induced mainly by poverty and gross overcrowding, or primarily involved families with low normal standards, Cormier, Kennedy and Sangowiwez (1962).

A number of reports are relevant to such considerations. T. Sonden, (1936) in his study of 241 incest cases brought before Swedish Courts during the 26-year period 1913-1933 found that all the offenders were persons of the lowest social strata, with none from either the middle or upper social classes. He also observed that the offences had been committed twice as frequently in the country as in the city and more often in small towns than in large conurbations. He stressed furthermore that overcrowding and bad housing were associated with incest behaviour. Agreement with Sonden's view is also offered by L.C. Hirning (1947) and D. Szabo 1957-1958).

However, other opinions have been expressed in the literature questioning the accuracy of the above reports. S.K. Weinberg (1955) states that incest rates in the United States and England have not been sensitive to the rise of urbanization and population density. This was also found in Japan by Kubo (1959). I.B. Wiener (1964) in an attempt to explain this controversy put forward the view that the necessity of

relying on criminal and court records to study large numbers of incest cases is itself a contaminating influence, in as much as conviction rates for all personal crimes are more numerous among lower than middle- or upper-class groups. In another study by the same author, I.B. Weiner (1962) in which he collected his sample from an open psychiatric clinic offering free help, he found that middle class incestuous fathers were well represented. From the above data we can conclude that there is no sound basis for affixing the relative frequencies of incest behaviour in the various socio-economic strata. R. Bluglass (1979) concluded; "incest occurs in all social class groups although it tends, like non-accidental injury to children, to be more easily concealed in the higher socio-economic categories".

INCIDENCE OF INCEST BEHAVIOUR

The incidence statistics on incest are largely drawn from criminal court records and research studies of imprisoned offenders. The social stigma and attendant shame and guilt which tend generally to depress the sexual offences are especially operative in cases of incest, I.B. Weiner (1964). Offences occurring in lower socio-economic groups and among persons with a history of some forms of deviance are more likely to be detected than cases involving persons of normal intelligence living in less deprived social circumstances, Rennet, H. (1954).

In the U.S.A., Weinberg (1955) reported the incest rate as 1-2 per 100,000 between 1910 and 1930. More recent studies suggest that 3.9 per cent of the average population of the U.S.A. have experienced incest, Gebhard et al., (1965). About 4% of females in Kinsey's studies reported an incestuous approach by a near relative, Kinsey et al., (1953).

In the U.K., M. Noble and J. Masan (1978) estimate that the incidence of incest from cases known to the police is 6.6 per 100,000 in England. However it is generally believed that incest is far more common than appears from the numbers known to the police, R. Bluglass (1979).

PSYCHODYNAMIC ASPECTS OF INCEST

A full discussion of the psychodynamic aspects of incest is beyond the scope of this brief review. Nevertheless, comments should be made. Initially, Freud thought that parental seduction of children was a reality and one of the causes of psychoneurosis, but later he discovered that the patients' reports were not true and he modified his theoretical formulations in terms of sexual fantasy in childhood. Freud postulated, however, that the existence of incestuous fantasies implies the possibility that, under certain circumstances, they will become fact, Freud, S. (1914).

Henderson, discussing this point proposed that paranoid traits and unconscious homosexual strivings are common in incestuous fathers. He suggested also that incest amongst fathers is an expression of unconscious hostility fused with primitive genital impulses discharged toward their daughter.

A psychoanalytic study by Gordon (1955) proposed that the daughter who becomes involved in incest with her father is the product of oral deprivation in the preoedipal stage of psychosexual development and, as a result, she utilizes the sexual relationship with her father as a revenge against the frustrating mother and an expression of her wish for gratification of oral needs. The daughter, rejected by her mother, turns to her father for oral gratification.

CLINICAL FEATURES

Most of the psychiatric literature has been concerned with father-daughter incest as the most prevalent form coming to attention. However, Weiner, (1964), reports that brother-sister relationships are the most frequent type of incestuous contact, but, being relatively transient and having fewer disturbing consequences, they are less likely to come to the attention of investigators. Other forms such as step-father-step-daughter, mother-son also appear in the literature.

FATHER-DAUGHTER INCEST

According to studies by Weinberg, (1955), Weiner, (1964) and most recently by Bluglass, (1979), incestuous fathers typically begin incest activity around the age of 40. This is usually with the eldest daughter, who has attained puberty at an average age of 12 years. It seems that the sexual development of the girl is the stimulus to start the incestuous relationship. Subsequently an incestuous father may initiate further relationships with the younger daughter.

Weinberg, (1955), classifies the incestuous fathers into three types which he describes as follows:

- a) an introverted personality which leads to an extreme endogamic or intrafamilial orientation with affection and social relationships confined to the family alone,
- b) a psychopathic personality, characterized by indiscriminate promiscuity, for whom family members are merely additional sexual objects,
- c) a psychosexual immature type who has pedophilic cravings and may become involved with other children as well as his own.

Available data indicate that incestuous fathers tend to be of a higher level of intelligence than other sexual offenders, and tend to have suffered from an emotionally deprived childhood. Bluglass, (1979), reported that formal psychiatric illness is an unusual finding among incestuous fathers, but in analysing the clinical material of Maisch, (1973), Bluglass revealed that in this group of incestuous fathers, 29% displayed psychopathological behavioural traits of violence and irascibility, 23% were maladjusted at work, 24% alcoholic, 46% had a previous criminal record and 14% were highly sexed. There is a good basis in the literature for the view that these men have made poor sexual adjustments, Weinberg, (1955), Honderson, (1975). Manifested difficulties in achieving adult sexuality, Weiner, (1964), and suffered from marital disharmony and rejection or a decrease in marital sexual activity, Bluglass, (1979). The loss of a wife

by divorce, separation or death leaving a bereaved father alone with an adolescent daughter who becomes a substitute wife providing love, solace and sexual comfort, has been found to be a strong precipitating factor for incestuous behaviour.

WIVES OF INCESTUOUS FATHERS

There is much evidence to suggest that the wives of incestuous fathers promote the incest by frustrating their husbands sexually or deserting them in some fashion. Their sexual unavailability as a result of pregnancy or illness may also be a factor, Weiner, (1964). Some of these mothers are dependant and infantile, Machotka, Pittman and Flomenhaft, (1967), Kaufman, Peck and Tagiur, (1954), and generally feel worthless both as mothers and as women. Sometimes this encourages intimacy between fathers and daughters directly, Kaufman, Peck and Tagiur, (1954). These mothers seem to indulge their eldest daughter and encourage her toward maturity beyond her years, Weiner, (1964). They push their daughters prematurely into a mothering role and that eventually includes sexual partnership with the father, Henderson, (1975). However, numerous cases have been reported in which the wife claimed complete ignorance and denied the ongoing incest until she was confronted with it by some undeniable turn of events such as discovery by someone outside the family or the daughter's pregnancy, which is the outcome in approximately 20% of the cases.

DAUGHTERS IN FATHER-DAUGHTER INCEST

Weinberg, (1955) concluded that the daughters in incestual relationships are usually coerced into performing the sexual act. However accumulating case reports give much evidence of the daughters' collusion in the incestuous liaison which may continue for a long period without protest, Sloane, P. and Karpinski, E, (1942), Szabo, D, (1962), Bender, L. and Blau, A, (1937).

It has been frequently shown that these girls tend to develop cha-

racter disorders, but serious psychiatric illness is rare. It has often been noted that such girls have a tendency, often after giving up incest, to seek a substitute in promiscuous relationships with other men, Lukiabowica, N., (1972) reported that 11 of his 26 cases showed character disorder (promiscuity, prostitution and anti-social behaviour), five had frigidity, four had frank neurosis and six showed no apparent ill-effects from their incestuous relationship. It is also suggested that the potential for psychological damage to the daughter is greater when incest begins in adolescence than it is with pre-adolescent onset.

BROTHER-SISTER INCEST

Despite the fact that father-daughter incest has been extensively studied and reported in the literature, compared with brother-sister incest, Weiner, (1964), in his excellent review on the subject concluded that the latter is probably the most frequent form of incest.

The older participant tends to be male, and the commonest pattern is of normal sexual play leading eventually to hetero-sexual intercourse. Meiselman, K.C., (1978) proposed that the children lacked adult supervision, and Weinberg, (1955) has stressed that the father's absence from the family is crucial. Friedlander, K., (1947) suggests that for the incestuous sister her elder brother may represent a substitute for the father, and her Oedipal desire, may be displaced on to him. Furthermore, it is possible that a boy, or man may seek an incestuous relationship to his mother and the sister in turn may respond out of her needs to fill a maternal role, Weiner, (1964).

MOTHER-SON INCEST

There are very few reports of cases of mother-son incest, which is considered to be the rarest form and its occurrence usually indicates more severe psychopathology in the participants than is usual in father-daughter incest.

A consistent finding in the few cases reported in the literature is the

loss of the father at an early age. Some contributing factors were suggested by Weiner, (1964), namely, overt seduction or tolerance by the mother, loss of sexual outlet to an adult son, and loss of control associated with intoxication or psychiatric illness in one or more family members.

FATHER-SON INCEST

Very little has been written about father-son incest. However, from the available data, it seems that it is also an expression of intra-familial conflict and pathology.

A poor marital relationship, an inadequate mother and a father with poor sexual adjustment, are always operative factors, the sons may express intense negative feelings, including homicidal wishes towards the father, suicidal ideation, and self-destructiveness. Other forms of incest are very rarely described in the literature, e.g., grand-father-grand-daughter incest, uncle-niece incest, and aunt-nephew incest. They are clinically and dynamically similar to those cases already discussed.

TREATMENT

The treatment of clinical incest is complicated and raises the question of the morbidity of the behaviour whether the occurrence of incest is pathological or not?

Maisch, H., (1973) suggested that the harmful effects on the family as a result of disclosure and punishment of the father may be more serious than those of incestuous behaviour itself. The economic results of the father's imprisonment may be serious, the daughter may be removed into care and the family stigmatized, Bluglass, (1979). However, a culturally determined moral imperative has been violated, and the cultural and legal prohibitions against incestuous behaviour have existed in most countries for a considerable period of time. But imprisonment of the father may at least serve to protect the child.

Clinically, incest has usually been viewed as a symptom of family pathology and treatment is orientated towards family therapy. Kennedy, M., and Cormier, B.M., (1969). Fathers who are mentally ill or alcoholics should be actively treated for those disorders. Intensive psychotherapy or psychoanalysis has been recommended by Henderson, (1975), when appropriate and in selected cases.

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AUTHOR

Dr Mohsen Sobhy Naguib-Honorary Registrar in Psychiatry, The Bethlem Royal Hospital and The Maudsley Hospital, London, Research Worker, Institute of Psychiatry, London.

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ABSTRACT

L'inceste est reconnu dans le plupart des sociétés mais presque toujours proscrit. Il se manifeste dans toutes les couches sociales quoique son existence est souvent passée sous silence parmi les groupes socio-économiques les plus élevés. Sa forme la plus commune est l'inceste entre frère et soeur mais l'inceste entre père et filles est la forme qui attire le plus souvent l'attention. Le père incestueux a été qualifié comme étant affectivement appauvri maladapté au travail et à la sexualité, et parfois alcoolique.

Leurs épouses ont été qualifiées comme étant dépendantes et infantiles et ayant tendance à se laisser prendre au jeu et à l'encourager. Plus tard elles manifestent souvent des troubles de la personnalité sexuelle.

L'inceste

Le scénario le plus commun est celui d'un père d'à peu près 40 ans qui engendre un rapport incestueux avec sa fille aînée et puis plus tard tourne son attention vers les autres filles auxquelles il a accès.

L'inceste entre frère et soeur apparait le plus souvent lorsqu'il y a un manque de contrôle adulte. Le partenaire le plus âgé est souvent le frère. Les autres formes d'inceste ont été moins souvent décrites.

Du point de vue légal l'inceste est presque toujours condamné et les frères sont souvent passibles d'emprisonnement.

Quoi qu'il soit naturel de montrer une inquiétude à l'égard de la protection de l'enfant, l'inceste doit aussi être considéré comme un symptôme de pathologie familiale qui demande une intervention thérapeutique familiale.

عرض لحالات العلاقات الجنسية المحرمة

ان قيام علاقة جنسية بين أفراد الأسرة الواحدة قد يبدو للوهلة الأولى شيئا نادر الحدوث ، ولكن الدراسات المختلفة اثبتت أنه شيء معروف منذ القدم وان كان يندر التحدث عنه .
تجمع الآراء على أن أكثر الأنماط شيوعا هو قيام علاقة جنسية بين الشقيق وشقيقته وان كانت العلاقة بين الأب وابنته هي أكثر الأنواع التي تثير اهتمام المسؤولين .

دراسات متعددة أظهرت أن أمثال هؤلاء الآباء عادة ما يعانون من حرمان عاطفي وعلاقة زوجية غير موفقة وانهم غير موفقين في أعمالهم وضعاف أمام رغباتهم الجنسية وفي أحيان كثيرة يدمنون الخمر . أما الزوجات فقد وصفن بشخصياتهن غير الناجحة التي تؤدي بهن الى دفع بناتهن للقيام بأدوارهن في الأسرة وينظمن هذه العلاقة الجنسية مع الأب .

كذلك فدراسة شخصيات هؤلاء الفتيات أوضحت ، انهن - غالبا - لا يظهرن اعتراضا ، بل أحيانا قد يلعبن دورا ايجابيا في قيام مثل هذه العلاقة وفيما بعد فهن أكثر عرضة للانحرافات الخلقية .

في كثير من الأحيان يكون الأب في الأربعينات من عمره حين يبدأ مثل هذه العلاقة ، وعادة ما يبدأ بالابنة الكبرى ثم يستدير للصغير سنا .
حدوث اتصال جنسي بين الشقيق وشقيقته كثيرا ما يحدث في غياب رقابة الآباء وفي مثل هذه الحالات عادة ما يكون الشقيق هو الأكبر سنا .
ان حدوث مثل هذه العلاقات داخل الأسرة هو ظاهرة مرضية خطيرة تستلزم التدخل لحماية الأبناء وشمل العائلة كلها بالرعاية والعلاج الأسري .