Impact of Sexual Abuse on Victims

Anna C. Salter, Ph.D.
“The Experiencing of Sexual Traumas as a Form of Sexual Activity”

(Abraham, 1927)
“In a great number of cases the trauma was desired by the child unconsciously. . . we have to recognize it as a form of infantile sexual activity.”

(Abraham, 1927, p. 38)
“In all of them the trauma could have been prevented. The children could have called for help, run away or offered resistance instead of yielding to the seduction.”

(Abraham, 1927, p. 50)
The girl “had allowed herself to be seduced. She had followed the neighbour into the woods and allowed him to go a long way in carrying out his purpose before she freed herself from him and ran away.”

(Abraham, 1927, pp. 52-54)
“It is not to be wondered at that this child kept the occurrence secret.”

(Abraham, 1927, pp. 52-53)
Sexual Abuse as a Form of Infantile Acting Out

- Abrams, 1907
- Bender & Blau, 1937
- Sloane & Karpinski, 1942
- Bender & Grugett, 1952
- Weiss, Rogers, Darwin & Dutton, 1955
- Revitch & Weiss, 1962
- Weiner, 1962
- Mohr, Turner & Jerry, 1964
- Lukianowicz, 1972
- Henderson, 1975, 1983
“Harmless individuals and their victims . . . Aggressive and seductive children.”

(Revitch & Weiss, 1962, p. 78)
Offenders

“They exploited him by accepting his gifts and money.”

(Revitch & Weiss, 1962, p. 75)
Offenders

“Timid . . . childish and immature.”

(Virkkunen, 1975, p.123)
Offenders

“Gentle, fond of children and benevolent.”

(Virkkunen, 1975, p. 179)
Offenders

“Placed in the position of compensating the oral frustrations inflicted by the mother.”

(Rascovksy & Rascovksy, 1950, p. 44)
Victims

“The child might have been the actual seducer rather than the one innocently seduced.”

(Bender & Blau, 1937, p. 514)
“This study seems to indicate that these children undoubtedly do not deserve completely the cloak of innocence with which they have been endowed by moralists, social reformers and legislators.”

(Bender & Blau, 1937, p. 514)
Mothers

“Unconscious homosexual strivings in the mother.”

(Lustig, Dresser, Spellman & Murray, 1966, p 34)
Mothers

“The mother . . . Keeps herself tired and worn out.”

(Justice & Justice, 1979, p. 98)
Victims

- Predisposed Victims
- Provocative Victims
- Participating Victims
- False Victims

(Fattah, 1967)
Effects of Sexual Abuse

“Lasting psychological injury . . . is not very common.”

(Brunold, 1964, p. 8)
Effects of Sexual Abuse

“Relatively minor effect on adult adjustment.”

(Gagnon, 1965, p. 177)
Effects of Sexual Abuse

“Diminishes the subject’s chance of psychosis and allows better adjustment to the external world.”

(Rascovksy & Rascovksy, 1950, p. 45)
Effects of Sexual Abuse

“May be either a positive, healthy experience of, at worse, neutral and dull.”

(DeMott, 1980)
“Children Not Severely Damaged by Incest with a Parent”

- Setting Fires
- Vandalism
- Disrupting Other Children
- Stealing
- Aggression Against Girls

- Sexually Abusing Boys
- Exhibitionism
- Fearing Calamity
- Suicidal Ideation
- “Manipulative” and “Smooth”
  (Yorukoglu & Kemph, 1966)
Conspiracy of Silence

Sandra Butler

1978
Butler’s Observations

“They were totally defeated, without joy or spontaneity, and didn’t seem to care about their circumstances or about what would happen to them.”

(Butler, 1978, p. ix)
“Seven-year olds can catch gonorrhea from dirty sheets.”

(Butler, 1978, p. 9)
## Difference in Symptoms: Sexually Abused & Non-Abused

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking Medication</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Attempts</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battered as Adults</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Addiction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcoholism</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Briere, 1984)*
## Difference in Symptoms:
**Sexually Abused & Non-Abused**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Problems</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Men</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Body</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightmares</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Briere, 1984)
### Difference in Symptoms: Sexually Abused & Non-Abused

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptom</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Sex Drive</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissociation</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Attacks</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble with Temper</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Briere, 1984)
### Lifetime Risk of Major Mental Disorder for Women Sexually Abused as Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>Abused</th>
<th>Non-abused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major Depressive</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phobia</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Stein et al., 1988)*
### Lifetime Risk of Major Mental Disorder for Men Sexually Abused as Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Abused</th>
<th>Non-abused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug Abuse</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-social</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Stein et al., 1988)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Any Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men Abused</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men Non-abused</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Abused</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Non-abused</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Stein et al., 1988)
Sequelae of Child Sexual Abuse

- PTSD
- Depression
- Anxiety Disorders
- Dissociation
- Sexual Problems
- Re-Victimization
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

- Intrusive Symptoms
- Avoidant Symptoms
- Arousal Symptoms
Intrusive Symptoms

- Intrusive Memories
- Affective Flashbacks
- Physical Responses to Triggers
- Nightmares
Triggers

- Smell of aftershave
- Footsteps on the stairs
- Alone in the room with a male
- Bathroom
- Dental appointments
Avoidant Symptoms

- Refusal to talk or think about abuse
- Avoidance of reminders
- Numbing
- Post-traumatic decline
Arousal Symptoms

- Hyper-startle
- Lack of concentration
- Irritability
- Difficulty sleeping
Correlates of PTSD in Rape Victims

- Life Threat
- Physical Injury
- Completed Rape

8.5 x

(Kilpatrick et al., 1989)
Characteristics of Assault

- Rape Alone: 29%
- Rape/Physical Injury: 58%
- Rape/Life Threat: 69%
- Rape/Injury/Life Threat: 79%

(Kilpatrick et al., 1989)
Contact with Offender

- Court appearances
- Supervised visitation
- Apology sessions
- Unsupervised visitation
- Reunification
Affective Sequelae

- Affective Flashbacks
- Secondary to Cognitions
- Secondary to Current Realities
Impact of Trauma on World View
Non-Traumatized Beliefs

- Above average
- Things will work out
- Underestimate chances of negative events
- Overestimate chances of positive events
- Overestimate personal efficacy
Rated Selves More Positively than Peer of Same Sex and Age

87%

(Taylor, Lerner et al., Submitted for Publication)
One’s Strengths     Important
         Rare

One’s Failings     Unimportant
         Common
(Campbell, 1986; Marks, 1984)
Time is on Our Side

Poor Performance

Remember as Better

20 Minutes Later

(Greenwald, 1980)
Not Recent Phenomena

One month

Rated mood each day compared to Own typical mood

Almost everybody

Typically happier than they typically are

(Johnson, 1938)
### Lifetime Probabilities of Experiencing Trauma

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car wreck w/ injury</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loved one die from homicide, suicide or accident</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some sort</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Norris, 1992)
Trauma-Based World View

Shattered Assumptions

Belief in Personal Invulnerability
Belief the World is Meaningful
Belief in Personal Efficacy

(Janoff-Bulman, 1992)
Fall-Out from Chowchilla Kidnapping

“Massive interferences with Optimism & Trust”
(Terr, 1985)
Fall-Out from Chowchilla Kidnapping

- Age 9
  - Russians ruining ozone layer
  - Everybody killed

- Age 10
  - World end in 2000
  - Live in Mountains: Towns
  - Not Safe
Fall-Out from Chowchilla Kidnapping

23 of 25 Afraid of the Future
World View and Sexual Abuse

“When you get old, you die. I have grandparents who are sixty or sixty-nine and I don’t think they are ready to die. But I sometimes think I am going to die sooner than other people – I don’t know why I think this. I think bad people will hurt me. I may be killed instead of dying.”

(Terr, 1990 p. 31)
“A marginally bearable sense of helplessness, a realization that one’s own will and wishes become irrelevant to the course of events, leaving either a view of the self that is damaged, contaminated by the humiliation, pain, and fear that the event imposed; or a fragmented sense of self.”

(Spiegel, 1990, p. 251).
Emotional Visibility
Emotional Invisibility

Where Does Safety Lie?
Apologies That Revictimize
My dear Joe,

I am finding it very hard to say my true feelings and to say that I’m sorry for the things that I did to you. You showed me love and happiness in the times that we had together. The friendship and love from me was and still is absolutely true. .

"
Dear Sally,
    I am going to explain to you what I’ve done to you so you don’t feel ashamed of yourself or guilty. When I put my hands on your body and between your legs that was very wrong of me. You felt that you had to allow me to do this. You were thinking that whatever I did or told you was right. . . “
Dear Matthew,

“You are sadly the victim I have created. I manipulated the situation in a very crafty way. This caused you to touch my private parts . . . It was my idea that we should play that game. I should not have asked you to participate. When you did participate you thought it was good fun. I knew you thought this and I encouraged you to touch my private parts. . .”
“My Dear Angela,

I know that I have hurt you and caused you much suffering. I have broken the trust you had in me and I have used my position as a father to take advantage of you instead of taking care of you. I realize the extent of the damage I have done to you and I can never make up for it. You should not feel guilty about anything: You are blameless and innocent. I am the only one responsible. I am the only one to blame.”
“I am now begging you to forgive me for all harm that I have done to you. I have asked for forgiveness from God and I am now asking for yours. We all have to appear in front of God and I do not wish to appear in front of him without your forgiveness. I know that it can be very difficult for you to forgive me and I pray God to enlighten your heart with his mercy.”
“May he who is our maker bestow his security and his protection on you. May he shower his choicest blessings on you. May he who is most compassionate guide you in his right path. May he who is the sustainer give you the best of this world and the best of the hereafter.”
Dear John,

I am writing this letter to let you know the facts of what I did to you. What I wanted from you was your young body to satisfy my lust. I did not love you. I only gave you toys so you would not tell about what I was doing to you, and to make you think good things of me. . . You may remember the days out I took you on and said I enjoyed those days. I did not enjoy those days with you. I only wanted to see you so I could abuse you.”
Inappropriate Apologies

- Explicit descriptions of the abuse
- Paradoxical statements
- Offender pride in his cleverness or control of victim
- Permanently damaged victim
- Extra burdens
- Double messages
Apologies: Reasons Child Survivors Want Them

- “I’ll feel better if he says he’s sorry.”
- “It will mean I was right to tell.”
- “It’ll mean I won’t have lost him. I’ve lost everyone else.”
- “He was closer to me that anyone else. Maybe we can still be like that.”
- “It’ll show me he’s forgiven me for telling.”

(Eldridge & Still, 1995)
Apologies: Reasons Adult Survivors Want Them

- “It will reconcile me to my family.”
- “Maybe they will forgive me at last.”
It will help him/her see that I was responsible.

It will make him/her feel better.

I’ll find her a way to show her who’s in control.

It’ll mean that she/he will forgive me.

It’ll mean that the family will forgive me.

They’ll think I won’t do it again and that will make it easier to get away with it.
Implicit Versus Explicit Denial
Why do they shoot spies?
Benign Transformation

Load-bearing Walls

Intimacy Allergy