

Renana Levy

Whats in it for me? A Study of the Low Rate of Incest Victim's Reports to Police

This article seeks to find out why the vast majority of incest victims still choose not to report to the police. Its purpose is to add to the discussion surrounding the victim's experience in coping with trauma that rises from incest. A better understanding of the victim's experience is a prerequisite for a well-functioning criminal justice system, as many victims may have several mental blocks that could: a) Prevent them from filing a complaint with the relevant authorities and/or; b) in cases where a complaint *was* filed, general criminal law, and specifically legislation concerning incest, may fail.

The article is based on a previous study conducted by the author, where both victims and therapists specializing in treating victims of incest were interviewed. These interviews raised diverse issues, such as the way this kind of abuse is conceptualized; the attempt to minimize the trauma through self-deception; the power of family ties and the need for the family's love; the complexity of family ties, specifically the complex relationship with the perpetrator and the fear of causing the family distress; the need for recognition versus feelings of guilt and shame, etc.

The article shows that the issues discussed can be categorized into three different narratives: The need to heal; the need to protect the family and gain its recognition; and the need for social responsibility. These narratives can better help understand the complexity of incest and the intricacies of dealing with its effects. Therefore, understanding these three narratives enhances policy-makers ability to deal with the incest epidemic effectively.