

THE MAKING OF A WHORE: THE STORY OF LARA NEWMAN

"If I had to describe myself in one word, I'd say, 'I'm a whore.'"

INTRODUCTION

I interviewed Lara Newman (a pseudonym) in Cape Town in 1991. The interview lasted approximately two-and-a-half hours. All the names in her story have been changed.

Lara was born in Johannesburg into a middle-class English South African family. She was 23 years old with two younger sisters aged 18 and 16 at the time of the interview. She was married and living with her husband and two children -- a boy aged five and a girl aged two. Her husband, Brian, an English South African, was a successful marketing manager. Lara was studying for a Bachelor of Accounting degree.

Lara's father obtained several diplomas but never went to university. He spent the last 20 years in charge of the computer programming department of a major commercial enterprise. Lara described him as "always ready to help when they phone him after work with computer problems, even if it's three o'clock in the morning." Her mother left school after finishing standard eight and worked as a bookkeeper before becoming a full-time housewife.

Although Lara went to school at a Catholic convent, she was brought up as an Anglican. This remains her religious preference now.

I chose the title for this article (with Lara's blessing) because I found Lara's story particularly helpful in illuminating how the experience of incestuous abuse can train a victim to become a prostitute. As Lara herself so poignantly stated it, "It's like being a circus animal. If you train them hard enough, they'll remember what they have to do."

Lara's story provides many other insights as well, including the extreme damage frequently caused by incestuous abuse. Her self-understanding and awareness, her intelligence and eloquence, her extraordinary honesty, provide an unusually rich opportunity to understand the complexity of the binds that incest survivors can experience, as well as the confusion and ambivalence. The analysis at the end of Lara's story, however, will focus on the relationship between incest victimization and sexual abuse by therapists, but especially, the connections between incestuous abuse and prostitution.

When Lara came to my home for the interview, she was demurely dressed and wore little or no make up. Her appearance

was fresh and natural -- which, together with her behaviour, gave quite the opposite impression from the compulsive flirt and seductress that she describes herself as having become. She related very well and warmly to me as a woman, unlike the male-identified picture that unfolds in the following story.

LARA'S STORY

FAMILY BACKGROUND

"I was never allowed to touch anything below my waistline."

I love my Dad. He's super. And he's a brilliant man. But he never used to hug and kiss us much. My Mom was also never into touching. Her hugs have been limited to occasions when we say hello after she's been away a long time or when we say goodbye. I am 23 years old now and if my mother has hugged me ten times, it's a lot. And she never complimented me when I was growing up. She'd always say things like, "You're too fat." I was very clever at school, an "A" student. I tried so hard to get her to say, "Lara, you are the best!"

My Mom and her two younger sisters had a very strict upbringing. My grandfather didn't allow them to have boy friends or to wear make-up or to go out. She also brought us up very strictly. I was a real mommy's girl who never did anything wrong. She only allowed us sweets on a Friday night, and we only got a small amount of pocket money, not because my parents couldn't afford it, but because my mother didn't believe in spoiling her children.

When I bathed I had to take off my pyjamas next to the bath and put a towel around me when I got out so nobody could see me naked. I was never allowed to touch anything below my waistline.

My Mom thinks children's sexual exploration is revolting and disgusting -- probably because her father [Lara's perpetrator] brought her up with weird ideas about sex. How ironic that my grandfather taught her that sex is bad and that she must be good, and then he raped me! I feel sorry for my Mom for having my grandfather for a father. If I am screwed up now because he raped me as a child, I can only imagine what I would have been like if he'd been my father!

My Mom never told us girls anything about sex. She still hasn't told my sisters the facts of life although Courtney is 16 and Melissa is 18. By the time she got around to broaching the subject when I started my period, I had learned about sex firsthand as well as at school.

My mother taught us to "respect your parents." I don't like my Mom but I do respect her. Respect is like "in awe;" you treat them like God. You don't do anything to juggle their world. I feel like I'm her mother sometimes and that I have to protect her.

My mother told me that my grandfather was very charming when she was growing up. Although he was married, he used to go out with a lot of women. He always dressed for women; he'd wear those cravats and paisley scarves, and he dyed his hair when it turned grey. He was very, very vain, and he was successful with women. But he got to the stage where it became harder for him to get them because he didn't want the old ones -- he wanted 20-year-olds. But this didn't prevent my Mom from putting him on a pedestal. Although he died 11 years ago when I was 12, she always said, "If your grandfather had been alive, he would have liked you to do this," and, "Your grandfather did this," and "Your grandfather did that." It used to get on my nerves. Here she was telling me what an amazing man he was and I knew that he was an absolute pig.

INCESTUOUS ABUSE

**"It was sore and it was messy and it was sticky,
but it was okay because I was his special little girl."**

I absolutely adored my grandfather. We had a very special relationship. He was always telling me, "I love you. You are such a pretty little girl. You are my little girl. You are my special little girl." I'd do anything he wanted me to do. If he said, "Jump," I'd jump. If he said, "Sit," I'd sit.

I was four-and-a-half years old when he raped me. He must have been almost 60 at the time.

My family often spent Christmas at my grandparents' house in Durban. After lunch we all went to have our afternoon naps. I was lying asleep on a bed when I was woken by the feel of something behind me. My grandfather had his hands in my pants and he was feeling me. When he put his fingers inside me, I told him, "Stop doing that. You are hurting me." "No, I'm only tickling you," he replied, as he carried on fondling me. Then he took off his pants and put his penis behind me. I can't remember if he sodomized me or entered me vaginally from behind, but it was extremely sore. All the times mesh into one and it's difficult to distinguish the first from all the others. My body can feel the sodomy so I'm one hundred percent sure that even if he didn't sodomize me that time, he did it at other times.

The sodomy was the most painful thing he did. I think the vaginal penetration was only partial while he did full anal penetration, which is why it hurt so much more. I remember quite

a lot of blood and my knickers being stained. I don't know if the bleeding was caused by the tearing of my hymen, but I'm sure the anal intercourse caused bleeding because the pain was so intense. It was as severe as the pain I felt from tearing when I gave birth to my children. The first thing I did after he raped me was to go to the bathroom to wipe myself, because revolting sticky stuff was running down my legs. My mother taught us to be very clean so I was very disgusted by the yucky feeling.

When I was about five I had an operation which my Mom subsequently told me was to have my urethra widened. I thought - and still do -- that my grandfather had hurt me so badly that the doctors had to repair my vagina.

I don't know if my grandfather did anything to me before I was four. I think about it a lot and I've tried to dredge up all the memories I can. I sometimes have dreams about him doing things to me earlier. I have a memory of standing by a table and being fondled. I also remember him fondling me when I was sitting on his lap, but I can't remember whether that was before or after the sodomy. I find it difficult to put things into time frames when I think back, but I believe that he must have fondled me before he raped me because it would be unusual for abuse to begin that way.

I always saw my grandfather as a big, ugly man, though he thought he was very debonair. He used to comb his hair back and wear cravats. He was a real ladies' man. He often kissed me with his tongue in my mouth, which I hated. It made me feel like throwing up. It sickened me even more than the vaginal penetration. And I remember his disgusting yellow nicotine-stained fingers inside me.

I used to wear nylon panties with lace along the edges. The lace used to get stuck up my vagina and it would cut against me when he started touching me. Then he'd pull my panties down and put his fingers inside me. It was very sore but that didn't seem to bother him. Or maybe he thought I was enjoying it so it couldn't be sore. He didn't think of me in terms of what I was feeling but in terms of what he was feeling. I know I made him feel good because of all the times he produced icky stuff.

He used to make me suck his penis. It was so revolting I want to vomit when I think of it. I used to kneel in front of him and he would put it in my mouth. He would push it right down my throat. He taught me how to suck properly by pushing my head with his hand and saying, "Do it like this." I learned to do it really well and I still do it really well. I don't know if he came in my mouth; I don't want to remember that.

Between the ages of four and twelve, my family would visit my grandparents in Durban for holidays twice or three times a year for about two weeks at a time. He would do it every day or

every second day, and sometimes twice a day. This continued for eight years with a break of one year when he went to live in East London.

What throws me is that I had such a special relationship with him before he started abusing me. I think I would have handled it a lot better if a stranger had done these things to me. But I loved and adored that man. As well as continually telling me how special I was to him, he'd say, "I'm only doing this because I love you so much." I came to feel I was so special to him because he abused me. And it was our secret. That is where a lot of my feelings of guilt come from. It was sore and it was messy and it was sticky but it was okay because I was his special little girl.

I have difficulty reconciling the fact that my grandfather took advantage of my love for him when I was little. I thought that I could show him that I loved him by allowing him to have sex with me. The sex also made me feel that he loved me. But looking back on it now, I realize it wasn't love at all, and that what he did to me was wrong.

I don't think it ever entered my grandfather's head that he might be harming me, or even affecting me. I don't think he was bothered at all by what he was doing to me. I doubt that he ever thought about it.

Me and my sisters would get many more sweets when my grandfather was around. He would say, "Shall we go to the shops and buy some sweets? What sweets would you like? Would you like an ice-cream and chips as well?" When I did anything sexual with him, he'd give me sweets, chips, ice-cream or money. Eventually I realized what I had to do if I wanted these things.

When I was older, I wanted a tape recorder. After having sex with my grandfather, I said, "Shall we go to the shops now?" He bought me the tape recorder, then he did it [sex] again when we got back home. After that he bought me tapes for sex, but mostly he gave me things to eat.

I loved it so much when my grandfather started cuddling and kissing me. My mother and father didn't touch me so he was the first person to do that. I had long hair when I was little and he used to stroke my hair and make me feel really special.

I was very big for my age. I was the size I am now when I was 11. I still wear the same clothes. I started developing breasts when I was ten or eleven years old. I used to feel really good and special when my grandfather used to touch them. He would say, "I want to watch you shower." I enjoyed him watching me as I soaped myself all over. Afterwards he would take me and do whatever he wanted with me. I liked the foreplay, the touching and the stroking. So even though what he did to me

was so revolting -- and this is where I have a lot of conflict -- I started liking it. He made me feel good in some ways and bad in others.

When I became an adolescent, my grandfather suddenly stopped calling me his little girl and started saying, "You are my woman." He also kept telling me, "You are the best." I was flattered and horrified at the same time.

My grandfather was really powerful, and he used to manipulate me with his power. I felt I was his victim. But as I got older, I realized that I could manipulate him. I started doing this a lot. I knew that I had something he wanted. He wanted me to be his good little woman, so I had to act the part.

In the last three years of our relationship I began to feel I was in charge. For example, when I saw him getting hard, I'd say, "Okay, I want to do this quickly," or "No, I'm not ready yet. Let's go to the shop first." And he would say, "Please," which I loved. When I was little, he never used to say, "Please," he just did it. Getting him to say "Please" was a thrill. I know that I've become a manipulative person because of this.

I started reading trashy paperbacks when I was 11, and I suddenly put two and two together. My grandfather was doing the same things to me that I was reading about in these books. I started reading about incest and thinking, "Hang on. My grandfather is doing this to me in real life!"

My grandfather had a take-away shop in Durban. He had a tattersalls upstairs where people bet on horses. Once when I went there I was wearing shorts. My grandfather was fingering me downstairs. Then he told me he had to take some food upstairs and asked me to go with him. He made me walk in front of all the men in the room. While stroking my breasts in front of them he said, "This is my girl." Some of them said things like, "You are so lucky to have this girl." I felt absolutely mortified and ashamed with all these men looking at me. Then, as I walked past them, they all touched me. My grandfather was saying, "This is mine. You can't have her." I hated it.

I was 11 the one time I told my grandfather that what he had done to me was bad. He had me on his lap while he was drawing. Then he stopped drawing and started stroking me and feeling me. It felt nice, but dirty. Then he wrote on a piece of paper, "You have such beautiful legs and I want to stroke them and I want to kiss your cunt and stroke your butt." Then he said, "I want you to read this to me." I got all brave and I said to him, "You are a dirty old man! Why are you saying this to me?" He started crying, which gave me the biggest thrill I've ever had in my whole life. He said, "How can you call me that? I love you. I would never hurt you. You are mine, and no other man is ever going to have you."

My grandfather died when I was 12 years old. I was taught at Catholic school that if I prayed for things, I would get them. I used to pray every night, "Please let my grandfather die. Please let him die." One day my mother told me and my sisters that my grandfather was very, very sick and that she had to catch a plane to go visit him in Durban. I was so happy when my Dad told us, "Your grandfather has died," that I cried. But I also felt very guilty. I thought he had died because my prayers had been answered. Sometimes I wonder what I would have done to my grandfather if he'd still been alive.

My grandfather didn't sexually abuse my sisters who were still very young when he died [5 and 7 years old]. But he probably wasn't content to just have me for a few weeks each year. In fact I have a very, very strong suspicion that he abused one of my cousins who also lived in Durban. She's one of my mother's youngest sister's three children. She is about twenty now and I see a lot of me in her. She also went through a stage when she was very promiscuous. When I'm older and I've got to the stage where my mother's word isn't law anymore -- because it still is now -- I'll go to Durban to speak to her. Right now my mother wouldn't tolerate my doing this.¹

Secrecy and Disclosure

I didn't tell my mother what my grandfather was doing to me until this year. I think he knew that I wouldn't tell her when I was little. Later he told me that it was our secret and that my mommy would be very angry if she knew about it, and I always believed him.

I never used to argue or fight with my mother. I was a good little girl. "Lara, go to your room and tidy up," she would say. "Yes, Mommy," I'd reply. My mother also used to tell me, "You must be honest and tell the truth." She still has difficulty understanding why I didn't tell her what was going on at the time. I think the idea of being good overrode the importance of being honest. I was my mother's good little girl at all costs.

¹ Over a year after this interview, Lara told me that when she made this trip to Durban, she found out that her grandfather had raped her cousin much more frequently than he'd raped Lara. Living in the same city gave him much greater access to her cousin, who, Lara said, continued to suffer greatly as a result of these assaults. Lara mentioned that her cousin also had a phobic reaction to the smell of TCP. Lara also learned that her grandfather had molested other young girls in his neighbourhood. This was the end of her illusion that she had been the only little girl in her grandfather's life.

When I was about seven years old, a girlfriend and I were playing "show and tell" with her brother. My friend's mother found us and told my mother about it. My mother beat me very hard -- from my friend's house into the car and then again from the car into our house -- then she locked me in my room. That experience reinforced my feeling that I couldn't tell her about my grandfather.

My mother's adoration of her father is another reason why I never told her sooner. I thought it would be devastating for her if I shattered the image of him she'd built her whole life on.

Lauren was my best friend when I was in standard one. She had a very liberal mother who got Lauren a book on the birds and the bees. When Lauren came to school the next day she said, "Do you know what I know?" I said, "What?" When she told me, I was sitting there thinking, "This sounds familiar!" So I said, "That is what my grandfather does to me." She said, "Don't lie! Only mommies and daddies do it." So I learned that I mustn't talk about it.

When I got home, I fished around in my Dad's or my Mom's drawers and I found a book called Living and Loving: A Guide to Sex Education for Your Children that was published years ago. It had things in it like, "Sexual intercourse is the act of a man penetrating a woman's vagina." I wrote this down on a piece of paper, then when I was at school the next day, I said to Lauren, "Come up to the dustbin to sharpen your pencil, and I'll give you something." After reading my notes she threw them into the dustbin.

One of the teachers found them and gave them to the principal. I was called into the principal's office and she said, "This is disgusting, my girl. This is totally vile. How could you have done this? Sex is something between a married couple and you are not supposed to talk about it. I know what kind of woman your mother is, and if I told her she would be horrified and disgusted. Your mother has not brought you up like this. What has got into you?"

I thought, "Well, if you would like to know what has got into me, you have just forbidden me from telling you!" All these experiences kept giving me the message, "Don't talk about it." I would be building up the courage to tell somebody and something else like this would happen to make me decide, "Don't say a word. Just keep your mouth shut."

I met Brian, my husband, when I was 13 years old. He was the next person I told about my grandfather. He was very understanding even though he hadn't studied psychology and he had no knowledge of incest. He knew exactly how to treat me, and he still does. He said, "Tell your mother." I said, "Are you mad?" Every year he'd say, "Will you tell your mother now?" I was so

screwed up this year [1991] that I didn't care about her feelings like I usually do. If I'd stopped to think about them, I wouldn't have told her.

I opened up the conversation with my Mom by saying, "I have something to tell you, but I don't know if you already know." After I told her, she asked why I had thought she might already know about it. I said, "That operation you took me for when I was little. I remember being under anaesthetic and the doctor hurting me down there [genitals] very, very badly." She asked me, "Do you think that I would have taken you for a gynecological operation at that age and not told you what it is was for?" I said, "Yes, I do." My Mom denied this emphatically. When I asked her to tell me who the doctor was she said she couldn't remember his name or where the operation was done. "Very convenient!" I thought. I don't believe her. But I don't want to think about it any more because if I fully accept that she knew, I think I might kill her. I really do. I absolutely cannot tolerate her condoning such a thing.

I used to tell my Mom I was very sore down there when I was little. I remember the burning sensation more than anything else. My Mom didn't believe in going to doctors, so she would say, "Not to worry." Then she would lie me down on the bed and take a little tupperware bowl of bicarbonate of soda and warm water and wipe my genitals with it to stop the stinging. And she never knew that I was being fucked?! I find that very hard to believe. My genitals must have been red. She kept doing this all through my childhood but claims she never noticed any redness.

I can't honestly see how something like what happened to me could be happening to your daughter and you wouldn't know about it. I used to have vaginal infections like cystitis for a couple of weeks after my grandfather fucked me. It used to burn like mad when I went to the toilet. I used to pinch my bladder to try to delay having to urinate. My Mom would say, "Stop acting and looking for attention and go to the toilet!" I'd start crying and I'd go to the toilet and it would burn terribly. With me continually holding my bladder, I think the infection never got a chance to clear properly. I always had one.

When I first told my mother about my grandfather, she said that it couldn't be true because she would have seen the blood. She said that when she lost her virginity on her honeymoon, she screamed when my father penetrated her, and she was horrified because the bed was full of blood. She also said that she never left my grandfather and me alone for several hours when I was little, but abuse doesn't have to take hours and hours.

"If you're telling me the truth, there's a problem," my mother told me, "and if you're making it up, there's a problem because it'd mean you are really sick." I thought, "She has not

heard a word of what I've said." I think my mother does believe me, but she doesn't want to believe me because she absolutely worshipped her father.

My mother told me that if I breathed a word to any member of the family about what I'd told her, she wouldn't see me or speak to me again. She said, "Lara, it's bad enough that you've told me." She also told me, "You have ruined my life! This is the worst year of my life!" I responded sarcastically: "Gee, Mommy, I'm so sorry that you've had a bad year. It is so terrible of me to lay this burden on you." Who the hell does she think it is who's been fucked all these years?! And it was her father who did it to me. I said, "You are telling me that I've ruined your life because I told you, and you are also asking me why I didn't tell you at the time!?"

I didn't tell my mother any details of what my grandfather did to me. All I told her was that he sexually abused me. If I were to tell her about the sodomy she would have a coronary.

My mother also doesn't think that my children should ever know about what happened to me. But I plan to tell them when they're old enough. I'm their mother and it's part of me so they have a right to know.

I hate my mother. I could cheerfully throttle her sometimes. I still believe she must have known about it. If she didn't know, then she's a lot more stupid than I thought. I don't know what I hate her more for: her stupidity or her naivety.

I told my sister Melissa what my grandfather did to me, but Courtney still doesn't know. My mother was horrified that I told Melissa about it. I told her when I was having a lot of problems and I thought, "If I don't explain what's going on, she'll think I'm scatty." I was also worried that it had happened to her. Melissa says it didn't, and she accuses me of lying. I hate her for not believing me. I still feel very, very bitter towards her about that. I wish she'd understand that if I'd made it all up, my life wouldn't be such a disaster.

Up until about a year ago I thought I should keep what happened to me to myself. It's only in the last three months that I've told all my best friends about it. It's hard to talk about the abuse because people don't want to hear about it. It makes them uncomfortable. It's a dirty subject. They feel burdened by it and don't know how to talk to you any more. They start watching what they say. I have to educate my friends about how to handle me.

Some survivors find it difficult because talking about it upsets them. For me, it's peoples' reactions that make it hard. People are apt to think, "This woman must be fucked up." Our

willingness to talk about what happened depends on where we are in the survival process. You can only start talking about it once you start to deal with it.

SEXUAL ABUSE BY PSYCHOLOGIST

My first therapist was a psychologist, Chris Koenig [his real name], who was twice my age. He was married to his second wife when I went to see him at his home. I told him, "I'm supposedly here for post-natal depression and I was raped by my grandfather."

I loved Chris from the beginning because he understood about what had happened between me and my grandfather. I was totally overwhelmed for the first couple of weeks. He was so attentive to me. He was so caring, and he understood. He would always say, "Yes, I understand." That's what I fell in love with. He was the first person who understood my feeling dirty. I didn't realise that because he is a psychologist he had studied about it and he was therefore supposed to understand. I thought he understood because he understood me.

He kept asking me about sex. "Do you masturbate? How often do you masturbate? Do you like masturbating?" I am aware that you have to talk about sex in therapy but he was really hammering it home. By the third session of therapy, I landed up in bed with him.

I suppose I should say that I was innocent and Chris took complete advantage of me. But when I'm around older men I act so seductively and so flirtatiously that they probably think, "This girl really wants it. We might as well give it to her." That is probably what Chris felt. Did I want him? God, No! You should see him. He is really revolting. He is old and fat with thinning hair. He has big jowls and rheumy eyes. He has many repulsive manners. He is enough to make anybody vomit. He's someone you look at and say, "Well, he must be somebody's son!"

Even in the first session, Chris spoke about himself. He told me that he'd been in the army and had spent a lot of time on the border. He talked to me a lot about the atrocities that the soldiers engaged in there. He spoke about women being raped; about women being hung up from trees and having their breasts cut off; about women being tied up on beds and being raped by the soldiers coming through the border. Even now as I talk to you about it, it makes me want to be sick. I cannot believe that people do things like that, yet I know that they do.

Eventually Chris said to me, "I can't do therapy with you. I think about you all the time." He also told me that he loved me. Our relationship lasted for about a year and a half. We had a lot of sex during that time.

Chris asked me around one afternoon. He said that his police buddies had just left. He said they'd been trying to get him to talk about something so they had put some stuff in his drink, which had made him want me. His wife wasn't home so he took me through to his bedroom and he carried on fucking me for hours and hours. Eventually I said, "I really have to go. I have a husband and two children." My saying that used to really turn him on. He got excited knowing that he made it hard for me.

My husband didn't know that I was having an affair with Chris. It was the secrecy of the affair that I found exciting. I had experienced that same kind of secrecy with my grandfather when I was little. My affair with Chris was a replay of that, which I found quite thrilling.

Then Chris started talking about heavy political stuff, and I became more scared than I've ever been before. For example, he told me he was involved with the Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB)² which was hired to kill David Webster. As our relationship progressed he used to threaten me by saying, "Don't tell anyone about this because if you do, they will find out it's you and then they'll harm your children." He told me all sorts of weird things like that a friend of his in the police force was asked to do something to Nelson Mandela when he was let out of prison. His friend didn't want to do whatever it was and two days later his daughter was killed.

Chris said that he had been offered a contract to kill Mandela, Boesak and Tutu. He said, "If I accept the contract, you can come to the United States with me." I don't believe the solution to this country is about killing people. The whole idea mortified me. I thought, "If he really does this and I am involved, I will die." I would have committed suicide because I could never live with being involved in things like that. I think it is really, really wrong. But I got deeper and deeper into his stories until I felt totally enmeshed in them. I went to school at a Catholic convent where we read a lot of banned books. So I knew that people can just disappear never to be seen again, which made me all the more scared by Chris's stories.

When I talk about this stuff, I think, "No wonder they want to put me in Valkenberg!" It was a re-play of my not being able to tell my mother about my grandfather because I didn't think she would believe me. I was caught in a trap with Chris and I could not get out of it because if I told people what he had told me, they would say I was really wacko.

Chris was very sadistic. He started subtly using what I had told him about my grandfather to hurt me. For example, I had told him about the time upstairs at my grandfather's shop. Then

² The name of the infamous government assassination squad.

when I was in bed with Chris later, he asked, "Do you ever think about that time when your grandfather touched you in front of all those men?" It made me feel like absolute shit. A man can do anything to me when I feel like that. When I so much as remember that incident, a man could come in here now and put me over this table and I would say, "Go for it!" I feel absolutely fuck all. Chris must have realised the effect it would have on me.

My affair with Chris ended in May last year (1990). It only stopped because an old friend of my family called Herbert came to see me. When he saw me he said, "My God! What is wrong with you?" I was grey. I had circles under my eyes. I was shaking with fear because of Chris's warning that the security branch would be after my kids. I was afraid that my phone was tapped. I was a nervous wreck while I was seeing Chris.

THE AFTERMATH OF INCESTUOUS ABUSE

"What my grandfather did has not just damaged me. It feels like he took my life."

GROOMED TO BE A WHORE

It wasn't so much the loss of my physical virginity that was traumatizing, it was the loss of my innocence.

When I was very young, my grandfather started showing me his books and magazines with pictures of lots of nude women in them - women in fishnet stockings and no panties. There were a lot of open crotches and open legs. He made me pose in seductive positions like the women in them. He would show me the pictures and say, "Do you see how pretty this girl looks? You must sit with your legs apart like she does." He always made me sit with my arms on my hips and my legs spread open like in the pictures. Or he's say, "This is what I'm going to do to you, and this is what you must do."

When I look at pictures of me when I was a little girl, more often than not I am sitting with my legs wide open. Little girls don't naturally sit like that. My daughter doesn't sit like that. He trained me into it. I still often automatically sit with my legs up and my hands on my knees. What worries me is that when I talk about this, it excites me quite a lot. Imitating the pictures used to make me feel exciting.

When I was about ten, my gran [grandmother] and grandfather had to move to East London, so my parents and I went to Durban to help them pack up. When my Mom and Dad left with my gran to go to my aunt's house, my grandfather took his books and magazines out of a built-in cupboard where he kept them. He wanted me to look at them with him. The flat was bare. All the furniture had

been moved out. The game this time was that I had to take off an item of clothing each time I sat down. When he had me lying on the dirty floor on my back, he put his penis inside me. My back got scratched by the dirt on the floor; and after he came I was all wet and sticky and there were no towels to wash with.

My grandfather used to bribe me with sweets and ice creams to let him have sex with me. That's what I've become used to: "If you fuck me, I'll buy you a packet of jelly tots." I still reward myself with eating because that's how he used to reward me. If I'm good, I'll give myself a chocolate. Old habits die hard. And I still expect men to pay for sex. I don't say this to them in so many words, but I make sure that they pay for what they get.

A lover called Jeff, who was married and had two kids, sent me flowers and promised to give me an angora sweater recently. I'm not seeing him any more because I promised my husband that I won't have any more of these relationships. But since he screwed me, I want him to pay me by giving me the angora sweater. I mentioned to my husband that I might be getting this sweater from Jeff, and he said, "I don't know how you can't see that you're letting him buy you." When he said that it hit home that my grandfather had bought me. That is how cheap I was. He didn't start that way. Perhaps if I hadn't taken his gifts, if I hadn't put up the "For Sale" sign, he wouldn't have bought me.

Wanting that angora sweater as payment for sex shows that I feel used when I have sex. At the same time sex makes me feel powerful because I make men come. When I have an orgasm, all I say in my mind the whole time is, "I am making this happen." No man has ever made me come. When they try to make me orgasm, I tense my muscles and tell myself, "Stop. Don't do it now because he's trying to make me do it. Do it a little later when I make it happen."

I only feel in control when it's a use/abuse situation. This complete juxtaposition of being in power and being a victim doesn't make sense. You can't be in power and be a victim at the same time. Sometimes I think I would like to see if hypnosis could help me remember why I changed from feeling like a victim of my grandfather to feeling in charge.

I feel that I'm in power when leading up to sex, but the minute penetration happens, I see my grandfather and I'm a little girl again. I wonder what the hell is happening to me and I don't feel in charge any more. Then, when I feel it building up to the man's coming, I take the driver's seat and I make him come and I feel powerful again. But afterwards I feel used. A victim. I know that he would have come anyway. I know that he could go and ejaculate with someone on the docks. But my ego likes to think that it's only me who can do this for him.

If I had to describe myself in one sentence, I'd say "I'm a whore." I can't say what whores are like but the image I have of them is of being a woman who is totally available. I feel like I'm just a usable commodity for any man to come along and say, "Cheers! Look what we have here. Let's turn you over and do it." I feel that I am purely available for men to have sex with.

When I have an out-of-body experience like when my grandfather's buddies gawked at me and he told them I belonged to him, I turn into a complete whore. Men can do absolutely anything to me then. They can hurt me. They can put it in anywhere, and I won't stop them. I will just lie there and say, "Do what you want."

I think if I hadn't married Brian I'd be a prostitute. AIDS fazes me a bit but having sex with many men doesn't faze me in the least. I'm very good at sex so why should it go to waste? I might as well give it to as many men as possible. Being good in bed has always been my identity because that's what I've known for longer than I've known anything else. I've been trained to be a whore. I know all the tricks of the trade. When I say this to my husband he gets very uncomfortable and unhappy. He doesn't like to think about me screwing at four years old. I feel that I was born for it.

I would love to get rich off having sex. When I was thinking of leaving my husband, I contemplated moving to a flat in Cape Town and becoming a prostitute. Not a street walker. I would nab chartered accountants and attorneys. I would be very good at it. I would lose some weight and wear sexy black lingerie. I get such a thrill from being in charge and being in power and making a man totally want sex. Then I'd say, "Okay, I'll give it to you when I'm ready. I'll do it if you wait for me." I said this kind of thing a lot to my grandfather in the last three years when I became more powerful. Making men cry and making them say "please" gives me power. That's what it's about. Power. Not sex.

My husband told me the other day that I flirt all the time. I don't consciously do it. I act like that because my grandfather made me pose in seductive poses like the women in his magazines, so I pose like that automatically now. It's like being a circus animal. If you train them hard enough, they'll remember what they have to do.

I find it very hard not to pose because posing is normal to me. This gets me into a lot of trouble. Men have been taught to react to the signals I've been taught to act. I really hate men for this. All this has screwed me up completely.

For the sake of my ego I would like to think -- and at one time I did think -- that my grandfather didn't just want a little girl, he wanted me. The thought of him having other girls would

shatter my ego completely. I want to think that he was attracted to me -- that I had some overwhelming allure -- not that he was attracted to little girls in general. When I look at old photographs of me when I was a small, I try very hard to find this overwhelming allure, but I can't.

I feel that I'm a fairy with a magic wand who has the ability to say to any man, "You are going to fall magically in love with me. You are going to be totally obsessed with me." And the weirdest thing is that so many men have been. I had an affair with my husband's brother, Ian. This must be about the worst thing I could do to my husband. Ian is totally besotted with me. Both he and Jeff have told me that they're obsessed with me, which makes me feel powerful.

For example, Ian started carrying a gun in his briefcase and visiting me every day to check that I wasn't with anyone besides my husband. He has told me that if he finds me with anybody else, he will blow both of our brains out because he believes that I belong to him.

Jeff took me to see a movie called "Last Exit to Brooklyn." In one scene there was a girl who had always been paid for her relationships with men. She loved a guy who gave her what she thought was money, but it was a letter saying that he had really loved spending time with her. She must have felt slapped in the face like I do in such situations. So she got drunk and went into a bar and said to all the guys there, "Come and get it." Then she went and sat in a car and a row of men lined up to use her. And she said, "Yes, fuck me! I am the best fuck in Texas."

I became very upset during this movie. I started shaking and crying. I identified so strongly with that woman. I thought, "I can't take this," and I walked out. That was the first time that I've ever walked out of a movie house. The minute I start feeling, I run.

I feel just like that woman felt. I could go to Cape Town station and say, "Here are tickets. Each draw a number and come back and try to fuck me to death." That is how I want to die because I'm used to that kind of treatment.

THE IMPACT OF INCESTUOUS ABUSE ON LARA'S OTHER FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

I don't remember my Dad in relation to the abuse at all. All my feelings centre around my mother. I hate her more than I hate my grandfather. She was supposed to be looking after me, but she never did. She says things like, "Can't you remember the happy times when you were a child?" No, I can't! The incest probably happened to me less often than did the picnics and the happy times, but it seems as if my whole childhood was a slow-

play movie of being raped.

I spent a long time hating my granny and thinking, "If he could fuck you, he wouldn't be doing this to me." But eventually I started feeling sorry for her. I realised that my feelings about her were stupid because whether or not she offered her services -- and I don't know whether or not she did -- he wouldn't have wanted her because she was fat and old and ugly. He wanted young, thin, and pretty.

LARA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HER HUSBAND

Brian asked me to marry him when I was 13 years old. He is the first man I slept with -- not counting my grandfather -- when I was about 16. He made me pregnant before we were married so I had to leave school before I completed my matric [final year at high school]. When it came to sex, Brian was very gentle. He taught me that sex is not love and love is not sex, but that sex can be an expression of love. That is not the kind of love I had when I was little. My vagina never gets sore with him because he really puts my needs first. I think that is why vaginal intercourse is not that bad for me.

My husband is the first person I had an orgasm with. It wasn't from penetration; I found that I could get the same feeling that I got from masturbation by rubbing myself against him. I masturbate quite a lot and I get a lot of release from it. Now that I have sorted out a lot of things with my husband, I've been making love with him a lot more often over the last couple of months, so I don't masturbate as often as I used to. My orgasms have been getting more intense as I get older and more experienced.

I feel very, very lucky to have Brian. He is very warm and cuddly and understanding. But I also find my relationship with him scary because it is so normal and he really loves me unconditionally. He doesn't try to buy me. He doesn't only care about me sexually. If I said to him tonight that I don't want to have sex with him for six months, he'd say, "I won't like it because I'll miss having your body, but if you don't want to, that's fine by me." That scares me because I'm not in control when a man is willing to forgo sex.

I say to my husband, "You are just like a mother." He cares about me so much and I act like a little girl sometimes. I do silly things like run outside in the rain without any shoes on and I eat ice-creams before dinner. He says, "Lara, you are not five years old any more." I tell the kids not to eat sweets before supper, meanwhile I eat them because I have this need to be a little girl all the time. My husband is also almost like my daddy. When I was having all my affairs and coming home late, he got quite upset about it, but all he'd say is, "Is this the time

to come home?"

One night I came home at 4 a.m. and I told Brian, "I think I'm in love with Jeff." Then I phoned Jeff at home and asked his wife if I could speak to him. He came to my house at 4.30 in the morning and I told Brian I was leaving him. Brian said, "But Lara, we've been so happily married for so many years." I said, "Oh, please! I had my first affair when I had only been married to you for six months. Do you really think I've been happily married?" He was totally devastated. I threw everything in his face. I really wanted to hurt him. I told him, "I've screwed around plenty of times. This marriage means nothing to me!"

My husband sat there totally calm and he said, "If this is what you really want to do, then you must do it. But I first want you to sort out your problems because what you are wanting to do now has to do with what happened to you when you were a child. You have never fixed it up. No matter who you run away with and no matter where you run to, you will never be able to run away from your childhood." He then suggested that I go into the therapy I'm doing now.

My husband does get the hell in with me sometimes. He gets upset and angry. For example, it was my birthday on Friday and Jeff sent me a bunch of 23 pink roses. My husband said, "I want those out of my house, now!" But mostly he is very patient with me. In fact he's amazing. When I can't cope, he always looks after the kids. He sees that they get fed and clothed and taken to school. He really loves me. He is more like a woman than a man. I realized that he really loves me on that night when I told him that I was leaving him. He didn't say, "Take your bags and go!" Instead he took me to bed and we made love like we'd never made it before. And afterwards he cried and cried, and he said, "I don't want to lose you. I love you so much but you can't see it. You also can't see what you are doing to yourself." I would not be where I am now without him. He has been a great help.

I made my grandfather cry, I made my husband cry, and I made Jeff and Ian cry. Brian, Jeff, and Ian cried when I told them I was leaving them. I absolutely love making men cry. It's enough to give me an orgasm.

When Brian kisses me and touches me it feels nice, like it used to feel with my grandfather. I think it's just a natural physical reaction to feel good with physical touch on a body level. But it's so frustrating that I can't feel it on an emotional level. Last night I told Brian, "I know that I love you but I can't feel it." Occasionally I feel fond of him, but that's all. The only time I feel at all is when I'm making love. It's not just the sex that I feel; that's when I can feel love. I hate my grandfather most of all for taking away my capacity for emotion.

Since I married, I've had three sexual relationships with men who are twice my age. When I'm around older men I act so seductively and so flirtatiously that they probably think, "This girl really wants it. We might as well give it to her." The one I had sex with a couple of months ago reminded me of my grandfather. My mother-in-law was horrified when she found out about these relationships. She was also fondled when she was a child and she says she is now totally anti-men. She thinks I should be against having sex with them. She doesn't understand how I could become so promiscuous. People forget that being promiscuous doesn't mean that you are loving sex to bits.

I don't feel bad about having had affairs. I'm being bad to my husband but I'm being good for the men I have affairs with. This incongruity is a replay of what happened in my childhood when I was a good girl for my grandfather but to my mother -- had she known what was going on -- I was being a bad little girl. It was confusing. I didn't know who was good and who was bad any more because if I was good for the one, then I was bad for the other.

LARA'S FEELINGS ABOUT SODOMY

I still have a thing about sodomy. My feelings inside my body are mainly concentrated around my rectum. When I think about my grandfather's abuse, my rectum clenches as if the feelings won't come out if I can hold it in. It's a weird feeling. It bothers me that the guys in my last couple of relationships have sodomized me, but I don't actually feel it. When it starts getting painful I switch off. They can fuck me to death and I wouldn't notice.

Although I don't like sodomy, whenever it occurs, it's always at my initiative. My whole being is centered in my anus when I have anal intercourse. It makes me feel very, very vulnerable. My whole body feels totally open. There are no confines. It feels as if everything is oozing out of me. I hate it. I feel I'm a little girl again and I can feel the pain. Who am I, and who is he? I have no identity at all. There is only the pain.

My husband has sodomized me a few times because I virtually begged him to. If you get men to a certain point, they will do anything. I put lubrication on myself when I have anal intercourse with him. With other men, I just let them do it. It is dry and it burns. It is bloody painful. I think all men really like anal intercourse.

When I was having sex with one of my lovers, I turned over on to my stomach and told him I wanted it this way, so he sodomized me. While he was doing it, he asked me, "Are you

liking this?" I said, "Of course." But I was crying because it was so sore. And he said, "You feel like when you were little. You think that I am your grandfather." I said, "Yes," but in my mind I said, "Yes, Grandpa."

I have only once met a man who turned down anal intercourse. I was 22 at the time and he was about 25 -- the youngest man who I had ever slept with and also the most attractive. I connived to get him to a flat. The sex was okay, though I didn't have an orgasm. Afterwards I turned over and told him to sodomize me because I thought that he'd want to do that. But he was Catholic and he was absolutely horrified. He lost his erection and he said, "Are you mad? What do you mean, you want me to do it there?" Only then did it hit me that I was trying to make this poor boy do something that was thoroughly disgusting. I felt terrible, even more terrible than if he had done it, because I'm used to it being done. I'm not used to someone saying, "No thank you."

In replaying my past through sodomy, I think I'm trying to get back to the feelings I had when I was little so that I can somehow reclaim something that I lost because of the abuse. I want to catch it quickly and take it back and keep it with me. I feel that I have lost so much. But it'll be difficult to find out exactly what it is because it isn't tangible.

OTHER PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

"I relive what happened to me in my mind every day and my memories wake me up every night."

I was a bitch when I was a little girl at school. I was really sick and cruel and sadistic. I used to say to the other girls in my class things like, "Someone is going to put you in the electric chair and shove cotton wool up your nose and up your bum and then they are going to switch on the current and all the blood is going to spurt out of you." I wanted to get back at everybody.

Everyone says my sister Melissa is so sweet, so good, so kind, and that my youngest sister Courtney is also such a sweet, kind and considerate girl. Maybe I would also have been a sweet, kind, gorgeous little girl if I hadn't been fucked around. I try to identify with Melissa because I always think that if the abuse hadn't happened to me, maybe I would be like her. I wonder who I would have been if all the abuse had not happened to me.

If I can go back to that exact same feeling that my grandfather made me feel, I can say, "This is what I was capable of feeling, therefore I must have been such and such a person. Let me quickly take that person, put her inside me and carry on living with her." I feel like there is a whole part of me that I

don't even know about. I think that many survivors find it more comforting to hang on to the abuse and the ways they have coped with it because they are familiar with it. Once you have dealt with it and the issues, who are you actually?

I'm my husband's wife and my children's mother and my mother's daughter. But I don't have a clear definition of who I am as a person. The only definition of myself that I have, and the only way I have of relating myself to anything, is as a survivor. My grandfather raped me. That is the only quality I have that is concrete and clear. That is my identity. If I deal with the rape, will I lose that identity? I don't know what I was before, so I don't know if I can reclaim my original identity. What would I have done without the abuse, and who would I have been?

I don't even feel that my body belongs to me. It is just something that I'm in, that I put clothes on in the morning, and I wash and I dress and I feed. It's like something that I carry around with me. I don't feel any love for it.

BREAKDOWNS

Sometimes I feel I shouldn't be so affected by what my grandfather did because it only happened a few times compared to how often it's happened to so many other girls. And when I read about women who've been abused by their fathers and who've had to live with their abusers every day, I think, "Lara, you have no right to be affected by your experiences. They only happened to you two or three times a year."

I'm fairly normal now, but two months ago I went totally wacky. I was on pills and I was high most of the time. I went completely out of my mind. I kept on scratching and cutting myself all over. I made little nicks in my flesh and watched myself bleed. I slopped around and didn't dress myself properly.

I cut my hand breaking a window to get into my brother-in-law Ian's house because he was suicidal. I started crying because of the pain once I got inside even though I hadn't cried for four years. I still can't remember exactly what happened but my brother-in-law tells me that I spoke like a little girl and crawled around on all fours. I remember saying, "I promise I will be a good girl. I promise I won't be naughty any more. Please tell me I have been a good girl."

Ian had to take me to the doctor for sedation. The doctor wanted to have me put away in Valkenberg. He said, "You can't act like this. It isn't normal." He said it was not fair on my family for me to carry on like that. Instead of Valkenberg, I landed up in the Kenilworth Clinic where I was put on etamine. The message I got from this experience was, "Please don't feel.

It offends us. Deal with your feelings quietly in a corner." Since then, even when I am in therapy, I tell myself I must calm down and pull myself back, because I'm so scared of what will happen when I start to feel again.

I've been hospitalized for severe depressions. Psychiatrists have put me on anti-depressants, but nothing has helped me with them.

I always feel dirty. I can see the dirt on me. I scrub myself raw every morning. I shower two to three times a day. But I'm never clean.

I relive what happened to me in my mind every day and my memories wake me every night. It's often little things that bring the memories back. For example, my grandfather often gargled with TCP [an antiseptic medication]. He must have had a thing about halitosis. When I smell TCP, I vomit immediately. When I was younger, my mother used to make me gargle with TCP when I had a cold. It made me throw up then too. She would say, "See how good it is? It is bringing up all your phlegm." Meanwhile I was heaving because I was thinking of that man.

Intellectually and from an adult perspective, I can see that my grandfather was the perpetrator. But the real me inside thinks it was my fault. I have a feeling of guilt, of being naughty. It must have been something about me, something about the way I sat, something that I did, that made my grandfather rape and abuse me.

I have a terribly self-destructive pattern. Sometimes I try to do as many bad things to myself as possible. I've crashed my car on purpose about five times. I take my hands off the steering wheel and the car drives into something. All I think about at these times is that I'm going to get hurt. I feel I deserve to be hurt. I try to make myself fail at things to hurt myself. I love studying and working but I have sabotaged my career and everything else. I think I should be punished because I was so bad. I know intellectually that I shouldn't think the abuse was my fault, but I don't believe people when they say that I'm not responsible. It must have happened because of something about me, and there's still something about me since the psychologist I go to see landed up in bed with me.

Not feeling is a very big problem for me. Sometimes I think it's going to take something major like losing a child to make me feel again. I read off what happened to me like a shopping list, without emotion. I refuse to give my grandfather the pleasure of thinking that I felt so much about what he did to me when I was little, that I can't feel now. But he is winning because not only do I not feel anything about that; I don't feel anything about anything else. I have two children whom I really love but I never get a really warm feeling about them. And even with my

husband, I love him but I don't feel that love. But the idea of feeling again is also very scary because I don't know what it would be like. And I'll never forget that time when I broke down and started feeling again and the doctor wanted to put me in Valkenberg.

My best friend at school was a nun. I fell madly in love with her. I thought then that I had very strong lesbian tendencies but now I think I loved her more as a mother and she loved me as a daughter. I started to feel again during my relationship with her. Then I moved to Cape Town. That is the last time that I remember feeling. I felt safer with a woman. There was no pressure. There was no, "Let's go to bed." I couldn't do any of my old tricks. We had so much in common: we both read like crazy; we both wrote poetry. I'm still very fond of her and I write to her often.

FROM VICTIM TO ABUSER

There is something I have never told anybody. I have never even mentioned it in therapy. When I was about nine and Melissa was about three, I used to bath with her and make her touch me there [genitals] and suck my breasts. I'm really worried that this might have done something to her. She hasn't said anything to me about it, though I haven't asked her. I used to tell her, "You are my baby and you must do this to me." Then I would hold her and make her suck my breasts.

I have had a hard time having a daughter. That little vagina. I changed her nappy when I had to, but I still don't know how I did it without pricking her with the pin because I didn't look at her. When I watch my daughter now, I sometimes hate her. I can see why people abuse their children if they themselves have been abused. I feel like taking a pole and ramming it up my two-year-old daughter and saying, "This is what happened to me. I'll do this to you so that you know what it is like." I'm so jealous of her for being so lucky. My husband is fantastic with her. She has everything. It isn't fair. I think, "You little bitch! You have got it and I never had it." I've never felt that way towards my son.

I am really worried sometimes about what I might do to my daughter. I get these funny moods when my brain almost trips. I don't know what I'll do when this happens. I often become very violent and very aggressive. I try to get my children away from me at such times. I phone my mother-in-law and ask her to fetch them because I don't know what I might do to them. Although I try to do everything that I can to make my children as happy as possible, if I hadn't gone into therapy and if I hadn't read as much about the effects of sexual abuse and what abuse does to you, I think by now I would probably have abused my daughter so she would have to live the way I had to.

What my grandfather did has not just damaged me. It feels like he took my life. He stamped on it. Then he put it in the fire, set it alight, chewed it, spat on it, and said, "Now that your life is screwed up, live it!" That is the destruction he has left me with. It has affected every little thing that I've done. It affects me from when I wake up in the morning and I start scrubbing myself with disinfectant to when I go to work and I can't get in a lift with a man, to when I go to work and a man tells me to do something and I don't want to do it and I don't have time to do it but I say "yes" because I can't say "no" to him. It has damaged me as a mother because I am scared of raping my child. It has damaged me as a wife because I can't love my husband. I suppose the only positive legacy that my grandfather has left me is that I'm very good at sex.

I'm even scared of being free of the abuse. I have hung on to the damage because I'm used to it. It's like being given a broken vase. You know what it looks like when it's cracked. What will it look like when it's fixed? Will it ever be okay or will they put it back together skew? If I'm whole and I'm free of it, who will I be?

THE STRUGGLE TO HEAL

"If I'm whole and I'm free of it, who will I be?"

If you had spoken to me before I went into therapy, I would not have been able to talk to you about the sexual abuse like I'm talking now. Because I've talked a lot about it and because I've been in a self-help group at Safeline with other incest survivors who've been through the same experience, I've realised that I'm not the only one who feels like a whore and all the other feelings I've told you about. This knowledge has made it easier for me to talk about my experiences.

I started therapy after my daughter was born because I couldn't handle having a daughter. A friend said I must be suffering from post-natal depression so I went to see a psychologist.

The reason I remember the abuse with so much clarity is that I think about it a lot, because for the last two years I've been doing so much therapy. I've seen that a lot of the ways I've dealt with my life is directly related to what happened to me as a child. I try to remember everything as clearly as possible so I can say, "This is my starting point. This is what I must fix up, and this is where I go on from here."

I am now in the first week of a three-month therapy course for depressives at William Slater Hospital. I had the most

horrendous headache for the first three days because I started feeling. In group therapy people have said to me, "You are so cool and calm and detached when you talk about the sexual abuse."

This is because I don't allow myself to feel anything about what my grandfather did to me. I don't cry when I talk about it. The first time I went to therapy after my daughter was born, I cried a bit about it in the third session, but now I feel so cold. Intellectually I have worked it all out. I have written it down in my head. I can describe exactly what I felt at the time. Except for depression, I have not felt for so long that I'm afraid of what will happen when I do start to feel.

One of the things that the psychiatrist said when I started this therapy is that the sodomy is a form of self-abuse. One of the ground rules for my being allowed to do this particular course of therapy is that I don't abuse myself at all, which means that I don't allow sodomy. If it happens I have to report it to the whole community and they must decide whether I am serious about being there.

When we did evocative techniques recently the woman occupational therapist said, "Imagine that you are a boat and you are in the sea in a storm. Draw for me what kind of boat you are." My grandfather used to put me on his lap and put a big drawing block on it and teach me how to draw. I remember his lap being hard so he obviously had an erection. I started drawing quite mechanically in this therapy session exactly as my grandfather had taught me, and I felt like that little girl sitting on his lap again drawing a boat. My head started shaking and I thought, "I can't take this." I wanted to go home.

I have always forced myself to remember the nice parts of the experience, like the feeling of being kissed on my neck and of my grandfather touching my breasts. When I start thinking about the horrible parts, my body says, "Stop!" I don't want to remember it. It is weird, because I don't want to remember it as nice but I also don't want to remember it as horrible. I am working every day now at remembering everything that happened to me. Last week was the first time I wrote about it. I love writing. Last week my psychiatrist suggested that I do a lot more writing. When she told me she would like my case history, I offered to write it out for her. I thought it would be quite easy. I sat down at the computer and I wrote, "When I was four my grandfather abused me and this is what he did." I was writing away quite merrily but after a while I decided, "I can't do this." I started making more and more grammar mistakes and I stopped using punctuation and then I lost it completely. I feel a lot more when I write. My poetry is also very emotional and I find reading very emotional. For me, the written word is more emotional than the spoken word. I am scared of what it will unleash. If you say something you can easily forget it, but once you have written it down, you start remembering the next part.

When I first heard the term "survivor," I realized that I have survived so much, it must show that I can survive anything.

I now see that I found many ways to cope with my grandfather's abuse. Sleeping with older men was one way. So is my eating problem and my switching off emotionally. In my heart of hearts, somewhere I must think that I can get past all this. I'm not someone who does something if I don't think I can get through it.

But I am very scared that I'm not going to manage and that I'm never going to be able to feel again.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

INCEST VICTIMIZATION AND SEXUAL ABUSE BY PSYCHOLOGISTS

Although Lara didn't marry a man who resembled her perpetrator as many incest survivors do, she often sought out extra-marital sexual relationships with much older men like her grandfather. Chris Koenig, Lara's therapist, was the most significant example of this phenomenon. He and Lara's grandfather were both much older than her, married, and physically repulsive to her. Both were sadistic: while Koenig enjoyed frightening Lara with his horror stories and assassination propositions, her grandfather found pleasure from raping her and humiliating her in public.

There is considerable clinical evidence that incest survivors are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse by the mental health professionals who treat them. Many therapists blame the victims for incestuous relationships, perceiving them as seductive or as desirous of a sexual relationship with their male relatives, no matter how young they are. This provides therapists with a ready-made excuse for holding such patients responsible for responding to their (the therapists') sexual advances.

Psychiatrist and incest researcher Judith Herman (1981) offers the following additional explanations for the vulnerability of incest survivors to this kind of betrayal by their male therapists:

Like other men, the therapist may consider the incest victim "fair game." Since she has engaged in forbidden sexual relations, he may see her as already corrupted and therefore may imagine that he cannot do her any further harm. The patient, for her part, may display a kind of ritualized erotic behavior which excites the therapist and permits him to believe that she really wants to be seduced. After all, she has been trained to stimulate and please men, and she often knows how to do this very well. She may indeed believe that any man can be seduced, and that no man can

possibly care for her without a sexual relationship. Since she often has a very low opinion of herself, she will not consider sexual involvement too high a price to have to pay for the therapist's attention. In short, the same traits that render the incest victim susceptible to repeated abuse by other men also render her particularly vulnerable to seduction by a male therapist.

Once entrapped in a sexual relationship with a therapist, the patient relives the betrayal and disappointment that she first experienced with her father. The outcome can only be a disaster for her.

Although we are not in a position to know whether Herman's descriptions of the thinking of male therapists applies to Koénig, her explanations for the vulnerability of incest victims to male therapists is strikingly applicable to Lara.

INCEST AND PROSTITUTION

In her classic book on father-daughter incest, Herman (1981) wrote the following insightful passage about the impact of this form of violation on daughters:

The actual sexual encounter may be brutal or tender, painful or pleasurable; but it is always, inevitably, destructive to the child. The father, in effect, forces the daughter to pay with her body for affection and care which should be freely given. In so doing, he destroys the protective bond between parent and child and initiates his daughter into prostitution. (p. 4)

Several studies of female prostitutes have found that most of them were sexually abused as children. According to Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon (1993), 65-75% of women in prostitution were victims of child sexual abuse (1988). With regard to incestuous abuse in particular, researchers Jennifer James and Jane Meyerding (1977a, p. 1383) reported that 25.5% of their survey of 136 female street prostitutes admitted having been molested by fathers or "father figures" (stepfathers or foster fathers). In contrast, 4.5% of my probability sample of 930 women in San Francisco were sexually abused by a father or father figure (Russell, 1986). If we use my study as a kind of control group of women in the general population, James and Meyerding's findings suggest that over five times as many of the female prostitutes had been incestuously abused by a father or father figure than was the case for the women in my study.

The prevalence figure for incestuous abuse by all kinds of perpetrators in my study, including grandfathers, uncles, brothers, and all other male and female relatives, no matter how distantly related, was 16%. If we assume that the percentage of

female prostitutes who were sexually abused in childhood by any relative would be more than five times the percentage of women in the general population (as was found for fathers and father figures), this would translate into over 80% of female prostitutes having been incestuously abused as children.

Although Lara didn't become a professional prostitute, she exhibited many of the attitudes and qualities that are common to prostitutes. For example, her training to be a sexually provocative and available object of desire, and her need to feel compensated for her sexual services. Payment for sex is the defining characteristic of prostitution. Lara describes how her grandfather trained her to expect rewards in exchange for her sexual submission. He "used to bribe me with sweets and ice creams to let him have sex with me. He'd say, 'If you fuck me, I'll buy you a packet of jelly tots.'"

When Lara realized that her grandfather was paying her to submit to sex, she learned that she could manipulate him to give her larger gifts. She felt quite proud of this achievement. As an adult, Lara said, "I still expect men to pay for sex." Such payment served to compensate her for feeling sexually used by men.

Ex-prostitute Evelina Giobbe (1993) reports that 30% of a group of ex-prostitutes related "that their pimps regularly exposed them to pornography as a seasoning technique" (p. 3). Like many other incest perpetrators, Lara's grandfather used pornography to train his young granddaughter to behave like a dutiful male-defined sex object. "He made me pose in seductive poses like the women in the magazines he read," Lara said.

He would show me the pictures and say, "This is what you must do." Or he'd say, "Do you see how pretty this girl looks? You must sit with your legs like she does."... He always made me sit with my arms on my hips and my legs spread open like in the pictures. I still often sit like that....

Although Lara's grandfather was not a pimp, since he didn't farm her out to have sex with other men, his training served his needs and those of the men with whom she subsequently slept.

Regarding the high rates of incestuous abuse psychologists James and Meyerding (1977b) found among prostitutes in their study, they speculate that that it seems possible that "to be used sexually at an early age in a way that produces guilt, shame, and loss of self-esteem on the part of the victim would be likely to lesson one's resistance to viewing oneself as a salable commodity" (p. 41). As we saw in Lara's case, incest victims often internalize the beliefs that they are dirty and that they are responsible for the abuse. "It must have happened because of something about me," Lara insisted. "I feel I deserve to be

hurt." And Lara saw to it that she was hurt (consider her insistence on anal sex, for example). According to Finkelhor and Browne (1986), "Many sexual abuse victims experience large amounts of guilt and shame related to their abuse," and their feelings of isolation, differentness, and stigmatization may cause them to "gravitate to various stigmatized levels of society" such as "criminal activity or prostitution" (p. 190). This affirms their feelings of badness, and satisfies their self-destructive urges.

It is clear that Lara suffered from the debased self-image to which James and Meyerding (1977b) refer. "I feel like I'm just a usable commodity for any man to come along and say, 'Cheers! Look what we have here. Let's turn you over and do it,'" Lara said. These are not the words of a compulsive sex addict or of someone who engages in a lot of sex because she finds it so pleasurable. They are the words of someone whose past experiences with her grandfather have trapped her into a compulsive, self-destructive role of sacrificing herself to men's sexual pleasures. "I feel that I am purely available for men to have sex with," explained Lara, who takes pride in trying to be the best lay in town. She regards being good at sex as "the only positive legacy that my grandfather has left me."

Herman (1981) noted that some of the father-daughter incest survivors in her sample:

even embraced their identity as sinners with a kind of defiance and pride. As initiates into forbidden sexual knowledge, they felt themselves to possess almost magical powers, particularly the power to attract men. (p. 97; emphasis added)

Herman's description fits Lara exactly. This is how Lara put it: I feel that I'm a fairy with a magic wand who has the ability to say to any man, "You are going to fall magically in love with me. You are going to be totally obsessed with me." And the weirdest thing is that so many men have been.

Lara's grandfather trained her to please men, not just himself.

Because Lara's sense of powerlessness with her grandfather made it impossible for her to rebel against him, she turned her hatred for him against herself. Then, finding the pain too great to bear, she cut herself off from her feelings. The more traumatic her experience with her grandfather, the more she dissociated³ in this way. For example, "When I have an out-of-

³ The word "dissociated" refers to a psychological defense whereby an individual is able to split off from her/his bodily experiences. Many incest survivors dissociate when the perpetrator is having sex with them.

body experience like when my grandfather's buddies gawked at me and he told them I belonged to him, I turn into a complete whore," Lara reported. She elaborated on this as follows:

It made me feel like absolute shit. A man can do anything to me when I feel like that. When I so much as remember that incident, a man could come in here now and put me over this table and I would say, "Go for it!" I feel absolutely fuck all. From that day on, anybody could have had me and it would not have made a whit of difference.

This quote demonstrates the connection for Lara between feeling "like absolute shit" and acting like a whore, as she defines this. To Lara, a woman who cannot say "no" to men, who encourages men to use and abuse her, is the essence of being a whore.

Despite Lara's feelings of powerlessness with her grandfather and subsequently with other men, Lara found a way to empower herself in sexual relationships, even with her grandfather. "I get such a thrill from being in charge and being in power and making a man totally want sex," Lara explained.

I'd say, "Okay, I'll give it to you when I'm ready. I'll do it if you wait for me." I'd say this kind of thing a lot to my grandfather in the last three years when I became more powerful. Making men cry and making them say "please" gives me power, and that's what sex is all about.

Many practicing prostitutes have testified to feeling powerful in the same ways that Lara articulated. Such transient emotional "power" does not, of course, enable them to redress the exploitative imbalance of actual power relations in prostitution.

Lara's description of the sex act reveals the enormous complexity of the power dynamics she experienced as well as her extraordinary capacity to recognize and express all the nuances involved.

I feel that I'm in power when leading up to sex, but the minute penetration happens, I see my grandfather and I'm a little girl again. I wonder what the hell is happening to me and I don't feel in charge any more. Then, when I feel it building up to the man's coming, I take the driver's seat and I make him come and I feel powerful again. But afterwards I feel used. A victim.

Instead of rejecting her prostitute persona after her grandfather died, Lara acted out the various manoeuvres that made her feel less powerless while in this role, such as seducing men, encouraging their obsessive adoration of her, demanding payment for sex, and hurting and rejecting them.

Lara married an unusually kind, understanding, and long-suffering man. Incest survivors are much more apt to marry men like their perpetrators. Brian appears to have been extremely unpossessive and supportive of her. This seems to be a key reason why Lara was able to resist her impulse to become a prostitute. The fact that Brian was a successful businessman may have been another reason she did not act out her attraction to this abusive lifestyle. Poverty also drives many girls and women into prostitution.

In short, Lara's story shows the traumatic basis for her attraction to prostitution, and the constant repetition of this trauma in most of her other relationships with men. For example, as an adult, Lara actively initiated the repetition of painful and traumatic experiences like anal rape despite the intense self-hatred and physical pain that results from this. Clearly, if Lara were to become a prostitute, this would aggravate her problems, not heal them. Remaining a prisoner of her grandfather's training is to remain his victim.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY ON PROSTITUTION

Most social policy is based on the assumption that commercialized sex is ineradicable, and society's efforts should be limited to controlling selected social harms such as vagrancy, crime, and sexually transmitted diseases that are associated with it.

While some people feel compassion towards women and children who have been driven into prostitution by poverty, most people see female prostitutes as immoral women who deserve to be punished for their debased behavior. The law in most countries upholds the majority view by criminalizing prostitutes rather than the males who purchase their services.

Many so-called progressive people today reject the term "prostitute" as pejorative, opting instead for the term "sex-worker." They argue that people who perceive the work of prostitutes as necessarily more demeaning and damaging than many other types of jobs to which most women are confined, are old-fashioned, puritanical, bigoted, and guilty of middle-class bias. These people usually champion women's right to practise prostitution as a profession and advocate decriminalizing "sex work" along with depathologizing and destigmatizing it. Despite these seemingly tolerant and progressive views, such advocates are not acting in the interests of the majority of women trapped in the sex industry.

Most women, including myself, believe that trading sex for money is inherently violating and psychologically damaging for women. Given the high rates of violence to which prostitutes are subjected by their pimps, their johns, rapists and serial

killers, as well as the police, and their great vulnerability to AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, their work is also frequently physically damaging,

Lara's notions of prostitution are highly romanticized. The powerlessness of women working as prostitutes is often minimized, even by prostitutes themselves. Frequently johns do not visit prostitutes simply to have sexual intercourse, but in order to dominate and subject them to behavior and sex acts that their wives, lovers or women who are free to say "no," would refuse to perform. To become a call-"girl" or street prostitute is not simply to take on an erratically paid and dangerous job; it is also to be forced into a socially-deviant identity associated with shame and taboo. Incest victims who have internalized shame from an early age are clearly predisposed to be able to tolerate such conditions more readily than women who have not been sexually abused. In addition, incestuously-abused women who dissociate spontaneously during sex likely experience less trauma from abusive sexual relationships with johns than women who do not have this capacity, many of whom have to resort to alcohol or other drugs in order to cut off and distance themselves from alienating sexual interactions.

If Lara were to become a prostitute, this would aggravate her problems, not heal them. Also, it would show the degree to which she remains a prisoner of her grandfather. Lara's experiences refute the view that prostitution is a victimless crime. Some of the prostitutes who say that they enjoy their jobs and/or that they don't feel violated by selling sex, may be as trapped in their past traumas as Lara was, without any real options. This is one of the most valuable lessons of Lara's story.

Because many prostitutes favor decriminalizing their work, well-meaning progressive people often assume that they should endorse this policy. Obviously, anyone engaged in illegal behavior would prefer it to be made legal. It is also understandable that stigmatized women would seek to redefine themselves, especially when they are unable to redefine or significantly alter the nature of the work they have to do. But this does not make decriminalization the best policy for society or for prostitutes. Those employed in a particular job cannot be expected to argue for its demise, even if the job is destructive to them.

Merely seeking to rehabilitate and relabel the social identity of prostitutes (as sex workers, for example), is not what is needed. Prostitution is an institution that exploits women, many of whom have already been severely sexually victimized in childhood. The notion that societies need this institution presumes that men's desires for sexual services, no matter how debased, destructive, or dangerous, must be satisfied.

Once we understand that the majority of prostitutes -- possibly all of them -- are forced into this role by poverty, entrapment by pimps and/or being trapped in a history of incestuous abuse and/or other kinds of physical or emotional violence, we have to recognize that arrest and incarceration are cruel and inappropriate ways to treat them. These girls and women need to be given opportunities to heal, and the chance to develop other marketable skills as well as access to alternative jobs.

The assumption that prostitution is a "necessary evil" and therefore ineradicable needs to be challenged. I believe that prostitution should remain illegal, and that the customers and pimps of prostitutes should be incarcerated for sexual exploitation. The widespread practice of punishing the victims instead of those who victimize them, is very sexist. It reflects the fact that it is men who make the laws to suit their interests. This is one of many forms of discrimination against women that does not belong in any society that aspires to equality between the sexes.

[16,177 words]