

# **BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IN WHITE SOUTH AFRICA**

**Incest Survivors Tell Their Stories**

**DIANA E. H. RUSSELL**



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IN WHITE SOUTH AFRICA

To Roberta,

With great appreciation  
for your continuing  
valuable assistance over  
so many years.

This is the book I  
will be "promoting" in  
South Africa.

I looked in the  
acknowledgments and  
didn't find your name.  
How did I do it without  
you?!

With tremendous  
gratitude, Diane  
1/8/98

*Also by Diana E. H. Russell*

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# Behind Closed Doors in White South Africa

## Incest Survivors Tell Their Stories

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*Oakland*

*California*

Consultant Editor: Jo Campling



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BEHIND CLOSED DOORS IN WHITE SOUTH AFRICA

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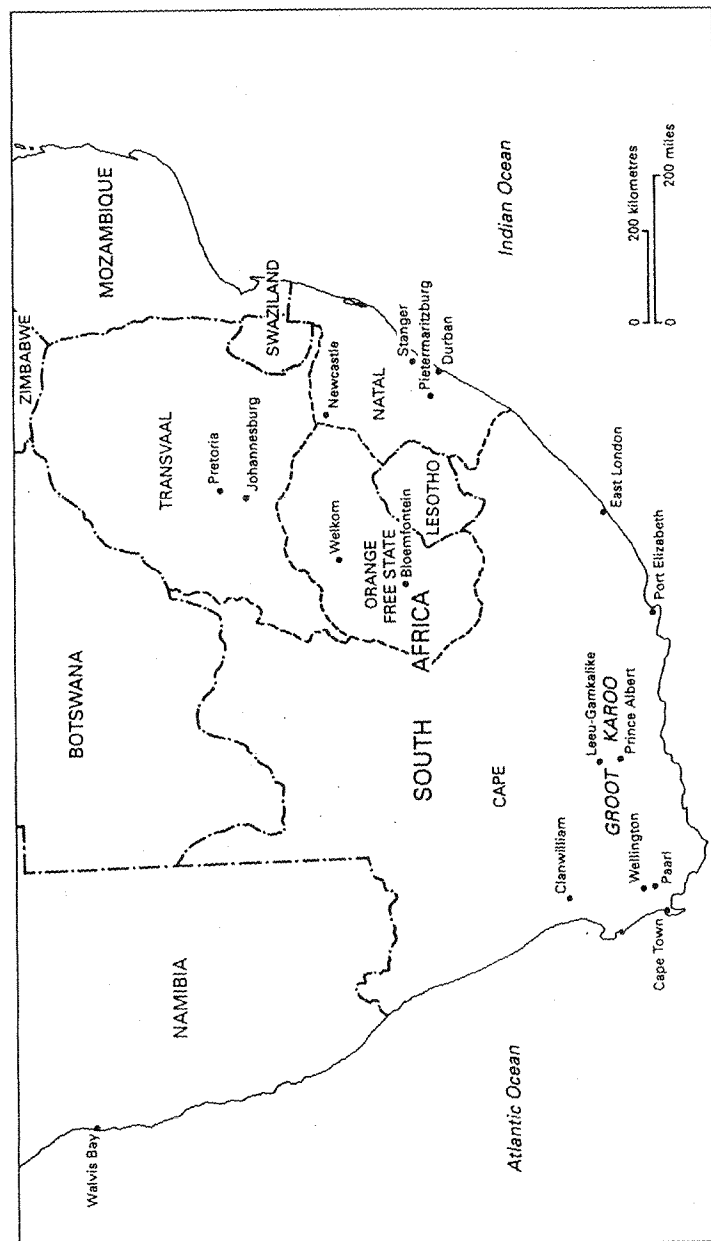
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To the incest survivors who were willing to share their pain  
and their triumphs with me and the reading public. May their  
courage and honesty be the help to others that they hoped for.





*Southern Africa in the apartheid era*

# Contents

<i>List of Tables and Figure</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<i>Map of South Africa</i>	xi
<i>About the Author</i>	xii
<i>Glossary and Abbreviations</i>	xiii
1 Introduction: Opening the Door in White South Africa	1
2 'It Felt So Good to Stab My Father': Nida Webber's Story	13
3 'Kill Me, Rather': Elsa Foster's Story	36
4 'There's a Sign on My Forehead Saying, "Abuse Me!": Marie Malan's Story	60
5 The Making of a Whore: Lara Newman's Story	90
6 The Divine Right of the Father: Elsabé Groenewald's Story	118
7 Conclusion: Paternal Despotism in Private and Public Life	151
<i>Appendix: Tables Russell's Sample of Incest Survivors</i>	170
<i>Notes</i>	173
<i>References</i>	177
<i>Index</i>	181

# List of Tables and Figure

## Tables

A-1	Information on Sample of Incest Survivors, by Ethnicity	170
A-2	Information on Incest Perpetrators and Their Abuse, by Ethnicity	171

## Figure

3.1	Family Tree – Elsa Foster and Marie Malan	39
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A shorter version of Chapter 5 was published in *Violence Against Women: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal* 1, 1, 1995, 77–98. Revised segments of 'Bloedskande: Die Donker Geheime van die Boerepatriarge' (Incest: The Dark Side of the Afrikaner Patriarch), *Vrye Weekblad*, 29 January–4 February 1993, 22–23, and an English translation of this article, 'The Divine Right of the Father: Incest in the White Afrikaner Tribe', *Off Our Backs*, 23, 3, 1993, 10–11, appear in Chapters 4 and 7. Edited paragraphs from my book, *Incestuous Abuse: Its Long-Term Effects* (Pretoria, South Africa: The Human Sciences Research Council Publishers, 1995), appear in Chapter 1.

Extracts from Judith Herman, *Father–Daughter Incest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) are printed with kind permission of the publisher.

## About the Author

**Diana E. H. Russell** obtained her BA from the University of Cape Town in South Africa in 1958 and a Postgraduate Diploma from the London School of Economics and Political Science (with Distinction) in 1961. She was the recipient of LSE's Mostyn Lloyd Memorial Prize awarded to the best student studying for the Postgraduate Diploma. She received her PhD from Harvard University in 1970.

Dr Russell is Professor Emerita of Sociology at Mills College, Oakland, California, where she taught sociology and women's studies for 22 years. She is author, editor or co-editor of 13 previous books (see page ii). The *Secret Trauma: Incest in the Lives of Girls and Women* won the 1986 C. Wright Mills Award for outstanding social science research that addresses an important social issue.

Dr Russell has been a politically active feminist since 1969. She started teaching the first course in women's studies at Mills College at that time. She was one of the main organisers of the 1976 International Tribunal on Crimes Against Women, and later that year helped to found the first feminist anti-pornography organisation in the United States (Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media). She remained active in this organisation for many years.

Dr Russell, who lives in Berkeley, California, has lectured widely in the United States and abroad about the political situation in South Africa, rape, incest, child sexual abuse in general, pornography, femicide and all forms of violence against women. She has been arrested three times for her political activism, in South Africa (1963), in England (1974) and the United States (1990).

# Glossary and Abbreviations

<b>African</b>	Refers to indigenous people of South Africa (Zulu, Xhosa, Sothos, Tswana, Venda, etc.) who constitute approximately 76 per cent of the population. Sometimes used as synonymous with the term black.
<b>Afrikaans</b>	Language, evolved mainly from Dutch, spoken by Afrikaners and a majority of coloureds. Also used as synonymous with Afrikaner.
<b>Afrikaner</b>	South African white descended from the early Dutch, German and Huguenot settlers.
<b>ANC</b>	African National Congress, the majority party in the government of national unity following the election in 1994. Previously, the most important opposition group, founded in 1912 and banned from 1960 to 1990.
<b>apartheid</b>	Government's policy until 1994 of compulsory and systematic racial segregation, including the creation of independent 'homelands'.
<b>blacks</b>	Term used to include Africans, coloureds, Indians, and other people of colour.
<b>Boer</b>	Afrikaans for farmer. Usually used as a pejorative word for Afrikaner.
<b>coloured</b>	Racial classification for South Africans of Asian-European and African-European descent; approximately 9 per cent of the population. This term is not capitalised, and is often placed in quotation marks or prefaced by the word 'so-called'.
<b>English-speaking South Africans</b>	White South Africans whose first language is English.
<b>European</b>	White person.
<b>forced removals</b>	The involuntary resettlement of people (mostly blacks, in areas not of their choosing).
<b>homelands</b>	The apartheid government's term for bantustans or reserves; approximately 13 per cent of South African land allocated for Africans on the basis of their ethnicity.
<b>Indian</b>	Descended from Indian immigrants; approximately 3 per cent of the population.

<b>matric</b>	Short for matriculation. Final examinations taken at the end of high school.
<b>Namibia</b>	Country on the Northwest border of South Africa, formerly colonised by South Africa and known as South West Africa.
<b>National Party</b>	Also referred to as Nationalist Party. The majority party from 1948 to 1994, supported largely by Afrikaners.
<b>NG Kerk</b>	The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, also called the Dutch Reformed Church, colloquially referred to as the NG or Reform church. Most Afrikaners belong to this denomination.
<b>rand</b>	Unit of South African currency worth approximately 16 pence (British currency) and \$0.33 (US currency).
<b>reserves</b>	An alternative name for 'homelands' or 'bantustans'.
<b>sjambok</b>	Animal-hide whip used by police (replaced now by hard plastic whip).
<b>standard</b>	Grade in school; 12 years of school start with 'sub A' and 'sub B', then progress from standards one to ten. Hence, standard six is the equivalent of eighth grade in the US, standard seven of ninth grade, etc.
<b>UCT</b>	University of Cape Town, a white-dominated institution.

# 1 Introduction: Opening the Door in White South Africa

The study of incestuous families ... shows father-daughter incest to be but one manifestation of a despotic paternal rule.

Judith Herman, 1981, p. 63

White South Africans are notorious worldwide for their brutal exploitation of black people. In contrast, white South African men's treatment of their wives, daughters and other female relatives is virtually unknown, both in that country and outside of it. My intent in this book is to tear away the veil of secrecy that surrounds incestuous abuse in white South Africa, and to suggest a connection between the brutal way white men have behaved towards black people and the way they treat the female members of their families.

My interest in South Africa stems from having been born and raised there. I come from a white upper-class English-speaking South African family residing in Cape Town. My father was an affluent businessman who also served as a Member of Parliament for 18 years, from 1945 to 1963. My British mother emigrated to South Africa to take up a post teaching elocution and lacrosse at a school when she was 23 years old. She quit her job shortly thereafter to marry my father.

Eager to be free of my suffocating patriarchal family and culture, I departed for England in 1959 at the age of 20, and became a British citizen three years later. Getting away from South Africa accelerated my acquisition of a more progressive political perspective, as it has done for so many other white South Africans. When I returned to the land of my birth in 1962, I became further radicalised and, in 1963, joined a revolutionary underground organisation there called the African Resistance Movement. The goal of this largely white group was to try to undermine the apartheid regime by sabotaging government property. Before this organisation was decimated by the South African police in 1964, I left for the United States where I have lived ever since.

In 1987, the hope of contributing in some small way to what appeared to be an impending revolution led me back to South Africa to conduct interviews with women in the anti-apartheid movement. I believed that personalising apartheid in this way would make its horrors more real, and that compiling a book of stories about the struggles of revolutionary

women would be the best way at my disposal to reach an international audience. Given the importance of international pressure in the movements to democratise South Africa, I hoped that these women's accounts of their experiences of resisting oppression would encourage greater support for economic sanctions against the government. South Africa was under a state of emergency during my four-month research sojourn, which made my project a somewhat risky undertaking, but I was fortunate to be able to complete it without serious mishap. This research culminated in my book *Lives of Courage: Women for a New South Africa* (1989).

In 1991, I spent six months in South Africa doing research on violence against women. I returned again in 1992 for a longer stay of 17 months. I first completed a monograph on the long-term effects of incestuous abuse (Russell, 1995c),<sup>1</sup> and several articles on incest and other forms of violence against women in South Africa (Russell, 1993a; Russell, 1993b; Russell, 1994a; Russell, 1994b; Russell, 1995a; Russell, 1995b; Russell, 1995d; Russell, 1995e; Russell, 1996). I then embarked on this book, which includes the personal accounts of five white incest survivors. Selected from 20 in-depth interviews I conducted on incestuous abuse, they provide vivid portraits of the sexual politics in the childhood homes of these women.

Because I completed my research during the apartheid era – that is, before Nelson Mandela's election as president in April 1994 – this book will focus on the period of white supremacy prior to this historic achievement.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The original objective of my research was to support South African women who contended that opposition to sexism deserved far more attention than it had heretofore been given. The vast majority of leaders and supporters of the liberation struggle had a long history of dismissing the oppression of women as a trivial problem that distracted politically progressive people from the all-important struggle against racism. I saw this opinion as a self-serving attempt by male-dominated anti-apartheid organisations to discount the need for men to change their oppressive behaviour. Left-wing movements worldwide have responded to the emergence of feminism in this fashion.

Many South Africans continue to see male violence against females as 'different' from 'political' violence – that is, white racist violence against black people or violence against anti-racism activists, whatever their

colour. Incestuous abuse is typically seen as a subcategory of child abuse rather than as a manifestation of the power imbalance in the patriarchal family. Depoliticising and privatising sexist violence in this manner makes it more difficult for women to mobilise against it, and tends to focus efforts on personal rather than political solutions.

I decided to focus on incestuous abuse because it is the most neglected, misunderstood and taboo form of violence against females in South Africa. I hoped that my choice would raise awareness about this particularly heinous form of sexual exploitation, as well as increase concern about violence against women in general. In addition, I wanted people to recognise that incestuous abuse, like woman-battering, misogynist murder (femicide) and non-familial rape, is a political crime that is largely perpetrated by males against females.<sup>2</sup>

Statistics rarely move people. Knowing that incestuous abuse is widespread is likely to horrify only those who already understand how painful such experiences typically are. Perpetrators, who often deny the pain and destructive effects caused by their behaviour, may well respond to information about widespread incest victimisation by feeling reassured that their conduct is not as abnormal as many people suppose. Some perpetrators may even interpret a high prevalence rate as evidence that little girls enjoy sex with adult men. In contrast, personal stories of incest survivors' often devastating experiences are more difficult for people to dismiss. Indeed, I hope that the personal accounts in this volume will motivate much-needed reforms in the way this crime is handled in South Africa (for a discussion of recommended reforms, see Russell, 1995e).

As my interviews with incest survivors progressed, I was struck by the extreme violence in several of the white Afrikaner<sup>3</sup> homes, as well as by the profound sense of ownership and entitlement to abuse that some Afrikaner fathers revealed towards their children. This discovery made me interested in exploring whether there might be a connection between the patriarchal-cum-racist authoritarian attitudes and behaviour of many white South African men in the private and the public domains. Examining this connection became a critical objective of this book. More specifically, I set out to evaluate the following related hypotheses:

*Just as many white Afrikaners have behaved in a particularly tyrannical and brutal manner towards black South Africans, Afrikaner men who have committed incestuous abuse are likely to have behaved in a particularly tyrannical and brutal manner towards their daughters. Furthermore, I predict that there is a causal link between these two forms of brutality.*

Addressing these hypotheses required that I focus solely on the stories of white incest survivors. And my desire to shed light on the mentality of

those responsible for inventing and implementing the barbaric and dehumanising system of apartheid necessitated a disproportional focus on white Afrikaner rather than white English-speaking South African incest survivors.

Many white South Africans – currently less than 13 per cent of a population of 44 million – smugly believe that incestuous abuse, like wife-beating and rape, frequently occurs in black communities but rarely in their own. Because white South African incest perpetrators, and those who collude with them, have succeeded in terrorising girls and women into keeping the perpetrators' sordid secrets, these racist illusions persist. Destroying this myth is yet another goal of this book.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Between 1991 and 1993, I conducted and audiotaped in-depth interviews with 20 white South African incest survivors, all but one of whom was living in Cape Town. I advertised for volunteers by posting signs around the community and by placing an advertisement in a student newspaper. Word of mouth, however, proved far more effective, as did the recommendation of a social worker who had access to a therapy group for survivors. I interviewed every incest survivor who volunteered – including four black survivors whose accounts were excluded from this study, but which will be analysed in the future.<sup>4</sup>

Because I had no intention initially of focusing on ethnic differences, it was only later that I became aware of the fact that as many as seven of the survivors in this study are the offspring of mixed Afrikaner–English-speaking South African marriages,<sup>5</sup> and two are the offspring of foreign immigrants (German and Israeli).<sup>6</sup> In order to allocate the 20 survivors to the most appropriate ethnic group, I took into account the survivor's description of her ethnicity, the language spoken in her home during her childhood years, the ethnicity of the community in which she was raised, as well as the ethnicity of the parents most involved in raising her (in several cases this was a stepfather rather than her biological father). Application of these criteria enabled me to categorise nine of the 20 incest survivors as Afrikaners, nine as English-speaking South Africans and the remaining two as foreign.

Originally, I selected 14 out of the 20 survivors' stories to include in this book. In the interests of creating an affordable, standard-length book, however, I have only included five – four Afrikaners and one English-speaking South African. The Afrikaner survivors were selected because

they strongly identified as Afrikaners and because their stories raise important and diverse incest-related issues, some of which are discussed in the concluding sections of their chapters. I chose Lara Newman as the one English-speaking South African because her story includes information about clandestine torture and alleged assassination plots that are peculiarly South African and therefore of particular interest to an international audience.

Basic demographic and sociological information comparing the Afrikaner and English-speaking South African incest survivors in this study is provided in Table A1 (see Appendix). A comparison of the relationship between the type of relative who perpetrated the incestuous abuse and the survivor's ethnicity is presented in Table A2, along with an ethnic comparison of some of the major characteristics of the abuse, for example the age of the survivor when it started, the frequency and duration of the abuse, the severity of the sex acts, as well as the severity of the force or violence used by the perpetrator, including whether or not it was associated with the incestuous abuse, and whether the perpetrator ever used a weapon to threaten or hurt the survivor or was known to have access to one or more weapons (see Appendix).

Although it would have been preferable had I been able to interview Afrikaner survivors in their own language, all the women interviewed were sufficiently fluent in English to outweigh the disadvantages of working through a translator.

The location of the interviews was chosen by the incest survivors. Most interviews were conducted in their homes, although my home was sometimes chosen for reasons of privacy and/or anonymity. Before commencing, I asked each woman for permission to audiotape the interview. None of them objected. I also obtained a signed consent form from each of them. This informed them that their interview might be published in a book with their identity concealed, if they so chose. I used the pseudonyms they selected unless these were inconsistent with their ethnic identity. To my astonishment, eight of the 20 women interviewed elected to use their real names, or said that they didn't care one way or the other. The remarkable openness of these women adds an additional element of authenticity to their stories.

Pseudonyms needed for other individuals mentioned in the survivors' stories were selected from a dictionary of Afrikaans and English names. For those who opted to use their real names, the real names of the other individuals they mentioned were also preserved, unless they requested otherwise.

Given the possibility of negative consequences for the survivors who opted to use their real names, I considered providing pseudonyms for all

of them regardless of their expressed wishes. However, after much discussion and reflection, I decided that doing so would be maternalistic. It now seems more respectful to honour the willingness of some of these women to risk identifying themselves rather than to refuse to allow them to make this choice. Imposing anonymity on them might also deprive them of positive consequences, for example the satisfaction of exposing their perpetrators to the reactions of friends, neighbours, work colleagues and other family members. Having arrived at this decision, I can only hope that it turns out to be a wise one.

Except for the initial questions on demographics, I used a highly flexible unstructured interview format because I believed this would facilitate optimal disclosure. The interviews, all but one conducted in one sitting,<sup>7</sup> ranged from approximately 90 minutes to five hours in duration, the average length of time being about two-and-a-half hours. Some of the interviews conducted in the women's homes were prolonged by telephone interruptions, crying babies or intrusions by family members or friends.

All the interviews were transcribed and those selected for publication in this book or elsewhere were edited.<sup>8</sup> Although none of the women had requested to see a copy of her edited interview prior to publication, the five whose accounts are included in this book had the opportunity to read and correct earlier drafts of their edited stories. Those who had opted for anonymity were also asked to change information that might identify them. A few such changes were made. None of these changes included information about the women's experiences of incestuous abuse. Space limitations and editing decisions have resulted in further changes being made, but these should not affect the accuracy of their accounts.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

A chapter is devoted to each of the five incest survivors. The chapter introductions include basic demographic information about the women and their families. Each survivor's story then opens with her description of her family background followed by her experiences of incestuous abuse and, when relevant, other sexual violations, the impact of the incestuous abuse on her life and her struggle to heal. Each chapter concludes with an analysis of one or more of the major incest-related issues raised by the survivor's story. An analysis of the connections between white South African men's racial politics and their sexual politics at home is mainly left to the final chapter. A glossary of South African terms appears on p. xiii.

Chapter 2 relates the story of an Afrikaner incest survivor, Nida Webber (her real name). Her stepfather subjected her to considerable violence in

addition to sexual abuse. She responded by stabbing him close to his heart. The next two chapters tell the stories of two Afrikaner sisters, Elsa Foster and Marie Malan (both pseudonyms). Their experiences of incest, torture and battering by their stepfather and other perpetrators is one of the more extreme accounts of victimisation to be found in the incest literature. Nevertheless, their reactions to it differed greatly – a topic addressed at the end of Marie's story.

Like Nida Webber, Afrikaner Elsabé Groenewald (her real name) employed violent strategies against her brutal father (see Chapter 6). Both Nida and Elsabé defended themselves with weapons. Elsa Foster didn't use a weapon, but she fought so hard that her stepfather rarely managed to rape her (see Chapter 3). She also begged her stepfather to kill her before raping her, if that was what he was determined to do. Interestingly, all three of these women chose to use their real names in this book. This may be another manifestation of their willingness to take risks. A pseudonym had to be used for Elsa Foster, however, because her sister wanted to remain anonymous.

Chapter 5 recounts the story of an English-speaking South African incest survivor, Lara Newman (a pseudonym). Readers should note whether they, like me, are struck by the greater paternal despotism in the Afrikaner homes than in this English-speaking family.

While all nine of the English-speaking survivors opted for anonymity, seven out of the nine Afrikaner survivors chose to use their real names (and one of the two foreign-born women). Descendants of the British tend, like their forebears, to value privacy very highly, but I have no idea how to interpret the more atypical openness of the Afrikaner survivors.<sup>9</sup> Their willingness to expose themselves is all the more surprising since a number of the women interviewed believed incest to be even more taboo among Afrikaners than in the English-speaking South African community.

Afrikaner Elsabé Groenewald, the determined fighter referred to above, provides a vivid description of a father who believes he is entitled to have sex with his daughter (Chapter 6). Even in old age, he remains unrepentant about his exploitive behaviour towards her. The final chapter provides an analysis of the connection between Afrikaner men's sense of entitlement to dominate and exploit both black people and the women in their homes. The stories in this book challenge the widely held notion that white South African women automatically share all the privileges of their male relatives.

## SOUTH AFRICA'S RULING CASTE

Whites constitute less than 13 per cent of the population of approximately 44 million South Africans. Fifty-seven per cent of them are Afrikaners – the



white descendants of the early Dutch, German and Huguenot settlers whose mother tongue is Afrikaans. The remaining 43 per cent are mostly English-speaking South Africans – a diverse assortment of white immigrants and descendants of immigrants, most of whom have British ancestry.

Unlike Afrikaners, most English-speaking South Africans still speak the same language as their forebears, albeit with a different accent and with the addition of some uniquely South African words and expressions. Some of them still feel connected to England and consider it their mother country, and many are able to obtain British passports through a relative, dead or alive. Many also feel able to integrate into British society with relative ease. Although the vast majority of this group share a common language, they do not possess the kind of shared sense of identity that characterises Afrikaners.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of the strength of Afrikaner nationalism, it was a long time before their forebears would relinquish their European identities and call themselves Afrikaners. As recently as the 1950s, white South Africans referred to themselves as 'Europeans' and to peoples of colour as 'Non-Europeans'. This colonial terminology has been replaced by even more blatantly racist terminology since racism is inherent in the very definitions of an Afrikaner and an English-speaking South African. For example, black South Africans who are the descendants of white Afrikaners and black South Africans and whose mother tongue is Afrikaans, are not considered Afrikaners. These mulatto people have long been referred to as 'coloured'.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the terms English South African and English-speaking South African are reserved for whites.

To avoid colluding in this book with racist terminology, perhaps the word 'white' should always precede the term Afrikaner when referring to white Afrikaans-speaking people. Yet it seems inappropriate for scholars – particularly those who live outside South Africa – to disregard the names members of ethnic groups have chosen for themselves. Similarly, it would be unreasonable for foreign scholars to decide that it makes no sense for the now-fashionable American term 'people of colour' to exclude so-called white people as if whites have no colour. Hence, I shall refrain from meddling with the terms white South Africans have chosen for themselves.

### INCESTUOUS ABUSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Despite the growing recognition over the past decade that incestuous abuse is a serious problem in South Africa (as it is in other countries), the struggle for racial justice has diverted many progressive people from

giving incestuous abuse the attention it deserves. A few women have made valiant efforts to bring this problem to public attention over the past decade, but the handling of this crime is still in the dark ages in South Africa compared with most Western nations.<sup>12</sup>

Although no adequate studies of the prevalence of incestuous abuse have been conducted in South Africa<sup>13</sup> (prevalence refers to the percentage of women who were victimised by incest during their childhood), there are many reasons to believe it may be even higher there than in many other countries, including the United States. Decades of abject poverty and brutal injustice as a result of apartheid has culminated in very high rates of violence in South Africa by the white elite and by the oppressed black masses. The more accustomed people become to using violence for political and/or criminal ends, the easier people (typically males) find it to employ force and violence in personal relationships as well. Consequently, when there are high rates of political and criminal violence in a society, girls and women are frequently among the unrecognised casualties. There is some evidence, for example, that the rape rate in South Africa may be almost double that of the United States (Russell, 1991, note 8).

### DEFINITIONS OF INCEST

The legal definition of incest in South Africa is archaic; it is limited to 'unlawful and intentional sexual intercourse between male and female persons who are prohibited from marrying each other because they are related within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, affinity or adoptive relationship'<sup>14</sup> (Snyman, 1989, p. 400). By this definition, sexual relations between steprelatives other than a stepparent and stepchild are legally permissible, for example, sex between a stepsister and her stepbrother, between a stepuncle and his stepniece, and between a stepgranddaughter and her stepgrandfather. It also means that penile-vaginal intercourse by a relative qualifies as incest while anal rape by the same relative qualifies as some other kind of crime. In addition, it excludes all forms of same-sex incestuous abuse, as well as all sex acts that don't involve penile-vaginal penetration, such as genital fondling – one of the most common forms of child sexual abuse. Clearly, this definition is in urgent need of expansion.

For the purposes of my study, I defined incestuous abuse as *any kind of exploitive sex that occurs between relatives, no matter how distant the relationship*. Sex is considered exploitive when it is unwanted and/or when there is a power imbalance between the relatives involved, such as when the age difference between them is three years or more. The term

'incestuous abuse' rather than 'incest' is used to distinguish exploitive sexual encounters between relatives from harmless, nonexploitive sex play between relatives who are approximately the same age. This definition of incestuous abuse is much broader than the legal definition in the range of sex acts it encompasses as well as in its inclusion of both consanguineal and nonconsanguineal relatives.

#### THE SYSTEM OF INJUSTICE TO INCEST SURVIVORS<sup>15</sup>

The South African legal system is in urgent need of radical reform. Before the elections of April 1994, it was a bastion of patriarchy, racism, classism and homophobia, both structurally and functionally. It was an institution developed and run largely by privileged white males and it typically served their interests. Consequently, the outcome of the few incest cases prosecuted in South Africa was determined by male judges and magistrates who were often more inclined to believe or empathise with male perpetrators than their female victims. One of the incest survivors in this study described the following example of such pro-perpetrator bias:

Two years ago one of my friends took her uncle to court for raping her. He was from a very wealthy prestigious upper-class East London family. He had also raped two of his own daughters, which became known when the youngest one fell pregnant when she was 13. The lawyer's explanation for this man's behaviour was that 'He wanted to prove his masculinity to his wife'. He was only fined about R1000 [£160/\$330<sup>16</sup>] and given a one-year suspended sentence. His wife took him back and the two victims were removed from the home.

After reviewing a substantial collection of newspaper clippings about cases of incestuous abuse that were prosecuted in South African courts, it is clear that this example is by no means exceptional.<sup>17</sup>

#### THE ORIGINS OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN SOUTH AFRICA

'The white man came with the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other'.

This quotation conveys a common African perception of the colonisation of Africa.

White settlers tried to create a utopia for the white man on the southernmost tip of black Africa. They built a caste system based on skin colour, and

claimed power and privilege as their birthright. It all started in 1652 when, under the auspices of the Dutch East India Company, Jan van Riebeck built a refreshment station at the site of present-day Cape Town to break the long voyage of Dutch traders as they travelled between the Netherlands and India. It wasn't long before the first Dutch settlers started plundering the land of the native Khoi people and, because the Khoi refused to be enslaved, began importing slaves from Asia and other regions in Africa.

Britons started to emigrate to South Africa when Britain took over the coloniser role from the Dutch in 1795, more than a century after the Dutch first landed at the Cape. The English settlers and the Afrikaners did not get along, and a passionate hatred developed between them. Literally at war with each other during the Boer War from 1899 to 1902, most of their descendants still practise voluntary segregation: they speak different languages, attend separate schools, live in different areas and vote for different political parties.

Building a white utopia has been no easy enterprise for a tiny, divided white minority vastly outnumbered by black Africans who had to be forcibly subjugated. It became increasingly difficult as growing numbers of black South Africans were willing to sacrifice their lives to change or overthrow the system of white domination. Terrified by 'die swart gevaar' (the black peril), the desire of Afrikaner and English-speaking South Africans to maintain their monopoly of power, wealth and privilege has been the main factor that united them.

Ethnic differences between Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans, as well as their mutual hostility, have been reflected in party politics. Whereas most Afrikaners were loyal supporters of a political party they named the Nationalist Party, a large majority of English-speaking South Africans used to vote for the 'United Party' before it collapsed in 1977. After a period of instability and a few false starts, English-speaking South African politicians created the Progressive Federal Party which eventually evolved into the Democratic Party that exists today. A small percentage of Afrikaners and a larger but still small percentage of English-speaking South Africans also supported more radical political parties and extraparlimentary movements.

Typically, those who have economic power also enjoy political dominance. But what happens in South Africa is rarely typical. While English-speaking South Africans dominate in business, Afrikaners dominated the political scene from 1948 until Nelson Mandela became president in April 1994.

After the Afrikaners came to power in 1948, prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd developed and started implementing the mad and inhuman

policy of *apartheid* – a policy of compulsory racial discrimination, including the creation of allegedly independent reservations or ‘homelands’ for different African ethnic groups. It took the Afrikaners’ dedicated fanaticism to invent and execute this diabolical scheme. For this reason, our exploration of the connection between the racial politics of white men and their sexual politics in the home will focus on Afrikaners.

Although English-speaking South Africans have consistently opposed the creation of separate ‘homelands’ for Africans, they were also committed to maintaining white privilege. They opposed the idea of universal suffrage, for example, because they assumed that it would bring an end to white power and privilege. But they were never willing to admit their true motives for favouring a qualified suffrage. To do so would have been too crude. Too direct. It would not have sounded decent or fair. But their fancy rationalisations didn’t fool black people or impress Afrikaners.

Many volumes have been written about the horrors of apartheid, including one of my own (1989). Much attention has been given to the outrageously bigoted utterances of white leaders as they have tried to justify their iniquitous system to the world. But the microscope has rarely been focused on how these leaders and other white South Africans have behaved in their own homes. Indeed, the patriarchal character of South Africa is largely overlooked. And the connections between the behaviour of white men in their homes and in the polity have rarely been addressed. The stories in this book will open the doors of some white homes – doors that have been permanently closed until now – to expose some of the best-kept secrets of these people. In doing so, I hope to add a new dimension to our understanding of the white South African mentality.

## 2 ‘It Felt So Good To Stab My Father’: Nida Webber’s Story

‘I stabbed my father, just missing his heart. His blood squirted on to me and my clothes got all bloody... It felt so good to stab him.’

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter tells the story of an Afrikaner incest survivor, Nida Webber (her real name), who was subjected to considerable violence, emotional and sexual abuse by her stepfather. At the time of the interview she was a petite young woman whose strength was masked by the usual feminine accoutrements that signify softness and fragility rather than toughness and willingness to kill. The stereotypic picture of cowed, submissive incest survivors who internalise their rage in self-destructive and life-threatening ways is shattered by Afrikaans women like Nida, Elsa Foster (Chapter 3) and Elsabé Groenewald (Chapter 6), as well as by other Afrikaner survivors I interviewed. Interestingly, there were no examples of this degree of violent resistance among the English-speaking South African survivors, nor do I recollect any comparable accounts of militant self-defence in the published or unpublished literature on or by incest survivors in the United States or Britain.

Note: the word ‘father’ will be used to refer to biological fathers throughout the narratives to follow unless the survivors (like Nida) routinely referred to their stepfathers as father.

Nida Webber was a 23-year-old married woman who had just separated from her husband, Andrew (a pseudonym), when I interviewed her in 1991. She and her British husband had a 16-month-old son, Christopher, over whom she had custody. Nida and her child were temporarily staying in the home of a friend in a predominantly Afrikaans suburb of Cape Town.

Nida was born in Transvaal Province, the oldest of three children who were born in quick succession; her two younger brothers were 21 and 22 years old. The family relocated to Cape Town when Nida was three years old. Shortly afterwards, Nida's mother divorced her husband whom she described as a 'sex maniac'.

After graduating from high school, Nida's mother married and started working outside the home until her three children were born. Mrs Webber remarried and eventually returned to work as a debtor's clerk for eight years. After becoming a housewife again for some years, she was subsequently unable to find employment outside the home because of her age. Pressed by financial need, she invested in a knitting machine and made clothes at home. She worked long hours and was able to earn about R400 (£64/\$133) a month. 'Without her money', Nida said, 'we'd never have survived.'

Nida left school after failing matric, and found work as a waitress. After her marriage, she described her occupation as 'mother and housewife'. Her Afrikaner stepfather completed standard six (8th grade) and drifted from one job to another until he found work in Cape Town. He had been employed as a male nurse for ten years at the time of the interview, a job that earned him only about R740 (£118/\$247) a month.

Nida's husband Andrew and his family were born in Britain. Andrew completed high school there, then trained as an electrician. He obtained a job in this trade in South Africa and earned about R4500 (£720/\$1500) a month. Nida identified herself as middle class although her own and her parents' educational and socio-economic status suggest that she is working class. Mr and Mrs Webber didn't subscribe to any religion, which is unusual for Afrikaners. Nida later became a member of the New Apostolic Church, but she left it 'because of the way they treated me when I wanted to take my father to court for what he did to me'. Despite her defection, Nida is still a believer.

Nida described herself as forthright and independent:

If I say I'm not going to do something, I'm not going to do it and nobody is going to make me. If I feel something isn't right, I'll tell the person what I think. I'm straightforward like my father. A lot of people don't like me because I'm very honest. Even at school, if I thought teachers said something wrong, I'd tell them. I'm not shy; I can go into any place and talk to anybody.

At the time of the interview, Nida was wearing the clothes of the woman friend with whom she was staying because she had fled her home empty-handed. 'I don't have any money now, so my friend is supporting

me financially', Nida explained. 'She's giving me and my son food and clothes and everything else we need.' When I saw Nida a month or so later, she was staying with another woman friend and sleeping in the bed of this friend's daughter.

## NIDA'S STORY

### Family Background

I never got any love from my parents and I never saw them hugging or kissing each other. I also never kissed or hugged my brothers.

If my father tells you it's raining outside when the sun is shining, it's raining. If he says, 'Tonight you're going to put on your pajamas', you put on your pajamas. And if he says, 'You're not going to eat this afternoon', you're not going to eat that afternoon. He doesn't allow disagreement from anybody, not even his wife. He is the boss and you are the maid. And he's very strict. If you're in his house, you must do everything he says. He doesn't like children. I think he has always been jealous of my mother's attention to us.

My father is very short. He's a bit smaller than me [Nida is about 5 foot 3 inches tall], and my mother and brothers are taller than both of us. I think he hates being small. He also feels insecure about not earning more. He finds his job as a male nurse very boring; he has to take patients from one place to another all day.

I think my father is also very frustrated because my mother hasn't given him much sex since early in their marriage. She told me this herself. My mother's previous husband wanted so much sex that it killed her desire. Also, after having three children close together, she was very tired at night, especially after my father suddenly quit his job and she had to go out to work. She had to put us in a crèche in the day, then look after us at night. She told me she was very tired and she was not going to do it [have sex].

Two or three times a week my brothers and I would hear our parents through the closed door shouting and fighting in the bedroom. We knew he was trying to have sex with her. He'd say things like, 'You will! I am the boss in this house!' Sometimes both of them would have a bath afterwards, so they must've done it. I think she must've given it to him quite a lot. My mother is very strong-willed and she's bigger than him, so perhaps she could sometimes stop him. But he's very, very strong when he's cross. Nobody can stop him doing what he wants at those times. My brothers and

I often ran out of the house to play with friends when they fought about sex because we couldn't take the screaming and the noises they made. If my mother had shouted for help, we would've gone in to help her, but she never did.

My father believes it's a woman's duty to wash the floors and the windows, to iron, and so on. South African men are like this. Most of them think that they should be the bosses in their families and that women must be the maids. My brothers didn't even have to make their beds or wash the bath. It's only here and there in South Africa that you can find a husband who'll help his wife with the dishes and washing the floor. But when my father tells my mother, 'I'm the boss in this house and you'll do as I say!' she tells him, 'You're my husband; you're *not* my boss!' When I was young, my father could dominate me even if he couldn't dominate her.

I always did the dishes when I was young, and when I turned 16, I had to do everything else in the house as well – washing, cleaning and buying the groceries. My mother was so busy working on her knitting machine that I had to be the housewife. Although she didn't believe in forcing me to do these jobs, she didn't stop my father from forcing me.

My father also gave me most of the hidings. He thought I always did everything wrong even though I was very quiet. If I broke a cup, I'd get a hiding; if my brothers broke a cup, my parents would say, 'Don't worry about it'. When I failed a subject at school, I got a hiding. When my brothers failed, my parents said it was all right. Ever since I can remember, I always got a hiding for anything I did wrong. My mother would tell my father if I broke a cup and show him my school reports when I did badly in a subject.

My father was also very nasty to my brothers and gave them hidings too, but not as often as he gave them to me. Sometimes I had to make excuses to get out of PT [physical education] classes at school; we had to wear shorts which didn't hide the marks on my legs and back, so I'd say I was sick.

My father wasn't a real father to me. He used to hit me very hard, usually with his belt. I still have a grudge about this. Sometimes I'd start to run away from him but he'd tell my mother to close the door so I had no place to run to. Then he'd catch me in a corner. If my mother didn't close the door, he would've fought with her.

One time my mother told my father to stop hitting me so hard because she realised he was taking his frustrations out on me. He then tried to beat her up but she hit him back and they had a big fight. He never tried hitting her again after that. My mother also tried to stop my father from beating

me up once or twice when I was older. 'She's too old for that', she told him. 'You can't hit her any more'.

When he hit me after I turned 14 or 15, I told him, 'I'm not taking this any more!' and I hit him back. I also hit him back when he tried to hit me when I was in matric [12th grade]. Like him, I'm also very strong when I get cross.

### **Incestuous Abuse**

My first memory of it was when I was about five years old. I remember my father coming to my bedroom at about one o'clock in the morning when everyone else was asleep. He woke me by turning on the light, then he asked me to take off my panties and lie on my back with my legs up in the air. He told me if I didn't do it, he'd tell my mother I was a naughty girl. I didn't want her to think I was naughty so I did what he said. He told me to keep my nightdress over my legs so I couldn't see what he was doing. Then he fondled me and masturbated himself.

If I did something wrong on a particular day, my father would come to me that night and tell me he'd tell my mother I'd done something naughty if I wouldn't do it. So I'd let him do it again. He came to my bedroom quite often, always at night. It was basically always the same thing – me lying on my back with my legs up. He didn't undress me or himself. My nightdress was long so it covered my legs while he fondled me. It was sore because he'd push his fingers in me and I was very small. I usually looked at the ceiling when he was doing it because I didn't want to know what was going on. It would take about half an hour. We always had to talk in whispers because the flat we lived in then was so small.

When I got older, my father did it more often. He also touched me more and did more things to me. He never tried anything oral with me, but I had to touch him [his penis] frequently. Afterwards, he'd go back to his room to sleep, but I could never sleep after he left. Sometimes I tried to fight to get out of my father's hands but he was very strong and he had me in his grip so I couldn't move.

When I was about seven or eight, my father took photographs of me when he came to my bedroom. I didn't like it and I told him that it wasn't right. He just told me to lie down and put my legs up, then he took the photos. He also used to come into the bathroom whenever he felt like it, which I hated. If I went to the toilet, he'd come in to wash his hands.

When I was about 13, my father said he'd kill my mother if I didn't do it. So I went on letting him do it to protect my mother. He'd always said he'd wait until I was a woman – until I got my period – before doing it all

the way. Although my period started when I was 13, I was 15 when he raped me.

I was asleep when my father came into my bedroom at the usual time in the early morning. He closed the door, then took off my bedding and started undressing me. I said, 'What the hell are you doing?' He said he was going to make me his wife. I tried to stop him undressing me and told him I was going to yell because what he was doing wasn't right, so he put tape over my mouth to keep me quiet. He said the words that a man says to a woman when he makes love to her, like, 'You're lovely. You're sexy. You're young.' I fought him but he took my hands and pinned them against the bed so I couldn't move. I didn't have the strength to stop him so I tried to imagine it wasn't happening to me.

He forced himself into me. I tried to get him out of me, but I couldn't. It was very painful. I was bleeding a lot. I felt this couldn't be happening to me. It felt as if I was not there. It felt as if I was above my body looking down, seeing everything. Afterwards he took the tape off my mouth, then put his clothes back on and left. He was happy because he got what he wanted. I felt dirty. I felt different. I felt totally changed. I wondered what my mother would say if she knew what he'd done. That was the only time my father raped me, but I didn't realise then that it was rape.

The pain lasted for about an hour but the bleeding went on for two days. I felt a little bit strange and lost. I didn't know what all the bleeding was about. Only later when I read a book about how a woman changes when she's growing up did I realise that my father had broken my hymen and that doing this is the right of the man I marry. I felt I wasn't clean. 'Men don't want to marry a woman like me', I thought, and I knew I wouldn't be able to tell them how it happened.

Strangely, I was not worried about becoming pregnant and my father didn't seem to be worried about it either. He also didn't seem to worry that I might tell someone. It went on for ten years before my mother found out about it. Some people think men who do this must be drunk, but my father didn't drink.

I don't think I'd be here today if I'd had my father's child. He's a real bastard and to have had his child would've been the end. I would've gone mad. I believe in a woman's right to have an abortion if she doesn't want a child, but I didn't know about abortion then.

### **Telling the Secret**

I became more sure that what my father was doing was wrong when he started threatening to kill my mother if I didn't do it. So I told my school

friend about it. I was 13 at the time. She was young like me and I don't think she understood what I was telling her, so she couldn't say anything to help me. But she promised she'd never tell anybody.

Two years later when my father raped me, I told my friend about it again. This time she told her mother who wrote to my mother about it. When my mother told me she knew about it, I asked her to please send me away to another school because I couldn't study any more at home. But she wouldn't do this because she always wanted me at home. Only later did she tell me that finding out about it was quite a shock. I feel she must've known about it before, but she said she didn't.

I don't know why she didn't confront my father after she found out. Instead, she told me to make a noise by knocking something on to the floor when he tried to have sex with me to make him nervous that she'd hear. So that's what I did when he started touching me after that. It helped a bit; he stopped coming to my room as often as before.

I made my mother promise not to tell my brothers about it. I said I'd tell them myself when I was older. When I told her about two years ago that I was going to tell them about it, she admitted she'd told them long ago. It was a big shock to find out they'd known about it all those years. I now understand why their relationship with my father changed at a certain point; it was because my mother told them about it and they hated him for it.

Every time my father wanted to hit me after that, my brothers came between us, so it was always a big fight. Once when he wanted to hit me with a sjambok [a whip], one of them came between us and told him, 'If you want to hit her, hit me first!' This brother was very big by the time he was in standard ten [12th grade]. One time when he got very cross with my father, he picked him up in the air, then put him down saying, 'I'm not going to mess up my hands on you because you're dirt!'

I've never confronted my father by telling him, 'You raped me'. But I did tell him when I left my husband about a month ago that my mother had known for years that he'd had sex with me. He was shocked because he still thought it was our secret. He was cross about it and said it wasn't true.

My mother confronts my father and they fight about it a lot now. She often tells him that he ruined my life. He says I'm lying and that he didn't do anything to me, but my mother believes me. I'm angry with him for not admitting it.

### **The Abuse Continues**

After my mother found out about it, my father started hitting me when I didn't let him come to me. Because my mother knew, I started hitting him



back more and more. He'd slap me in the face and I'd slap him back. That made him more angry because he said a child must know her place, so he'd hit me even harder. This made me hit him back harder. Once I threw a chair at him that hit him. Another time I took a glass and threw it against his head. I threw lots of things at him. His finger was badly hurt once in one of our fights. When my father and I fight together, we both get hurt. When my life is threatened, I fight back. Sometimes I ran away because he is very strong when he's cross and it would have been all over if he'd caught me. But my mother always came to get me back home. He was still hitting me when I was 16 or 17.

My father had a sjambok because he needed a weapon to keep the blacks from coming into the yard whenever they wanted to. When I was 16, he hit me with it, which gave me big bruises. I also had a sjambok, so I hit him back with mine. He threw me out of the house after that fight. I had to pack my bags and leave.

#### *Reporting to the Police*

'I can't take my father's hitting me any more', I told a friend I went to stay with. 'I'm going to report him to the police and go to court about it.' After I reported it to them, I went to the doctor for an examination, and I told the minister of my church about my father's beatings [not the sexual assaults]. The minister put pressure on me to take back my police complaint. He said if I wanted to belong to his church, I mustn't prosecute my father. I asked him, 'How the hell can you say that to me?' He answered, 'You are just a child. What do you know about life?' I said, 'I know more about life than you do!' He told me to take back what I'd said to him and to go back home or he'd throw me out of the church. He showed no concern about my father beating me. So I stopped going to that church after that, although I've been back there over the past two years.

My mother found out where I was staying and asked me to please stop my report to the police and to come back home – for her sake. Doing that was, and still is, the most difficult thing I've ever done. I didn't talk to my father for months after that. I ignored him as if he was part of the furniture. Finally my mother said, 'Please talk to your father, even if it's just to say hello and goodbye', because the strain in the house was getting worse. So I started saying hello and goodbye to him, but that was all.

#### *The Violence Escalates*

After I started fighting back, throwing things at my father, locking my bedroom door when I slept at night and locking the bathroom door, his

violence kept getting worse. Whenever he's around, I still feel I have to lock every room I'm in.

One night when I was doing the dishes, my parents started fighting over me. My father was saying it was my mother's fault that I was such a bad girl. I got very angry with him. Why should it be my mother's fault? I am what I am and he's the one who made me that way. So I picked up a knife and I said, 'Stop this! It's not my mother's fault!' My father had a belt in his hand and he tried to hit me in my face with it. I ducked, and it hit my shoulder instead. I took hold of the knife and I told him, 'If you come near me, I'll stab you!' He came towards me, so I stabbed him, just missing his heart. His blood squirted on to me making my clothes all bloody. It felt so good to stab him. I'd like to get rid of the devil. I still feel that way and I have the strength to do it. But I also think, 'Why should I go to gaol [prison] for killing him?' If it wasn't for that, I'd have done it long ago.

With the blood still on my clothes, I ran for two or three kilometres [about a mile] to the home of two old friends of mine – Katerina and Marius – and I told them what had happened. Katerina slapped my face to try to calm me down. Then she called a doctor who gave me an injection to control me. She threw away my clothes because they were badly torn and lent me some of hers. I stayed with them for four days before my mother came to get me. I didn't want to go home, but she insisted.

My father had to go to a doctor for stitches. Doctors have to report things like this but I think my father knew him so he didn't report it.

Many years ago my mother told my father in front of me, 'I don't stay with you for love. I stay with you because you married me and now you have to look after me'. She doesn't have any choice. She's tried to get a job, but like me, she couldn't. I think she'd have left him if she could've. Now that my brothers and I have left home, my parents get on very well. But when I visit them, I know they'll fight that evening. I think my father is jealous of my mother's attention to me and my brothers. He doesn't like children, not even Christopher, his first grandson.

#### *Father's Motivation*

I think men do these things because they want to feel they are the boss. Perhaps my father felt he wasn't the boss enough because my mother is so strong and strong-willed. He wanted to dominate her but she didn't let him. Also, my father's mother was the boss when he was growing up, so this might have made him more afraid that my mother would dominate him. But I was young, so my father could feel powerful over me.

### A Close Call

A lot of women were being gang raped in Bothasig [a primarily Afrikaans suburb of Cape Town] when I was staying there last year. A car would stop next to them when they were walking on the street and a man would force them into the car with a rifle. Once when I was walking down the street with Christopher when he was three or four months old, a car pulled up next to me and a man with a pistol in his hand opened the car door and told me to get in. There were three other men in the car and the leg of one of them was outside the car on the ground. I took the door and slammed it back very hard on his leg, hurting him, as I said, 'You can shoot me, but I am *not* going to get into your car!' Then I just walked off.

I phoned the police afterwards and gave a description of three of the four men. They were Afrikaans and about my age, except one was older. The police caught them four or five weeks later. I had to go to the police station and look at them standing in a row from behind special mirrors where they couldn't see me. I was able to tell the police immediately who three of the four men were but I told them that I didn't want to go to court because I was afraid the men would threaten my life when they got out of prison. I read in the newspaper that they were all put in jail for five to eight years.

## THE AFTERMATH OF INCESTUOUS ABUSE

### Impact on Family Relationships

I feel I didn't have a big enough childhood. Suddenly I had to be grown up. I had dolls but I can't remember ever playing with them.

I have a lot of mixed feelings towards my father as well as being very cross with him. I'm also very cross with my mother because I realise now that she could've stopped it. For example, she could've sent me away from home. But instead, I had to stay in that house with my father until I finished matric. I had to look him in the eye every single day. I'm also angry with her because she never wants to talk about it. She says it's private. I told her it can't be private because it's ruining my life.

I think what happened to me was actually my mother's fault. My father would never have come to me if she'd given him what he wanted. If the woman keeps the man happy, he'll never do things like that unless there's something physically wrong with him or he's mad. It isn't fair of me to blame her, but I do because I'm her daughter.

### School Work

I used to get about 60–70 per cent for all my subjects before my mother found out when I was 15 about my father's abuse. I was so upset after she knew about it that I couldn't concentrate any more or listen to what the teacher was saying. I also forgot a lot of things because the day after my father had been with me, I'd tell myself, 'Forget about it!' and I forgot *everything*. When we had tests, I'd write my name on the paper and tell the teacher I didn't know what was going on, so I'd get nought [zero] for them.

I wanted to leave home to go to another school so I could study properly again, but my mother wouldn't let me. All my marks suddenly went down to 20 per cent and 30 per cent, and for one subject I only got 10 per cent! I only just managed to pass each year until I failed standard nine [11th grade] completely. My teachers knew I'd been a good student before because I'd been in the class for the best students, so they decided to put me in the matric class anyhow. But I failed the matric exams as well. I'd have thought that the teachers could have seen that something was wrong with me, if they'd cared.

I still have a memory problem. Sometimes I promise somebody I'll do something and the next moment I forget everything I just told them. I also forget where I put things.

### Negative Self-Image

I could never look at myself in the mirror. I didn't want to see the real me. I didn't like myself.

I was always the bad one to my father, and he blames my mother for this. But it's *his* fault that I changed from the girl I'd been into someone more harsh. I feel I'd have been a different person if he hadn't sexually abused me. I'd still have been innocent. I'd still think the world is a lovely place to live in. And I wouldn't have been so violent. I yell a lot when I'm angry and sometimes I feel better if I throw a glass against the wall. If my father hadn't sexually abused me, I think I wouldn't have so much anger in me.

I'm also a very negative and pessimistic person. I see all the negative things in myself. I often feel that whatever I do is wrong.

### Depression and Attempted Suicides

I'm depressed a lot. I started being depressed in high school when I was 15 after my mother found out what my father was doing to me. Now, if I wake up depressed in the morning, I stay depressed for two to three days. I've been depressed at least half my life.



I tried to end my life twice. The first time was when I was 16 or 17. I wanted to die because of the pressures and other difficulties I was having at home and at school. I had to act at home as if nothing was happening with my father because although my mother knew, my father didn't know this. He was still trying to hit me and he kept telling me I must iron, wash the dishes, the floors and the windows. My school work was getting bad. My teachers were getting cross with me. My friends didn't want to talk to me because my marks were so bad. Everything was going wrong in my life.

I swallowed about 30 headache pills. I thought I'd go to sleep and die. When I woke up the next morning, I vomited for a long time. I realised this could give me kidney failure so I went to the doctor and told him what I'd done. He put a pipe into my stomach and emptied it, then checked my kidneys and said they were fine.

The next time I tried to commit suicide was in December last year [1990]. Once again, everything was going wrong in my life. I'd never been happy. Now that I was married, I still wasn't happy. My son was getting his teeth and screaming the whole time. My husband was drunk a lot and sleeping around. His family was giving me problems. So I felt it wasn't worth living. I felt I wasn't a good mother because I got cross with Christopher for everything. I thought if I died, my husband would get a better mother for him.

This time I drank more than 100 vitamin pills, headache pills and tranquillisers. Once again it didn't work and once again I told the doctor what I'd done. He sent me to hospital again; I was there for two days. I nearly had kidney failure but they stopped it.

#### *Relationships and Sexuality*

My parents didn't allow me to have just any boyfriend visit me when I lived at home. But after my father threw me out of the house when I was 16, I went out with one man after the other. I was looking for someone to love me and I felt I had to prove to myself I was woman enough to have boyfriends. But I didn't sleep with any of them until I was 17. After I left school, I started drinking at parties and sleeping around with one man after the other. With some, it was just one night, with others, one or two months. I was trying to get them to love me.

I once knew the names of all the men I'd slept with. There were about 20 to 30 of them in about two years. Three-quarters of them were much older than me. Some of them were in their forties when I was 19. I realise now I was looking for a father figure who'd love me for who I am. When men got me into bed with them, they made me feel like a woman. They

made me feel I was perfect. But after the sex was over, they'd leave and never want to see me again. The relationship would last only if I didn't have sex with them. Afrikaner men are like that. All my boyfriends were the same.

Sex was fine while I was having it, but I always felt guilty afterwards. I didn't know if it was right to be doing it without being married. I didn't use any birth control and the men didn't either. I had orgasms with some of them but not with others. Some were good lovers and others weren't. Then suddenly I stopped having orgasms until I was married.

When I was 19, I had a six-month relationship with a 29-year-old man called Dawie [pseudonym]. I still wasn't using birth control then, and after we'd been together a few months, I fell pregnant. I was happy about it, but I only earned R170 [£27/\$57] a month as a waitress, so I realised I'd have to marry Dawie if I wanted to bring up the child. I also wanted to marry him because he was a very nice guy, nice-looking and with lots of money.

When I told Dawie about being pregnant, he didn't believe it was his baby because he knew I'd been sleeping around. I knew it was his because when I get attached to someone, I only sleep with that person. When Dawie and I were out having dinner in a restaurant six days later, he got very angry and drunk and said I was trying to trap him into marriage with someone else's baby. He hit me and threw me against the wall in front of everyone, then he hit me in my stomach with his fist. I collapsed and my stomach suddenly became very sore. I saw the blood coming down my legs. Dawie had left the restaurant but luckily there was a hospital in the same building and a girlfriend came to take me there.

When I woke up in hospital, I realised that Dawie had succeeded in getting me to lose my baby. I think that's what he wanted, but I felt it was my fault. I felt that God was punishing me for getting pregnant out of wedlock. I was in hospital for two weeks because of all the complications.

Previously Dawie became cross very easily when he was drunk and he had been a little bit violent, but not like the time in the restaurant. I just ignored his violence towards me before that incident because I thought, 'This is the way men are'. Most Afrikaans men beat up the women they're involved with. Dawie called his attack on me an accident. He wanted to come back to me, but I told him I wasn't interested. I didn't sleep with anybody for a long time after that.

#### *Marriage*

I met Andrew when I was 20 and he was 22. I found him to be totally different from the South African men I'd been out with before. He really cared for me. We were just friends in the beginning. Then suddenly he

held my hand and the next week he kissed me. He really took his time. Then he took me to his parents to show me to them. That's when I knew he was serious about me. But his family didn't like me because I came from a poor white area and they don't like Afrikaans people. They also said I was a gold-digger. This made me cross because I come from a very good background. The only thing wrong with my family is what my father did to me.

I told Andrew about my father before we slept together. I told him that he must realise I'd been very affected by my father's sexual abuse and that it would cause problems for us. I also told him that I was a very difficult person. He just said, 'It doesn't bother me', as if he understood. But now I know he didn't.

Andrew wanted to marry me and take me away from home because I was so unhappy there. We slept together two months after we started going out together, and we married just over two years ago when I was 21. Everything was fine between us for the first two months. After that, Andrew started acting like my father. He felt the house was his and that he was the boss. I hated it. I did whatever I felt like doing in my house and I told him he was *not* my boss.

Although Andrew started out being so different from the Afrikaans men I'd been out with, he turned bad because of his family and his drinking. He's a beer drinker who would sometimes drink two or three beers in the morning, and he'd drink a lot more after he got off from work.

Sex with my husband was also fine for the first two months. But then I fell pregnant, which I found difficult to accept. It was too soon. That's when we started having sex problems. I didn't want sex with him because my dreams and nightmares from the past started coming back. Every time my husband came near me, I thought for a second that it was my father, so I'd push him away.

I was so big with my pregnancy that the doctor told me it would be dangerous for me to have sex for six months before the birth. When I was five months pregnant and I could feel Christopher inside me, I started losing all interest in sex. And being so big, I didn't feel beautiful any more. I was also very tired a lot of the time. So my husband and I had less and less sex. We only made love about once a month while I was pregnant. He was very fed up and frustrated by this because men need sex more than us.

I was also very tired *after* Christopher was born. When Andrew wanted to make love, I'd say, 'I can't. I'm tired and the child is screaming.' I felt cold towards him. I didn't even want him to kiss me or touch me any more. Every time we had sex, I was disgusted because he felt like my father. All the feelings I had when my father did it came back so I'd push him away and tell him not to touch me and to lie far away from me when

we were in bed. He would leave the house angry, and come home happy. That's when I realised he was sleeping around.

One time I found a cigarette in the car with lipstick on it. Another time I found someone else's earring there. I told my husband that I knew what he was doing. At first I actually felt glad I didn't have to have sex with him any more. After that I only slept with him once or twice when I felt like it. When I didn't want it, I told him to get it somewhere else.

I left my husband once because our marriage wasn't working. When I came back to him he kept on running around with other women because I couldn't give him what he wanted. The few times he slept with me, he gave me a sickness. I'm still trying to find out what it was.

We went for marriage counselling but I stopped going when my husband went on sleeping around. By then I thought, 'Why should I give it to him when he's getting it somewhere else?' I decided it wasn't worth it to lie on my back for him and feel worse afterwards. I was also turned off by his hitting me, his drinking and all the fighting. After a while it seemed as if he didn't need sex from me any more because he got plenty elsewhere.

I was glad that Christopher was a boy because if I'd had a girl, I'd have always been afraid of what my husband might do to her. I'm going to bring him up so he'll never do the things his grandfather did to me.

### *Battery*

My husband started hitting me about two months after I got pregnant. He hit me because he was very jealous. Everywhere I go, men always give me attention. He didn't like that because he thought of me as his. After he beat me, he'd always cry and say he was sorry and that he'd never do it again. He was just like a little boy at those times. I'd forgive him and then he'd do it again.

We were out one evening when I was two months pregnant, and a man who was playing in the orchestra recognised me and played a lot of love songs to me. Then he brought me wine and came to sit next to me and talked to me and my husband. When my husband and I went back to our hotel room, he was drunk and started hitting me. I hit him back, as I always did when he slapped me around because I didn't feel it was right for him to hit me. We made a lot of noise so some people came in and stopped him from hitting me even more. By then I had bruises on my face and all over my body, my eyes and lips were swollen, and my nose felt like it was broken. Andrew had also hurt me on my tummy so I was afraid of losing the baby again.

The people who had stopped our fight asked me if I wanted to press charges against my husband. Stupidly, I said 'no' because I didn't have the guts to do that, but I was very cross with him for weeks afterwards.

My husband also hit me on my stomach when I was seven months pregnant. Because of the heaviness of the baby during my pregnancy, I fell about four times, and was in a lot of pain. After Christopher was born I found out that my back had been hurt by the beatings or the falls.

Andrew hit me on my stomach again a few weeks ago because I wanted to leave him. I folded over like this [Nida demonstrated the position] and couldn't do anything for a while because it took my wind away. But when I recovered, I started hitting him back.

#### *Post-Partum Depression*

I suffered from post-partum blues after Christopher was born. The nightmares about my father started up again when he was a month or two old. I was very depressed. I cried a lot. All sorts of things upset me. Christopher got me down. Andrew's drinking got me down. His family got me down. Andrew didn't want to sleep with me and I didn't want to sleep with him. We were fighting a lot. I told my husband that I wanted to get help but he didn't like the idea. A doctor gave me a two-week supply of tranquillisers which made me feel a lot calmer and better, but she said she couldn't give me any more because they're addictive.

#### *Ending the Marriage*

Andrew and I were married for two years and four months, and we were only happy for about the first two months. When I told him I was going to leave him, he drove off in his car and brought his stepfather and twin brother back with him to fight his battle for him. I was alone against the three of them. Andrew didn't want me to leave him, but his family did, and they wanted Andrew to have my child. Andrew isn't interested in bringing up Christopher. He could never do it with all his drinking. He only says he wants the child to be mean to me. Christopher didn't even recognise him when he came to visit me a few days ago. He actually screamed when Andrew tried to pick him up.

On the night I planned to leave, Andrew's family wanted to physically take my son away from me. Andrew had told his parents about what my father had done to me, so they said, 'How can someone who is disturbed like Nida look after a child?' They said that a sane person doesn't do things the way I do them. I felt very hurt and angry, and I took a knife out of the kitchen drawer and I said, 'If you take my son away, I'll kill all of you!' I could see I'd frightened them. People are afraid of me when I'm very cross – even Andrew is – so they left.

I told my parents that I had to leave my husband, and I told my father that it was his fault that my marriage wasn't working. I feel I'd have

behaved differently in my marriage if he hadn't sexually abused me. Then I went back home, packed my bags, and my parents picked me up and took me to their house.

I feel very threatened now. I'm in a corner and I'll use any means necessary to fight back for my son's sake. I don't want Christopher to become like his father – always drinking and jolling [partying] and with no sense of responsibility. I had nightmares about my husband and his family poisoning Christopher's mind against me. If my husband's family had taken him away that night, I'd never have seen him again. I'm afraid that if Andrew gets the chance, he'll take Christopher to Britain. Although he has the money to look after my son, he doesn't behave like a father to him. He picks him up, tells him he loves him, then puts him down again, and that's it. English people seem cold towards children.

My lawyer has now filed for my divorce and sent a letter through the court to my husband telling him he must pay me maintenance. Andrew also has a lawyer who is opposing the divorce. His family is planning to say in court that I'm mad. They want to have me put in a mad house. The problem is that I told Andrew everything about myself and my past which will be used against me in court, especially about what my father did.

#### *Pessimism about Future Relationships*

Every time I'm with a lot of people, the men always want to take me out, even though I'm not interested in men at the moment. Two people have told me that it's because I'm beautiful, so perhaps that is why it happens. But I know they want to sleep with me and then leave me. If they want to stay with me, the relationship doesn't work out for other reasons.

#### *Current Relationships*

When I divorced my husband, I didn't want to go to my parents' house but it was the only place I had to go. My father kept telling me he was my boss because I was living in his house. It wasn't long before he said that my child was in the way, I was in the way, and my mother was in the way. So I said, 'Fine. I'm leaving!' My mother was cross with my father for throwing me out of the house again but she had to keep quiet because otherwise he would've thrown her out too. She was also cross with me for leaving when my son was very ill. He had a high temperature and he was coughing and bringing up all his food.

My son and I went to stay with one lady friend and then another. We will stay here for a few weeks and then we must move again, though I don't know where.

## THE STRUGGLE TO HEAL

I decided to go to an incest survivor group at Safeline [a facility to help incest survivors and perpetrators] several months ago. After being in the group, which meets every two weeks, it became more difficult for me to see my father. I was so angry with him I couldn't even speak to him. But I have to see him if I want to see my mother, which means I see him about once a week.

I'm starting to feel much better since I've been going to the survivor group. I haven't been able to go for a few months now because it's quite far away and I have no transport. When I'm divorced I hope I can stay in the group until I'm healed.

Everything is getting much better since I left my husband. I can feel the change in me. I feel more 'me' because I know I have to look after myself now. When I get some money I'm going to dress myself up and put on make-up again. I didn't like dressing myself nicely before because I felt I was dirty and that my life was wrong.

I want to be friends with men after my divorce. I like going out and I hate being on my own. I don't think I'll have more children, but one thing I'm absolutely sure of: if I marry again, I won't have a child immediately.

Most of my life I've been unhappy and most of my life I did favours for other people. When I ran away from my parents' house, I only went back because my mother wanted it. I always did things to keep her happy. Now I'm the one who is most important in my life, and if I don't want to do something, I won't. From now on, I'm going to keep myself happy, not someone else.

## AFTERWORD

I located Nida Webber in Newcastle, Natal, in 1993, and sent her my edited version of her interview. After making minor changes, she gave me the following update on her life.

I'm glad my story will be published because I believe it can help someone else. But reading the interview made me very unhappy because it made me realise how miserable my life had been. I'm trying to be happy in Newcastle. I can only be happy if I leave my old life alone where it was – in Cape Town.

My life changed dramatically after I was on the MNET programme on incest two years ago.<sup>1</sup> My entire family and many friends saw it on

TV, and I lost my family's support after that. It seems like they believed my father. Up to this day, they haven't even tried to reach me to ask me how I am. A nephew is the only one of them who cares.

But I've found happiness in Newcastle. His name is Louis and he's 43. He has three children aged 17, 15 and 13. We're very happy together but I have a hard time communicating with his children. We want to get married but we decided to wait until his children are responsible for themselves in three years' time. Louis means everything to me. He's my protector, my lover, my friend, my life!! I would rather die than live without him. He understands me perfectly.

Right now I'm not having the nightmares I used to have, and luckily, I can't even remember them! But I'm still afraid of darkness. It makes me frightened and insecure. I keep the bedside lamp on the whole night when Louis works nightshift. I also don't have eating problems right now and I've lost about 22 kilos [48lbs] since I saw you.

Christopher is getting big now; he'll be four in February [1994]. I'm glad I kept him. He talks a lot and he's a joy in my life. His father has also changed for the better. He stopped drinking and he's living with a girlfriend now. We've both grown up in the last two years. The Almighty has strange ways to teach us about life.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

**Blaming the Mother**

In her study of 40 survivors of father-daughter incest, Judith Herman found that, 'With few exceptions, the daughters seemed more tolerant of their fathers' shortcomings and more forgiving of their failures than they were towards their mothers, or themselves' (1981, p. 82). This statement clearly applies to Nida Webber who said that she felt her mother was more blame-worthy than her stepfather for his sexual assaults. Her feelings are consonant with a long sexist tradition of mother-blame that permeates the incest literature according to which it is the wife's duty to satisfy her husband sexually, regardless of her reasons for not wanting to do so (he may be a selfish and inept lover, for example) (see Herman, 1981; Mrazek and Bentovim, 1981).

Despite Nida's harsh judgement of her mother for trying to avoid having sex with her husband, she firmly rejected the notion that she herself was duty-bound to keep her husband happy at her expense or to submit to his sexual desires. However, she also realised that blaming her mother was not fair.

Survivors of father-daughter incest often blame their mothers even more than their fathers because they have internalised the patriarchal notion that their mothers have a greater obligation than their fathers to protect them from harm, including harm done to them by their fathers. Because most young children experience their mothers as all-powerful, it is difficult for them to comprehend emotionally – even as adults – how powerless many women are in relation to their husbands. Even those who enjoy some power, as Nida's mother clearly did (for example, she was taller than her husband and very strong; she contradicted his claim to being her boss; she managed to defeat some of his sexual advances; she retaliated successfully the one time he beat her; she played a vital economic role in the household), are usually significantly less powerful than their husbands. In this case, for example, Nida's mother appears to have been raped many times by her husband, who also beat her once; she was subjected to his constant macho chest-thumping about his right to be the boss and women's duty to be maids; and she felt unable to leave him for economic reasons, despite her intense aversion to him at times.

### **Colluding Mothers**

Herman drew the following conclusion from her study of father-daughter incest:

Mothers who are strong, healthy, and competent do not tolerate incest. But mothers who have been rendered unusually powerless within their families, for whatever reason, often tolerate many forms of abuse, including sexual abuse of their children.... Maternal collusion in incest, when it occurs, is a measure of maternal powerlessness. (1981, pp. 47-9)

As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, the mother of Elsa Foster and Marie Malan certainly fits Herman's portrait of a woman who was unusually powerless in her family. But Nida Webber's mother tolerated her husband's raping and beating Nida despite the fact that she appears to have been 'strong, healthy, and competent'.

For example, Nida described her mother as strong physically, as larger than her husband, and as returning his blows the one time he hit her. Mrs Webber also stood up to her husband's claim to being the boss of their home, told him in no uncertain terms why she was staying with him and insisted that it was his duty to take care of her. Although Nida did not make specific reference to her mother's health, presumably she would have done so had her mother suffered from poor health.

There are several reasons for inferring that Nida's mother colluded in her daughter's abuse. After Mrs Webber was informed about her husband's sexually abusive behaviour, she merely advised Nida to knock something on to the floor whenever her stepfather started sexually assaulting her. She also refused Nida's request to transfer to a school that would have enabled Nida to get away from her stepfather; repeatedly persuaded Nida to return home after running away to escape further abuse; and put intense pressure on Nida to withdraw her charges against her stepfather for his beatings.

Nida said that she feels 'totally cross' with her mother because she believes that she could have stopped her stepfather's physical violence and incestuous assaults. Nida concedes that her mother tried to stop the beatings 'once or twice when I was older', on the grounds that, "she's too old for that". But the question is why Nida's mother didn't consider her husband's violence and sexual assaults on her daughter unacceptable at any age.

Nida offers an alternative theory to Herman's to explain why her stepfather insisted on making her 'his wife' against her will. She suggests that men with wives they cannot dominate to their satisfaction are motivated to seek out their daughters to satisfy their desire for a sexual power-relationship. Herman, on the other hand, maintains that mothers only fail to protect their daughters when they are powerless to do so (e.g., too weak, incapacitated, unavailable or oppressed).

While these two descriptions of marital relationships in incest families may seem diametrically opposed, both have merit, and both are useful in understanding some of the cases included in this book. In Nida's case, it seems clear that her mother was capable of protecting her daughter, but failed to do so.

There were several others besides Nida's mother who colluded in her stepfather's abusive behaviour towards her. These include the minister to whom Nida reported her stepfather's beatings who threatened to eject her from 'his' church if she prosecuted her father; the police, who appear to have taken a completely passive stance when Nida failed to follow through on her report to them; and her teachers, who failed to find out why her grades at school had plummeted so abruptly. Such institutional collusion with incestuous abuse and other forms of child abuse is common.

### **Other Issues**

Many other interesting and important topics are raised by Nida's story. Although she always refers to her stepfather as her 'father', there is considerable evidence that stepfathers are much more predisposed than biological fathers to sexually abuse their daughters (e.g., see Russell, 1986). In our

small sample of 20 cases, four of the incest perpetrators were biological fathers and six were stepfathers. Given that only a minority of girls have stepfathers, six stepfathers represents a sizeable overrepresentation.

Like Nida, many incest survivors respond to incestuous abuse by becoming promiscuous in adolescence or adulthood. Research psychologist John Briere explains that because of 'survivors' experience[s] of the value others place on their sexual aspects', many, like Nida, assume that 'sex is the best way to initiate or sustain an intimate relationship, receive (superficially) caring attention, or gain interpersonal power' (1992, p. 55). Briere goes on to note that 'the survivor's sexual value is often relatively transient for many of those to whom she wishes to relate, resulting in eventual experiences of abandonment or rejection' (1992, pp. 53, 55). Briere's observations could have been written for Nida, so precisely do they describe many of her experiences with men.

In contrast, many other survivors react to their abuse by becoming repulsed by sex, which creates severe problems for them in their intimate relationships (Briere, 1992, p. 34). Both Elsa Foster and Marie Malan exemplify this response (see Chapters 3 and 4), particularly Marie whose intense aversion made sex with her husband virtually unendurable for her. Why some survivors follow one path rather than another is a complex question which research has not yet resolved.

Research has demonstrated that incest survivors are at greater risk than women with no incest history of being raped and beaten in marriage (see Briere, 1992; Russell, 1990). Nida was beaten by her husband and by a lover. The beatings in both cases were particularly associated with her pregnancies. This also is a common finding in the research literature (see Pagelow, 1984, pp. 314-16).

I wonder how many women readers can identify with Nida's uncomplicated and brazen desire to kill her stepfather, and with her feelings of gratification at nearly having done so. If the words in the epigraph that opens this chapter had been spoken by a man, few people would be surprised. But coming from the lips of a woman and an incest survivor challenges common stereotypes of both incest survivors and women. Nida's violent resistance to her stepfather will be further discussed at the end of Chapter 6 after readers have become acquainted with the stories of other survivors who were violent resisters.

### **Nida's Perceptions of Afrikaners**

Like several of the Afrikaner incest survivors interviewed, Nida characterised her stepfather as exceedingly patriarchal and authoritarian. 'If my

father tells you it's raining outside when the sun is shining, it's raining', she declared. And she remarked on his repeated assertions that he was the boss in 'his' home and that females were the maids. This term rings with particular significance in South Africa where the role of maid is especially denigrated because maids (usually referred to as 'servants') are typically black women.

Nida also maintained that 'Most Afrikaans men beat up the women they're involved with'. I believe that very few English-speaking South Africans would make the same generalisation about men in their ethnic group. This is not to say that English-speaking South African men are not batterers. Many are, including Nida's British husband. But I suspect that wife battering is less common among English-speaking South Africans. This conjecture is more fully examined in Chapter 7.

According to Nida, Afrikaner men, including her boyfriends, left her as soon as she had sex with them. Whether English-speaking South African men are any less inclined to act in this sexist way, I do not know; none of the other survivors commented on this manifestation of a common sexual conquest mentality.

In the next two chapters, two Afrikaner sisters describe their lives of abuse. Elsa Foster, the elder of the two, is particularly eloquent about her perceptions of some of the differences between Afrikaner and English-speaking South African men.



### 3 'Kill Me, Rather!': Elsa Foster's Story

'I used to beg Jacobus and Hoffie to rather kill me. I told them they could do anything to me afterwards but they had to kill me first.'

#### INTRODUCTION

Twenty-six-year-old Elsa Foster (a pseudonym) volunteered for my study after her sister, Marie Malan, told her about her own interview with me. Elsa was married to an English-speaking South African with whom she had a five-year-old son, Pierre, when I interviewed her in 1992. She longed for more children, but had become sterile after having a contraceptive injection.

Elsa was born in Cape Town in 1966, the second of four children. Her eldest brother, Willie, was a divorced 27-year-old policeman; Marie was 25 years old, divorced and childless; and her youngest sister, Beatrix, was a married 21-year-old, with one child. Elsa resided with her family in Parow, a predominantly Afrikaans suburb of Cape Town.

Despite doing well at school academically, Elsa left after completing standard eight (10th grade). She was working as a 'day-mother' looking after children of parents at her church when interviewed. She was also taking care of 'problem-children' on a voluntary basis. Elsa's husband, Ted, who had also left school after completing standard eight, worked as a senior telephonist at a post office.

Neither Elsa nor Marie knew their biological father's occupation in their early years, but he worked as a store manager at the time of the interview (he had remarried their mother 18 years after walking out on her). Their mother, Margaret Malan, was the manager of a department in a hospital; she had previously worked as a nurse, a kitchen supervisor and a laundry manager. Elsa and Marie's parents, who had married when they were 20 years old, had both dropped out of school after standard seven (9th grade).

Elsa's first stepfather, Hoffie, ran a radio repair business from home. She believed that her second stepfather, Spike, had been a boilermaker for a time, but he had also worked at whatever jobs he could find, such as

caretaking and manual work. Elsa reported that he kept losing his jobs because of his drinking problem.

Elsa described herself as middle class although, based on the information she provided about her own and her parents' occupations and education, most sociologists would probably consider her lower class or lower middle class.

Abraham Malan, Elsa's father, 'walked out on us' in 1970 when she was only four years old. She saw him until the age of six, so she had 'some memory of him as a little child', but after that, 'We had no contact at all' until her parents' remarriage many years later. Abraham and Margaret's first marriage lasted six years. Three years later, Mrs Malan started living with Fritz Hofmeyer, nicknamed Hoffie, whom she had first met 'in hospital after his legs were paralysed in a car accident when he was 16'. Mrs Malan was an 18-year-old nurse at the time and Hoffie was one of her patients. They married in 1974 after living together for a year.

After Mrs Malan's second marriage, she and her family left Cape Town and went to live with Hoffie's mother on a farm – a small plot of land in the Transvaal. When Elsa was eight years old, they moved to their own home in Welkom, a hotbed of reactionary Afrikaner politics in a province called the Orange Free State, about two hours' drive from Bloemfontein. Mrs Malan finally returned to Cape Town in 1980 when Elsa was 15 years old, and moved in with her mother.

Elsa reported that Hoffie, the major perpetrator in her story, 'was severely disabled' by the car accident, but that 'he was far from incapacitated'.

Although my stepfather was in a wheelchair, he was very mobile. He could move on the floor quicker than a child can crawl. He drove a car. He bathed and dressed himself. He got on the bed by himself. He did races in his wheelchair and even did crossbow shooting.

Mrs Malan's second marriage ended in 1979 when Elsa was 14. She married her third husband, Graham, nicknamed Spike, that same year. Six years later when Elsa was 20, Mrs Malan's third marriage ended in divorce. In 1988, she remarried her first husband, Abraham Malan, who had to divorce his second wife in order to remarry his former wife.

Mrs Malan's second husband, Hoffie, became a Mormon when Elsa was about ten years old. 'We all became Mormons when Hoffie did,' Elsa explained, 'and that's what I still am. We had no religion before that.' However, Hoffie 'wasn't a very religious man; there was no talk about God or religious practices in our home. Very few Afrikaners were

Mormon when we first joined the church,' Elsa noted, 'but quite a lot are now.'

Elsa's sister Marie described their father, Abraham Malan, as 'a boer' and 'a real Afrikaner' whose 'whole family is Afrikaans'. Their first stepfather, Hoffie, who sexually abused both Elsa and Marie, is also Afrikaans. Although their mother is an English-speaking South African, Elsa described her family as Afrikaans, but bilingual. They spoke Afrikaans at home until the family moved to Cape Town when Elsa was 14 years old, switching to English when they moved in with Elsa's maternal grandmother because she, like Elsa's mother, was an English-speaking South African. However, Mrs Malan still speaks Afrikaans with her husband Abraham.

Elsa and Marie's accounts of their experiences of incestuous abuse and battering provide an unusual opportunity to try to understand why two sisters, only one year apart in age and raised in the same home, reacted to being raped by the same stepfather in such dramatically different ways – Elsa with rage, bellicosity and a remarkable degree of recovery, and Marie with compliance, despair and self-destruction. This topic will be discussed at the end of Marie's chapter.

A crude family tree has been provided for Elsa and Marie to minimise confusion when reading about their multiple perpetrators and the multiple marriages of their parents.

## ELSA'S STORY

### Family Background

You never asked Hoffie questions and you never challenged him. You just said, 'Ja, Pa' [Yes, Father]. If you asked him why, you got a double hiding. What he said was law and you accepted it. With God you have an option, with Hoffie you didn't.

Hoffie was a rich man, but he never gave a cent to mum. He forced her to earn the money to feed us because we were her kids. He didn't believe in using a bank so he had money all over the house. He used to have notes rolled into those big panado [aspirin] bottles which we used to steal.

I was only five years old when I took care of my youngest sister Beatrix, and when I was eight, I started looking after Marie and my brother Willie as well. My mother left home at five in the morning and only got home at six at night, so I had to do all the household tasks like cooking, cleaning and looking after Beatrix, as well as going to school. I

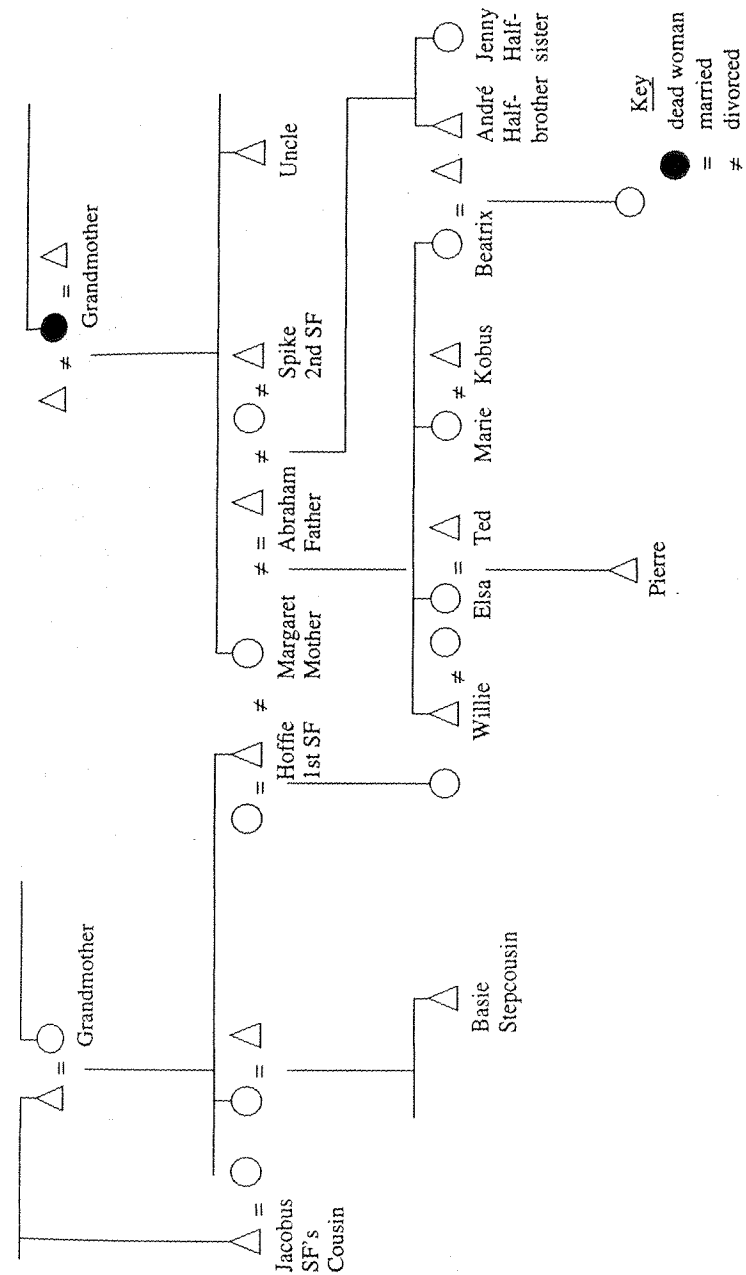


Figure 3.1 Family Tree – Elsa Foster and Marie Malan



was very grown up for my age. When I was 13, I acted like a woman of 23. I never had a child's life. I never played with toys. I had to be a mother.

Menstruation was a forbidden subject in my family; my mum didn't explain what happens when you get it. She gave me English books to read about it but I didn't understand English well enough, so I was shocked to find out about it when I started menstruating at eight years old. I was embarrassed about my body and very conscious of its changes.

Hoffie was the eldest son of seven or eight kids. He had a very domineering personality. You had to do what he said exactly the way he wanted it or he'd punish you. If I heard his car stop outside the house, I'd try to hide, even though he punished me for hiding. Whatever I did was immaterial. He was a very violent and sick man.

His physical abuse started when I was about seven. His being in a wheelchair made it worse because although we could've got away, we didn't dare. If he said, 'Go to the room. You're going to get a hiding', we went to the room. When he gave us a hiding he made us strip naked, then he'd hit us with a sjambok. Being naked was more embarrassing than the hiding, but getting a beating was my biggest fear. I got a beating with a sjambok every day of my life.

Often he'd start by beating up my mum. Then he'd line up the four kids in the kitchen. When my mum ran outside to get away from him, he'd take a gun and hold it to Beatrix's head and tell my mum, 'If you don't come inside, I'll shoot your child.' My mum would come in and Hoffie would beat her up so badly she had to go to hospital time and time again. He often blackmailed her into doing what he wanted by threatening to shoot us if she didn't.

Hoffie wouldn't let my mum spend any money on us. We didn't know what it was to have sweets because he didn't allow this. He'd beat my mum up if she brought us a sweet. We never got gifts or new clothes because he'd take my mum's money. We always wore other people's clothes when we were kids.

Hoffie didn't allow us to be close to my mother. We weren't allowed to hug her. He'd threaten her with a gun if she kissed us hello or goodbye. He'd take the magazine out of his revolver and he'd sit and click it. It worked on our nerves and we were petrified he'd shoot us.

My mum is a very soft person and a walkover. Everybody uses her. I think she took Hoffie's abuse for so long to protect us kids. She'd rather take the beatings than have us get them. But he'd beat us up anyhow, sometimes in front of her but mostly it was behind her back.

The main thing that made Hoffie angry with my mother was that she couldn't give him a child. He beat her continuously because of this. He never accepted us as his kids and he complained that he had to raise us. He'd speak about us to my mum as 'your bastard children', and he kept telling us that our 'bastard of a father' had left us.

Hoffie beat up my brother Willie very badly once because he had a cup of coffee which he wasn't allowed. We never did anything right as far as Hoffie was concerned. We got beaten up for playing on the lawn or for being in the lounge. Beating us was his way of getting pleasure and taking out his frustrations. He used to line us up in my mother's bathroom when she was bathing. He'd block the bathroom door with his wheelchair and start to drown my mother in front of us. Beatrix was only two years old at the time. If we screamed or cried when he did this, he'd beat us up.

After my mum had left for work in the morning, Hoffie used to lock all the food in the cupboard so we couldn't eat. At night he'd get us to pack it back on the shelves before my mother got home. There were days when he'd sit and eat tins of mushrooms while we had nothing to eat all day. It was his greatest pleasure to have us sit and watch him eat. He'd laugh and smirk and say, 'Don't you want some?' The next moment he'd tell us that if he ever caught us stealing food, he'd beat us. But he gave us a beating at the end of every day anyhow. If he couldn't find a specific reason to beat me he'd say I deserved it for anything that I might do in the future.

I was very thin and undernourished as a child. By the time I was 13, I couldn't cope any more. I didn't mix with other kids at school. I never had a friend. I had a major problem with boys. I withdrew emotionally because I couldn't speak about what was happening to me at home. One of my teachers picked up on some of this and started bringing food for me every day. I found this very embarrassing and I started staying away from school.

Eventually our teachers found out we were being starved at home because we stole food and money to buy food. One of our teachers came to the house one day when Hoffie wasn't there and said she wanted to see inside the cupboards. We tried to stop her but we couldn't. Then she asked us when last we'd eaten and we lied that it was recently. We knew that if we didn't lie, Hoffie would beat us up. But she figured out that there were drastic problems in our home so she called in the welfare department.

Some of Hoffie's family who were at home that day told him about what had happened, so he beat us up for getting the family into trouble. My mum had broken down completely by then and she told the welfare people that she was too scared to leave Hoffie. She wasn't a person any more, she was a wreck! She lived from day to day. She got up, worked,

came home, took everything that happened at home, then went back to work. She carried on very mechanically. The welfare department said they'd take us away if she didn't leave HOFFIE, so she finally did. I don't think she had a mind left by that time.

The plan was for us to slowly get things out of the house, then sneak out and leave when HOFFIE was out. But he came home drunk the night we planned to leave, and he beat up my mother. He slapped Beatrix in the face even though she'd had dental work done that day. There was a lot of shouting, then HOFFIE went into the lounge and beat up Willie very badly. When Willie went flying across the room, my mother told us to take our stuff and get into her car. Then she attacked HOFFIE to get Willie away from him. When we finally got out we'd had to leave almost everything behind. I only had two dresses when we left. My mum had four kids and she was earning only R200 (£32/\$67) a month at the time. So we landed up on the streets with nowhere to go.

Although HOFFIE was a rich man, he demanded half of my mother's money after she left him. He also threatened to kill her, so she had to ask for police protection. We kids were kept in boarding school for months and not allowed out of our teachers' sight for fear of what HOFFIE would do to us.

I think HOFFIE was so cruel because of his accident. He couldn't accept being confined to a wheelchair, so he took it out on his wife and children who couldn't fight him. I think beating us up gave him strength. The more he beat his kids and wife up, the stronger and the more manly he felt.

## INCEST AND OTHER SEXUAL ABUSE

### HOFFIE

There was no affection from HOFFIE that I can remember. My memories start with him touching me when I was seven. He came into our room when I was sleeping and started touching me all over, including my breasts and genitals. I just lay there. I knew what he was doing wasn't fatherly love because he'd never given us that, and I knew it was wrong. But I just froze and pretended to be asleep. I don't think I even breathed. Worst of all was that my two sisters and brother were in the same room when this happened. I had to be very quiet because if my brother woke up, he'd blame me for what HOFFIE was doing. For a long time I felt I was the one in the wrong and that I must've looked for the abuse.

I was very young when I started developing breasts. This was a terrible problem for me because HOFFIE would grab at them and my privates when

I walked past him. He sexually abused me about every second day, though sometimes he touched me two or three times a day. As I got older, it kept getting more serious. He started abusing me very badly when I was eight. The first time he put his finger up me, it hurt terribly. The pain was worse than the pain of giving birth. It was so sore I wanted to die. Soon after that he grabbed my hands and forced me to hold his penis. I screamed and begged him to let me go, but he told me it was my duty so he could make me a woman. This made me want to kill him. I had a lot of hate in me at such a young age.

HOFFIE's words to me were, 'I'll show you what a woman is supposed to be like'. He believed what he was doing was natural and that every father has the right to do it to his daughter. He'd tell me, 'Every father does this to make his little girl grow up'. He still believes this. His words have stuck in my mind to this day.

The first time HOFFIE did it, I felt dirty and I went straight to the bathroom afterwards. I washed my hands with some rough salt to try to get his stuff [semen] off, and it made them bleed. I scrubbed the rest of myself red, then burst out crying. But I never cried in front of HOFFIE.

I couldn't cope for a couple of days after that. I didn't know how to act. I couldn't tell my mother because there was no bond between us. I just went on as though life was normal, but I went blank inside. The abuse didn't develop gradually over the years. It was just a matter of weeks before HOFFIE suddenly started doing more serious things. I felt dirty and scrubbed myself after every time.

I don't remember how old I was when HOFFIE started calling me to his bedroom. He said he was going to make me feel like a woman, then he started having oral sex and trying to have intercourse with me. If he didn't succeed in getting me into bed by hitting me with a sjambok, he'd take out his gun and tell me he'd shoot me if I didn't do what he wanted. Then I'd do it – except for intercourse. He often tried to do that but I kicked and screamed and bit him. I went berserk. When he took out his gun at these times I decided he could kill me rather than make me have intercourse.

In all those years HOFFIE only managed to have intercourse with me five times. Twice Pieter, a friend of his, held me down. Another time, just before we left home, he starved me to the point where I became sick. Then he told me he'd give me something to eat if I did it. I was so desperately hungry that he got his way. Then he gave me a dry piece of bread. HOFFIE made a prostitute out of me. Because I did it for food, I felt I was the biggest prostitute walking on this earth, and that everybody knew this.

HOFFIE made my embarrassment about my body and menstruation worse by making me undress when I had my period. If he couldn't get me to

undress, he'd take out his gun and tell me he'd shoot me if I wouldn't do this. So I eventually decided I had to undress. I was nine years old and I hated myself.

I started getting very violent headaches every weekend when I was nine. Hoffie continued to sexually abuse me no matter how bad my headaches were. When I was 12, I started having epileptic fits. They were so bad that I had to go to hospital when I had one. I know now that these fits were emotional blackouts I'd have when I couldn't cope with Hoffie's abuse. I'd be unconscious for a few days at a time. The fits got worse and worse so the doctor put me on Epilin tablets. But it was only when I started vomiting and losing consciousness that Hoffie would back off. I think I started having fits as a way of escaping him. Most of the time I'd be taken to hospital, but even if I stayed at home, he left me alone when I was unconscious. My fits continued until I started therapy at 17.<sup>1</sup>

I thought these things were happening in every home and that this was probably what life was supposed to be like. Hoffie kept on abusing me until my mum divorced him when I was 14. By 16, I didn't have any interests or hobbies any more. I didn't feel anything and I didn't do anything. Eventually my mum got like that too. I was living the way she became when she left Hoffie.

#### *Hoffie's Strategies*

Hoffie is a very clever man. He knew where to press our buttons. He didn't use the same approach and excuses for me and Marietjie [Elsa called Marie by this diminutive form of her name]. Because Hoffie knew how much I cared for my mother and that I would do anything to protect her, he told me he'd shoot her if I didn't co-operate with him. He also threatened to use my sisters. I was responsible for them and would do anything to protect them. So I let him do what he wanted. I took a lot of abuse to protect Marietjie in particular. I didn't know then that Hoffie was also sexually abusing her.

You can convince Marietjie to do something much quicker than me. With me, Hoffie had to use threats, but he didn't with Marietjie. You just have to use a bit of psychology and you can get her to do what you want. She's very manipulable, whereas I'm not. I'm a fighter. But Hoffie still got to do what he wanted with me – although not as often as with Marietjie. He used gifts with her, but never with me. He couldn't bribe me except that one time when he starved me.

I didn't understand why Hoffie gave Marietjie gifts until I was about ten. Then I knew he was sexually abusing her – although I didn't see it and we never spoke about it.

#### **The Other Perpetrators**

Hoffie's sister's son Basic tried to sexually abuse me, but he didn't get very far because he wasn't much older than me.

By the age of nine, Hoffie's abuse was part of my everyday life. That year his cousin Jacobus and his friend Pieter also started having a good party with me. They and Hoffie usually abused me together. Jacobus and his wife were staying with us in Welkom at that time. Pieter, who was paralysed and in a wheelchair, stayed in a caravan in the yard for more than two years. Jacobus did it for less than a year; Pieter did it more often and kept doing it even after he moved to his own house. But it was only once every month or two by then because he didn't visit us as often.

Hoffie and Jacobus used to joke and laugh at my body and say, '*Die bytjies het gesteek*' [the bees have stung], when my breasts started to develop. And 'now she's becoming a woman', they'd say. Jacobus always grabbed at my breasts and said, 'Ooh, let me feel how far they are', and he'd ask me, 'Have you developed any hair?' and then he'd try to touch me. But he never could have intercourse with me. I'd fight and scream and perform when he tried to do it so he could never get it right. I used to beg Jacobus and Hoffie to rather kill me. I told them they could do anything to me afterwards but they had to kill me first. They said I wasn't being a woman and that I must take it like a woman because I was grown up like a woman. They said, 'this is what womanhood is about'. So I hated being a woman. I wanted my old body back.

I think Pieter and Hoffie had a big discussion before Pieter started sexually abusing me. One of the first things the two of them did together was make me watch videos. In one of them, a young Indian girl was raped by three cowboys. In the other, a woman was raped and then cut up with an electric saw. I vomited after I saw them and I was very sick for a couple of days. I was sure that the Indian girl really had been raped and that the other woman really had been cut up after she was raped. I also believed that these things happened in everybody's lives. If it happened on a video and it was happening in my home, how could I say it was wrong? I became very doubtful about what was right and wrong.

Hoffie and Pieter would block the doorway to a room with their wheelchairs and make me get undressed. They'd say, 'Elsa, you know what to do', and I'd just stand there. Hoffie would say, 'Start!' and I'd continue just standing there. Then one of them would take my hand and force me to touch where he wanted. Then they'd comment on my body like, 'Your bum is too big and your breasts are too small', or they'd complain, 'You

don't have enough pubic hair.' By then I'd be in a very emotional state. I'd stand there doing nothing and eventually they'd force me to play with their penises. It was gross. Still today, I won't touch a man's penis.

I had to take off Pieter's urine bags when he abused me, which I hated. He would lie on the bed and tell me to lie on top of him, but I wouldn't. Hoffie would then lift me up and put me on top of him. I'd be like a robot. I had to do whatever they wanted but I wouldn't be the one to start it. That made me feel it wasn't happening to me. I can still do this [dissociate] today.

### *Telling the Secret and Confronting Hoffie*

After my first suicide attempt when I was 15, my mother asked if there was anything in the past that I wanted to tell her about. That's when I told her that Hoffie had sexually abused me and Marietjie. She had a very hard time adjusting to the knowledge that her kids were being abused under her eyes. She feels a lot of guilt about it. She confronted Hoffie about it when he phoned many years later. He said he hadn't done anything wrong; that he only did what every father does to his daughters. He believes that fathers own their children and can do what they like with them. His whole family thinks that way.

When I was 18, I went back to Welkom where Hoffie still lives, to confront him about what he did to me. I was still very angry with him and I was very bothered that he hadn't been punished for what he did. When I got there, I looked into his eyes and said, 'God will punish you ten times worse than what you've done to me'. He asked me what I was talking about because he didn't think he'd done anything wrong. I told him he was a sick man and that he'd get his punishment, not in this life, but in the next.

My hate for Hoffie disappeared after that and I no longer want revenge. It's in the past now. Revenge wouldn't give me back my innocence or the cleanliness I want. No punishment that he could get now would do that. But on Judgement Day, he'll be punished and I'll be cleansed.

While I was in Welkom, I warned any female I knew Hoffie was in contact with about his abusiveness. I told his girlfriend who came with him to fetch me at the station, 'You don't want to get married to a man like this. If you have children by him, he'll abuse them.' I'll report him if I find out he's been touching any child.

There was never any point to trying to prosecute Hoffie. I'd have been willing to do this in different circumstances, but courts say that the victim was looking for it in 90 per cent of the cases that are tried in South Africa. I wasn't going to go through a trial only to be made into the guilty party.

## SEXUAL ABUSE OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

### **Elsa's Mother**

My mum told me recently that her stepfather got into her bed with her when she was 16 years old. My granny caught him, so nothing happened, but she still felt it had a big effect on her. After that, my grandmother didn't trust her husband so she slept with my mother until she was grown up.

My mother also said she'd been molested once when she was five or six by a male cousin. He was eight or nine at the time. He pulled her into the bushes and tried to penetrate her, which was pretty traumatic for her.

### **Elsa's Siblings**

Marietjie was a real tattle-tale. If she knew about us stealing food, she'd tell. Then we'd get a beating and she wouldn't. That's how the hatred between Willie and Marietjie started. He got even more punishment than the rest of us. He hated Marietjie and sexually abused her because, he said, it was the only way to punish her for getting him into trouble. Also, he was very jealous that Hoffie gave her so many gifts. He knew that having sex with her would break her, so that's why he did it. And he's never apologised to her for what he did. I also hated Marietjie because I felt I was being punished for protecting her.

Willie never touched me sexually. Although he was a year older than me, I was bigger than him and I used to beat him up if he beat up one of my sisters.

### **Other Relatives**

My son Pierre went through a stage where he wouldn't let anybody besides my husband take off his nappy [diaper]. This made me wonder if he was being abused. When he was a year and a half old, my mother and I caught my 12-year-old half-sister Jenny playing with his penis. I freaked out because I'd told myself that my child would never have such an experience. I beat the hell out of Jenny and nearly killed her that day. I know I shouldn't have handled it that way but I was so upset because I know that sexual abuse breaks a person and takes away their innocence. I took my son for a medical check-up and was told that he had a very bad infection.

My mum and I took Jenny to the Red Cross Hospital to be examined. After that my mum caught her having sex with her adopted brother

André,<sup>2</sup> so we sent her for therapy. We found out that André had started sexually abusing her when he was ten and she was five. Jenny's mother was a prostitute before my dad married her [she was his second wife], and she ignored it when her kids started having sex with each other. I think it went on for five or six years.

My dad decided Jenny was causing too much trouble in our family, so we put her on a flight to her mother in Namibia [a neighbouring country previously colonised by South Africa]. Jenny is continuing to sexually abuse other children in Namibia.

### Hoffie's New Life

After my mother left him, Hoffie, who was in his forties, married a 16-year-old girl. There was a story in *You* magazine about it with a picture of him posing in his wheelchair with his new wife. That young girl ruined Hoffie, which gave me the biggest pleasure. She stripped him of his money, his house and his business. But when he divorced her, he got custody of their little girl, who must be about five years old now.

When I heard this, I phoned the welfare office in Welkom and told them I was afraid Hoffie would sexually abuse this child. I also told them that he'd abused me for many years. They told me they would monitor the situation but I can't see what will come of that. It's so cruel. I'm sure Hoffie hasn't stopped his abuse, so that little girl will go through exactly what we went through. And we're partly to blame because we didn't prosecute him. I'm angry that he hasn't had any punishment for all that he's done.

### THE AFTERMATH OF INCESTUOUS SEXUAL ABUSE

I have a lot of memory loss; I've blocked out the worst things that Hoffie and his friends and family did to me. I'm positive that deep down I know them, but I've cut them out of my memory so I can cope better with life. But my memory loss doesn't just relate to what Hoffie did. For example, I can't remember ever feeling happy or laughing as a child.

I was like two different people when I was 13. I could talk to people when Hoffie wasn't around but I'd withdraw and try to flee when he walked into the house. I'd sit under the kitchen table when we had visitors.

The sexual abuse has changed me and my whole outlook on life. I've also been affected by the mental and physical abuse. But I've made quite a good life for myself anyhow. I've made myself cope with my problems. Yet certain reactions will stay with me for the rest of my life. I've tried to

change them, but I can't. They are so deep they've become automatic. For example, even today, I lose my temper instantly if someone walks past me and smacks me on my backside.

### Impact on Relationships with Men

#### *Boyfriends*

When I was 13, an 18-year-old boy called Mark started coming to the house every day. He seemed to sense what was happening in my home and tried to protect me. He sat with me until my mother got home or he took me out before Hoffie got home. He tried to get me out of the house as much as possible. I think he realised my fear although we never talked about it.

Mark is a very special person to me, although I have no contact with him now. He became my sole support yet he never made any demands on me. I didn't think I could feel that way towards a male after everything that had happened to me. I think it's because of Mark that I coped with the abuse better than Marietjie. Because of Mark, I knew there was somebody who wasn't like all the others. And I knew he loved me for who I was, not what he could get out of me. The letters I got from him were beautiful. In the five years we were together, he didn't do anything sexual with me.

When I was 18, Mark was living in Welkom where Hoffie was also living. He wanted to marry me. We planned to get engaged and to live in Welkom. When I arrived there a girl told me Mark had a child by another woman. When I didn't believe her, she told me she was engaged to him. So I packed my bags and returned to Cape Town. The only person I'd trusted in my life had done exactly what everybody else had done to me. I came back home very broken and tried to commit suicide.

Two years later I found out that Mark hadn't been engaged or had a child. I hadn't had the guts to ask him if he'd deceived me all those years. I *expected* him to betray me even though he'd loved me unconditionally for five years. Mark couldn't forgive me for not turning up to marry him. When I realised I'd ruined our wonderful relationship, I turned to therapy for help.

Except for Mark, my relationships with men before my marriage were terrible. After we'd left Hoffie, I was determined no man would ever touch me again, not even to hold my hand. As long as men stayed at a distance, it was fine. I wouldn't go out with a guy if I couldn't pay for myself because I wasn't going to let him pay for me and then want a favour afterwards. It was very clear to me that men only want one thing, so I never put myself in that position. I started having epileptic fits as soon as a guy got

too involved with me. As soon as a guy heard I'd had fits, he wouldn't come again. I wanted them to love me for who I was, epileptic fits and all.

### *Sexual Harassment*

I started working at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town when I was 16. I had a boss who started flirting with me, but I didn't respond. He wanted to have an affair with me, so he locked me in his office. I broke everything in there. When he opened the door, I threw one of the cash registers at him. He said he'd report me. 'That's fine', I said. He told me if I wouldn't have an affair with him he could have me fired. I marched down to the superintendent's office and reported him.

When I returned to work after a holiday, my boss said he was going to sue me for reporting him. I went to the superintendent's office again and was told that nine other girls had reported him while I was away. My boss was demoted and moved out of the department after that, and he wasn't allowed to have any females working under him again. That was when I started to be in control. I knew that from then on, no man would invade my body or my privacy. Since then, I'm very firm about it, even with my husband.

### *Therapy*

Before I met my future husband, Ted, the girls in our family had sex therapy, because to us, sex was filthy and something you didn't talk about. The sex therapists were adamant that because sex had not been discussed in our family, my mum had to be there too. We were very embarrassed when they described the sex organs and how the sex act happened, but it was very helpful to realise that our bodies weren't something to be ashamed of. I think it's because of the sex therapy that my marriage has lasted. I don't think I would've been able to have sex without it. When Ted and I were engaged, we had therapy together because I still felt I couldn't cope with sex. The therapist wanted us to postpone our marriage because he said I wasn't ready for it. He kept telling me I'd never be able to have a baby and I'd never be able to have a successful marriage. This made me determined to prove that I was ready for marriage. I was on antidepressants at that time and I found that I needed them after therapy sessions. Two weeks before I married, the therapist told me again that I wouldn't be able to cope with sex or marriage. I stopped the therapy after one and a half years, and I haven't been back since.

### *Marriage*

I married Ted six years ago when I was 20. Before we got married, I told him I'd been sexually abused and that there are some sexual things I'll

never be able to do because of it. He was quite understanding about it, but that didn't stop us from having a lot of sex problems.

Ted is a very loving person whereas I'm not that loving. Sexually, I'm probably a failure because I'm quite happy to never have it, especially now that I can't fall pregnant again. This is a big problem for Ted. It makes him feel I don't love him. I get very obstreperous when he says this because, to me, sex is not love; it's something you have to do to keep your partner happy. If Ted can't love me enough to accept me the way I am, he'll have to find somebody else. I won't give in on this. But sometimes I get very depressed, especially when we're having problems.

Ted does certain things to me that really bother me, like coming up behind me and touching my breasts. I slap him for that. Also, it's a major thing between us if he touches me when I'm sleeping. I've warned him never to do that. If he tells me to sit in certain positions, I won't do that either. I'll never touch him [his penis], which is a bit upsetting to him. I've told him he must never put my hand on his penis. I'll murder him for that. I've told him if he doesn't learn not to do something that I feel uncomfortable with, then I'm going to hurt him the way he hurts me. My experiences have made me very determined to be myself and not to do anything I don't feel comfortable with. I had to learn this for my survival.

But I feel a failure because I know my sex life isn't normal and I don't think it will ever be. But we talk about our problems and I'm determined to make my marriage work. If I need more sex therapy, I'll get it, because I know sex isn't dirty even though I sometimes feel it is.

Ted and I have a wonderful relationship aside from our sexual problems. We get along very well. Fortunately, I didn't choose a man like Marietjie's husband, Kobus, who'd say, 'Sex is your wifely duty'. I've been one of the lucky ones to have two good men in my life to support me through all the abuse.

When Ted says he loves me I tell him I love him too and give him a hug. But if he doesn't tell me he loves me, I can't tell him that. When I'm very upset I'll say to him, 'I was only put on this earth for sex'. I know it isn't true, but at times I feel I was only created for a man's use.

Unlike with Ted, I don't find it difficult to be very loving towards my son. I give him the love that I didn't get. He'll never go without anything that I can afford to give him. I have an obsession about letting him know that I love him and I tell him this a hundred times a day.

### *Blamed for the Abuse*

Ted was quite understanding about my sex problems until he had an affair about a year ago. Then he started saying that the sexual abuse was my fault



because I should've told my mother about it. He can't put himself in my shoes. He can't accept that all the mental, physical and sexual abuse all those years made us unable to talk. We never said *anything* to my mother. We were cut off from her when we were kids. In fact, we didn't say a word to *anyone*. We accepted what was dealt out to us. Sometimes Ted can't handle the fact that he wasn't the first person [to have sex] with me.

The other day Ted even said that I'd looked for the sexual abuse. We had an enormous fight about this, and I told him to get out of my life. He wants me to tell him about the abuse in detail but then throws it in my face when we have an argument. So I realise now that talking to him about it is the quickest way for us to land up in a divorce court.

I was convinced when I was young that Hoffie's abuse was my fault. Now that I've had therapy, I want to kill somebody who blames me, because I *know* I was innocent. Ted will have a very hard life if he doesn't stop blaming me. I told him to read *The Secret Trauma* [Russell, 1986] so he'd have a better understanding about sexual abuse, and I told him, 'When you grow up and talk to me without being judgmental, I'll talk to you about it again'. That's how we work at our problems. Eventually I get him around. But I won't remarry if we divorce or if anything happens to Ted because I won't give my son a stepfather.

### Impact on Elsa's Relationship with her Mother

Even today, I won't hug or kiss my mother. I think it has a lot to do with what Hoffie did to me. Affection has become sexual for me. It feels wrong with my mother. I think she senses that I feel very uncomfortable with physical contact so we keep a distance from each other. But it hurts that she hugs Marietjie and Beatrix, not me.

I can't show my love for my mother except by going out of my way to do whatever she wants me to do. I haven't learned to say no to her. But I've also never told her I love her even though she means as much to me as my son does. I can't say it to her because she's never shown me that she loves me. I want more from her but I feel I can't have it because she's having such a hard time adjusting to all Marietjie's problems.

My mother has had more than enough punishment through the years, so the more she can think, 'Elsa has done a good job with it', the easier it is for her. I don't want to add to all the guilt she feels about Hoffie's sexually abusing us. So I picture saying the awful things I want to say to her, but I don't actually say them. On the positive side, my mother and I have become very close in the last six years. She's like a friend now, and we can talk about a lot of things.

### Other Psychological Consequences

#### *Rebellion, Depression and Attempted Suicide*

Altogether I tried to commit suicide four times – when I was 15, 16, 17 and 18. The first attempt was the most serious.

I was 15 when we left Hoffie. Suddenly we weren't being abused or controlled by anyone any more. My mother had the most terrible four kids after that. We went wild. We beat each other up. We broke windows. We did the most weird things. We stole. For example, we stole my mother's car – not because we needed it, which is why we'd stolen when we were young – but because we wanted to be caught. We were very obvious about our thefts. I'm surprised we didn't land up in a place of correction.

We had a very hard time adjusting to being free of Hoffie's abuse. There was nobody telling us we had to do this or that. We were lost with nobody dominating us. I pushed my mother to the limits because I wanted her to take over that role. I'd go into a shop and I'd steal while she was standing right next to me. I hoped she'd notice and punish me. I wanted to be punished for Hoffie's sexual abuse because I felt so guilty about it. So the more my mother punished me, the happier and more satisfied I felt. I couldn't cope without abuse. And since I wasn't being beaten up any more, I went out of my way to *get* beaten. I drove my mother to the point where she would get so cross she'd hit me. I was also so naughty to get her attention. I wanted her love but I didn't know how to ask for it.

I got worse and worse and I wanted to die, so I decided to commit suicide. Boys had started to take an interest in me and I couldn't cope with it. Willie, Beatrix and I had to stay in boarding school while Marietjie was allowed to stay at home, which I also couldn't handle. I hated Marietjie because I'd protected her from being abused all those years and I'd taken a lot more abuse than she had. But *she* was allowed to stay with my mother and I wasn't. So I took an overdose of about 100 Epilin tablets [epilepsy medication] and I was unconscious for two and a half weeks.

Although I still wanted to die when I became conscious, I also desperately wanted to see my mother. But she refused to come to see me the whole time I was in hospital. That broke me. I hated Marietjie for that too. And it took me a long time to forgive my mother. I felt that she'd have been there for me if she'd loved me. She tells me I said terrible things when I got to hospital like that she hated me, but I don't remember this. Marietjie had already tried to kill herself, so the doctors had been at my mother because her second child had tried to commit suicide.

When my mother picked me up from the hospital, she said, 'I'm taking you back to boarding school'. That wasn't what I wanted to hear. I wanted

to be with *her*, but I couldn't tell her that. I tried to show it by the way I acted. And I told her that if she took me back to the hostel, I'd commit suicide. She asked me why I'd do that and I couldn't answer. Then she said, 'You are pregnant!' and hit me. I wanted her to tell me she loved me and that she didn't care that I'd tried to kill myself, but instead she beat me up! That's the last time she did that. By then, if she'd told me to put on my shoes, I'd have told her to go to hell. I became very rebellious and started hating her. The hate grew with the years and by 17, I was a very disturbed person. I couldn't forgive my mother for the way she treated me after my suicide attempt.

Later my mother told me she didn't come to see me in hospital because she was so upset by all the things she'd said to me in response to what I'd said to her, and that she didn't know how to handle me. She thought I tried to commit suicide to spite her, which was true in a way. And I continued to try to get at her for the following six years. I gave her the worst time in her life because she'd accused me of being pregnant when I wasn't. I understood her to be saying that I wanted the sexual abuse that had happened to me. And I felt that she'd proven to me that I was worthless. I needed therapy to learn to be able to love again.

Marietjie then became the main person I tried to hurt because she'd become everything to my mum. My mum spoilt her. She got what she wanted because she'd been a sick baby. My mother felt she had to protect her because she couldn't cope with her problems or fight for herself the way I could. But I also needed protection and my mother didn't give it to me.

My mother thinks my life is wonderful compared to Marietjie's, but it isn't. There are days when if it weren't for my son, I think I'd attempt suicide again. I have a very hard time but people don't seem to see it. I feel I have to fight because people make me fight and I have to be strong because people make me be strong. They seem to believe, 'Elsa coped with it in her teenage years, so she doesn't need support now'. I have to tell myself, 'Just keep going; in a couple of days the depression will blow over'. But sometimes it takes me weeks to get over it, and it always comes back.

#### *Nightmares and Sleeping Problems*

I don't like sleep and I don't like the night. Sleeping started being a very big problem for me after HOFFIE first put his finger up my vagina when I was nine, and it lasted until I was about 16. I had a lot of nightmares as a teenager about being touched and raped, and I still have them occasionally, like about touching a man's penis.

I can't handle a dark, quiet room because I'm terribly afraid of the dark. I try to hide this fear, but when I moved out of my mother's house it was very difficult for me to stay overnight in my own home because it brought back memories of HOFFIE's abuse.

I don't sleep deeply. My husband knows that he mustn't touch me once I've fallen asleep because if anything moves over my body, I'm up and out like a shot. Even if he only puts his hand on my arm, he has to go sleep somewhere else. He tells me that my whole attitude towards him changes after he's touched me in my sleep and I won't allow him close to me for a couple of days until I'm over the fear. It's like I'm a little girl when I'm asleep and I think it's HOFFIE when somebody touches me. So I postpone going to bed until midnight and I'm up again at six in the morning.

#### *Self-Blame*

When I was a teenager, I was convinced that HOFFIE's sexual abuse was my fault. Sometimes I felt maybe he wouldn't have continued to do it if I'd said something to him about it. Sometimes I feel guilty I didn't do more to try to stop him. Right up to becoming an adult, I kept breaking myself down about this instead of telling myself that HOFFIE was the problem, not me. Therapy taught me that I didn't look for it and that I shouldn't feel guilty about it. But I still live with the guilt at times. If only I'd run away. If only.... But I didn't. My fears were too great for me to do anything.

#### *Body Image*

I was beautiful when I was young. I attracted men and I hated myself for that. When I'm fat, like now, men aren't interested in me, so I'm happy being fat. I know that when people like me now it's for my personality, not my body. If people tell me, 'You're a bit fat', I say, 'Do *you* have a problem with it, because I don't!' I won't let people intimidate me about my weight. Even my doctor won't comment on my weight any more. The first time I saw him he said, 'Well, we are overweight, aren't we?' I told him, 'You're a bit overweight as well!' One of the things the abuse has taught me is to speak up for myself because if I don't, nobody else will. It's only when I don't want to hurt someone close to me that I talk to them in my mind instead.

#### *Dissociation*

I can talk about what happened to me as if I'm talking about somebody else that I know. I can make myself into two people: the person who is being abused and the person who is watching it. When I say, 'He did this or that to



me', I'm saying it to the second person. Although I know the second person is me, dividing myself in two makes it possible to cope with it and talk about it, otherwise I get too emotional. My mum feels that *she* can cope with it if *I* can, so doing this helps both of us to deal with it. But I get upset afterwards when I have to deal with my feelings on my own.

### *Suppression of Feelings*

The sexual abuse has had a very big effect on the way I express my feelings. I can talk quite calmly about what happened to me, but inside I feel like a volcano about to burst. I try to suppress a lot of my emotions because I know if I let go, I've had it. So I'm petrified of letting go. I wonder what I'll become if I do.

### *Headaches and Addiction*

I have violent headaches, heart palpitations and high blood pressure. The doctor says they're caused by tension. I have a terrible thing about pain, so I took more and more Syndol and became addicted for about a year. My headaches came back as soon as I went off them. Now I use Migrol and a muscle relaxant that knocks me out for 24 hours. After that I'm fine for a couple of weeks. Lately, I only get a headache once in two months, but they're very bad ones. I'm now trying to stay off Migrol because I think they're habit-forming. I used to be on medication for my high blood pressure and heart palpitations, but I've been off all medication for two and a half years now. I threw all my anti-depressants away!

### *Lack of Trust*

I don't trust any man with a child. I prefer little girls to stay away from men. I insist on this with a little problem-child I'm taking care of now. I lose my temper and send her to her room if she gets too friendly with a man. I know it's wrong for me to give her a negative attitude to men, but I'd rather do this than have her experience sexual abuse. If a guy is too friendly towards her, I kick him out of my house.

## THE STRUGGLE TO HEAL

I went to see a therapist for the first time when I was 17. He wanted me to move out of my home because of the problems I was having with my mother at the time. But I wasn't very keen on his advice so I stopped seeing him. I went back to therapy when I couldn't cope without it. I told my second therapist that HOFFIE sexually abused me but it was too difficult

to tell him much more than that. He advised me to go to family therapy as well as continuing to see him.

I spent nine months in intensive family therapy at the university. That's when my mother realised how much her kids hated her. I admire her for her strength because she got a lot of hate from all four of us in those sessions. My fits continued until nine months after I started therapy, but I've not had a fit since then.

I'm more at ease now and I can talk about my childhood. I now see myself as a very positive person although I have my hitches and my depressed times. But I'm basically very contented with life. I'm not sorry I got married and had a baby and I'm coping with the problems in my marriage.

My object in talking about my weight to people the way I do is to make them see that if you're determined enough you can make something positive out of abuse rather than allowing yourself to go down the drain. People need to know that you can make it after being sexually abused. For me, it's been hard and it's taken many years, but I'm at ease now because I'm in control. And I'm peaceful and loving now, especially with children.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### **Disability and Incestuous Abuse**

Elsa believes that HOFFIE's violence was related to his disability: 'He couldn't accept being confined to a wheelchair,' she said, 'so he took it out on his wife and children ...'. She surmised that his disability had also undermined his sense of manhood, and that the more he beat his family, 'the stronger and the more manly he felt'. Elsa's reasoning here could just as well apply to HOFFIE's incestuous behaviour.

I was struck by the number of other disabled or unusually short incest perpetrators there were in my small sample of 20 survivors, particularly since I didn't ask questions to solicit this information. For example, HOFFIE's friend Pieter was also in a wheelchair and Elsa described her older brother Willie (who sexually assaulted Marie) as 'very tiny' – smaller and weaker than she. Her second stepfather, Spike, who called Marie a whore and threatened to rape her over a period of four months, was also disabled. His legs were 'messed up' and he had to wear special shoes because of an injured foot (see Chapter 4).

Nida Webber described her abusive stepfather as unusually short and unable to physically get the better of his larger wife. 'I think he hates

being small', she said (see Chapter 2). The stepfather of Eastlynne Nelson-Tansley (her real name), another Afrikaner survivor in the study, lost a leg when he fell off a horse as a child. Eastlynne surmised that he was 'acting out his rage at being disabled' when he sexually abused her. The disabilities of other incestuous fathers whose daughters' stories are not represented in this volume include having a hairlip, cleft palate and speech impediment and being sexually impotent.

This raises the question of whether disabled men are particularly prone to sexually abuse their relatives, or perhaps children in general. It seems quite possible that Elsa's speculation about her stepfather may apply to other disabled men; that is, in reaction to feeling their masculine egos undermined by their disability, they may try to bolster their sense of power by manipulating or forcing one or more of the female members of their families into a state of sexual and/or physical servitude. This finding and the theory suggested to explain it warrant further investigation.

#### DIFFERENCES IN PATRIARCHAL POWER IN AFRIKANER AND ENGLISH-SPEAKING SOUTH AFRICAN HOMES

Because Elsa was raised an Afrikaner but married an English-speaking South African, her descriptions of some of the differences that she experienced in these two white cultures is particularly valuable. For example, she observed that Afrikaners are significantly more authoritarian than English-speaking South Africans. She considered the fact that Marie had married an Afrikaner to be pertinent in explaining why her sister had experienced a tougher adult life than she had (see next chapter). Elsa also contended that the family structure of most Afrikaner families is more father-dominant and less democratic than that of English-speaking South African families:

Afrikaner men are very domineering – more so than English-speaking men. They think they own their wives and children. In the Afrikaner family, the father is power, the mother is obedient, and the kids have to fall in behind. The wives and children don't talk back. The words of the father are law, regardless of the thoughts or feelings of the rest of his family. For example, my dad and Marietjie's husband Kobus believe they are the law and they don't tolerate you questioning this because they won't accept losing their power. They aren't give-and-take-people; it's, 'I order you' to do this or that. That's also how they talk to children. They don't explain *why* children have to do something. Their atti-

tude is, 'Do it because I say so.' So the Afrikaner child learns not to ask *why*, whereas children in English-speaking homes ask questions. Sexual abuse isn't spoken about in Afrikaans homes as it would be if the child and the mother had individual rights.

The connection between the greater patriarchalism and authoritarianism in Afrikaner families, the severity of the incestuous abuse and Afrikaners' racism and brutality towards black South Africans, will be explored in depth in the concluding chapter.

## 4 'There's a Sign on My Forehead Saying, "Abuse Me!": Marie Malan's Story

'By that time, I felt I couldn't do anything; I just used to lie there and let him [brother] do what he wanted.'

### INTRODUCTION

Marie Malan (a pseudonym) was 25 years old, divorced and still living with her 48-year-old parents in a suburb of Cape Town when I interviewed her in 1992. She left school after completing standard nine (11th grade), and now works as a data inputer in a hospital. Basic information about Marie's family was provided in the previous chapter and will not be repeated here.

In addition to being raped by her stepfather, Marie was raped by two other relatives (her brother and her stepfather's cousin) and two much older friends of the family (Pieter and Hendrik), as well as being sexually harassed verbally by her second stepfather, an uncle and two men at her place of work (one of which involved sexual touching), and being peeped at when bathing by her half-brother. Some readers may find this number of sexual violations hard to believe. However, Elsa's story corroborates many of Marie's experiences as well as many other parts of her story. Similarly, Marie's story corroborates Elsa's. This corroboration is all the more significant in view of the fact that they had barely discussed their personal experiences of sexual assault with each other until after Marie had been interviewed.

The issue of multiple victimisation is a very important one for incest survivors, because of its frequency and because it so often results in victim-blaming. This topic will be addressed at the end of Marie's story, along with multi-generational incestuous abuse, the impact of torture and sexual slavery on survivors, and the dissimilar reactions of these two sisters to the extreme abuse to which they were subjected.

I interviewed both Marie and Elsa in the living room of their parents' home. Marie told me that she'd had a sleepless night before our appointment.

She disliked being asked about her experiences of sexual abuse and she was apprehensive about being interviewed in English. But 'I want to help other abused women who are hesitant to talk about it,' Marie told me, 'and I also feel special to be asked to participate'. Feeling special is immensely important to Marie, as will become evident in the following pages.

Although Marie and Elsa describe the same family background, they do so in different ways with different emphases that reflect their different personalities. Hence, I have elected not to edit out all of the overlapping information.

### MARIE'S STORY

#### Family Background

My mom had a back operation before she had a baby, and the doctors told her she couldn't have any children. She gave birth to three of us anyway but she had miscarriages after having me. This is why there's a gap of three years between me and Beatrix. My mom had to have a hysterectomy after Beatrix was born.

My mom had to work a lot because my stepfather, Hoffie, insisted she had to support us, so she wasn't around during my childhood. As for my dad, I find it hard to forgive him for leaving me when I was only three years old.

I came to see my stepfather [Hoffie] as my father but I was always petrified of him because he was so strict. I just did what he told me to do. My brother and sisters and I were not allowed to mix with people at school. We weren't allowed to bring friends home. We weren't allowed on my stepfather's grass or to go outside when we got home from school. We weren't allowed to play in the house. We had to go directly to our rooms and stay there. We were only allowed one cup of coffee a day. He never explained why he made all these rules.

We moved from my granny's house [Hoffie's mother] to our own house in Welkom when I was about seven. Because my granny wasn't there any more, my stepfather started beating us a lot with a sjambok when he was cross with us. Elsa normally hit him back, but I could never do anything like that. My stepfather also kept a gun next to him when he beat us. He never used to say anything when he hit us and we didn't ask him why he was doing it. We just had to do whatever he wanted us to do.

My mom was also very violent when she was young. She also hit us for any reason. One time the next door neighbour told her that we'd sworn at

him. Although I was innocent, she hit all of us. She never listened to what we had to say. Sometimes I ran away to try to avoid a beating. That made her so mad she'd throw bookcases down the stairs after me.

My mom had a maid who used to look after us and cook for us because my mom was away working very long hours. The maid would buy spinach and make pap [maize porridge] for our main meal, while my stepfather would eat canned mushrooms and other luxuries. When the maid passed away, my stepfather was supposed to feed us, but instead he started starving us. I was about 10 at the time. When my mom came home he'd say that we'd already eaten. I was too scared of him to say a word; we were all scared of him.

I used to steal food from other children at school because I was hungry. The teachers laid a trap for me at school when I was in standard three [5th grade] and caught me stealing. I felt so humiliated that I wet my pants. When it came out that I wasn't getting any food from home, a teacher started bringing me a sandwich every day. So from then on, I knew I'd have something to eat. But I couldn't take this teacher into my confidence. I was petrified of grown-ups. Even in high school, I wouldn't talk to people.

We also used to steal toys from shops because we were never allowed to have toys. We never got anything for Christmas. We had a Christmas tree only once that I can remember. When people gave us presents, my stepfather would always take them away from us. One guy used to give us sweets; he also gave us a hi-fi and my brother a bicycle. My dad sold all of these things because he didn't allow us to have anything of our own. Once Elsa got caught stealing some small thing from a shop and her punishment was to stand there for a whole day.

My older brother Willie tried to kill my younger sister Beatrix when we were young. He had a rope around her neck and he tried to hang her from the roof. When my mom rocked up [arrived] unexpectedly, he had to stop. Willie used to fight with Beatrix a lot. My mom didn't know about it and we never told her. She also didn't know about how much we stole, or that we used to sneak out at night and jump from the roof. Those were nice times – the only times we could play. Only now does she hear about the things we used to do. She says she would've killed us all if she'd known what we were up to at the time.

After my stepfather kicked us out of the house, my mom found a flat in Welkom, but she couldn't afford to support us so we had to be split up. Beatrix and I went to stay with different church families, who gave us clothes. Finally, my mom managed to find a one-bedroom flat so we could all live together again.

My mom met Spike and married him after a few months. His legs were messed up because he'd jumped off a building in a suicide attempt. He had to wear special shoes because his feet were injured. He told my mom on their wedding day that he'd just got out of jail for stealing a car radio but we found out later that he'd been there for murder. I think he did 10 years of a 15-year sentence. I don't know who Spike murdered; I don't ask any questions, I just pick up what is said in front of me. But it didn't bother me that he'd been in jail and I didn't care what sort of person he was; I just wanted a relationship with somebody, especially a man.

When we came to Cape Town from Welkom for a holiday, we stayed with my [maternal] grandmother. Spike didn't bother looking for a job here because he didn't want to work. He just sat in his room the whole day and watched television. The church finally gave him a job but he used to drink a lot and they let him go after they caught him drunk a few times.

When I landed up in hospital after a suicide attempt, we all went to family therapy together. I begged Spike to be a father to me. I wanted so much to be loved and accepted, but he wouldn't accept us or mix with us. My mom eventually kicked him out after eight years of marriage to him. After their divorce, Spike started phoning every night. He used to upset us, especially me, when I picked up the phone. For about four months he called me a whore and said he'd rape me. I was petrified. We had to get the police to remove him from our property. There used to be trees in the front of our house, but we had them pulled out because he used to come into the yard, sit down behind the trees with his long knife, and threaten to kill us. We were terrified because of his prison record.

After my mom's third divorce, I succeeded in tracking down my real father. I asked a man at work who was going up to Walvis Bay [in Namibia] where some of our family lives, to see if he could find my dad there, and he did! When my father came to Cape Town, I didn't recognise him. At first my brother and sisters hated me for tracking him down because they were mad with him for leaving my mom, and they didn't want anything to do with him.

I felt I was special to my father until he remarried my mom four years ago. But now, when he has an argument with her, he threatens to take his stuff and bugger off if she doesn't do what he wants. He threatens us [children] in the same way when we say something he doesn't want to hear. I cut myself off from him when he says that. My sisters tell him, 'So pack your stuff and go! You didn't come back for us!' Sometimes I wish I had their guts. When he swears at them they talk back to him. They

remind him that he wasn't around for 18 years and they tell him that we're grown-ups now and he must stop treating us as children.

My dad criticises me a lot. He doesn't understand why I'm depressed. Because I sleep a lot when I'm depressed, he sometimes says I'm very 'sleg' [bad] and that my body is already so rotten that it must die. I have a lot of hate towards my dad. I blame him for leaving my mom. If they'd stayed married, I wouldn't have been abused.

I met Spike again about two weeks ago after not seeing him or hearing from him for years. He phoned me afterwards and told me that he loves me and that I was always his special one among the kids. It felt so wonderful to hear this because I've been looking for that kind of fatherly love. I had to remind myself that he didn't accept us as his kids when I needed him during the eight years that he and my mom were married. He only tells me that I'm special now that they're divorced and he has no family.

## SEXUAL ABUSE IN CHILDHOOD

### Hoffie

It started at the same time as the hitting when I was seven years old [one year after he started sexually abusing Elsa]. He began by touching me. Then he wanted me to touch his penis. I must've been about nine when he started having intercourse with me. He also did it behind [sodomised her]. When he made me do oral sex, I had to swallow it, which made me vomit. Later on he used to do sex with me every day or two.

The main thing I remember is getting very sick; I vomited a lot. After vomiting, I felt clean inside. I felt okay, at least for a few minutes. It made me feel more in control. But my stepfather gave me hidings for vomiting. I also bled a lot [from her vagina].

He used to give me money and sometimes food if I did what he wanted. Elsa and Willie were very jealous and resentful about this. Every time he had sex with me, he told me it was because he loved me and because my mom couldn't give him a child. He must have been very bitter about this to keep mentioning it. There was a stage when I wished I could give him a child. I hated my mom for what he did to me because I felt it was her fault. I didn't really hate *him* at all.

My stepfather carried on sexually abusing me even after he'd kicked us out of the house in 1979. He used to pick me up from my mom's one-bedroom flat, take me to his house, have sex with me, then drop me off at

home. When my mom started working night-shifts, he'd wait at her flat for me to get home from school.

After my mom sent me to boarding school, my stepfather told the school hostel mother and father that he was going to kill my brother, sisters and me as soon as he saw us. The hostel mother didn't allow us to go out of the schoolyard after that; we had to go straight to our rooms after class. We even ate in our rooms. The hostel mother and father reported my stepfather's threats to the police. My mom also told the police that he was threatening her at work. I think the police warned him about his gun, but he was never arrested.

Everything seemed too much for me when I was 13 and in boarding school. I couldn't get on with others at school. I had problems communicating and mixing with people. Everything was *deurmekaar* [mixed-up]. I was always in trouble about being untidy and not caring about how I looked or dressed. I hated not having my mom around. So I took an overdose of Elsa's epilepsy tablets.

When I went home after my suicide attempt, I felt special because I didn't have to go and sit with everybody and eat in front of them. People left me alone. I could go to my room and study. My mom was concerned about me, although I refused to speak to her about why I'd done it. The school officials told my mom that I must be removed from boarding school because I couldn't mix with people and I needed to be with her. So we were all sent to another school.

My stepfather still carried on sexually abusing me after that; it ended sometime later that year when I was 13.

### Keeping the Secret

My stepfather threatened to hit me if I ever spoke about the sex. When I was about 10 or 11, he made me watch two movies. Then I had to do what the women in the movies had to do. In one of the movies a lot of men raped a woman and did whatever else they wanted to her. The other movie showed a woman being cut up alive after the men had sex with her. My stepfather threatened to do the same to me if I told anyone what he was doing to me. That's why I'd rather have died than tell anyone. The movies pumped into my head that 'this is my life'. I started to think that what was happening with my stepfather must be normal; that it must be happening to other girls. So I started accepting it.

When I was a little older, my stepfather used to sit with his gun and threaten to kill me if I told anyone. After my suicide attempt he bought me a television set to try to keep me quiet. He continued giving me presents for allowing him to do it and to get me to keep quiet.

*Disclosing the Secret*

I went to see a social worker after my first suicide attempt. He was the only person I ever told about the abuse while it was still going on. But he didn't believe me. He said I was lying and looking for attention. So I continued to keep quiet about it after that.

I was 17 when Elsa told my mom what my stepfather had done to us. When my mom asked me if it was true, I burst into tears but said nothing, then I went to my room and cried. Before that I'd always pretended that nothing was wrong. Although my mom knew about it then, she didn't know how far it had gone. After finding out about the abuse, she sent me to get treatment for my vomiting.

My mom has a habit of telling anybody I meet that I've been sexually abused, so I never bring people home. I've told her not to do this, but she continues anyhow. Elsa also talks about it very easily now, even in front of males, which upsets me a lot. I walk out when she does this in front of me. My dad doesn't allow us to speak about sexual abuse or about the past in front of him. He and I have very little communication any more.

**Other Sexual Abusers***Hoffie's Cousin Jacobus and His Friend Pieter*

Jacobus began talking to me a lot about sex and going to bed and how enjoyable it is. He did this about the same time my stepfather began touching me. He [Jacobus] showed me his penis and made me hold it, then he paid me two rand [32 pence/\$0.67]. He was the first one to make me do a sexual act.

I must have been about 11 when my stepfather's friend Pieter started sexually abusing me. He knew that my stepfather didn't give us food, so he offered me food for having oral sex with him.

*Brother Willie*

Willie and my sisters hated me because I was at home after I attempted suicide while they were at boarding school, and because I meant more to my stepfather than they did. Willie was also jealous because of the gifts my stepfather gave me.

Willie walked in one time when Jacobus was about to penetrate me. I think this may have triggered his decision to sexually abuse me. He started doing this when he was 15 and I was 13 after my stepfather had kicked us out of the house. He mostly did it on weekends when he was allowed out of boarding school. He'd come to my bed at night, pull off my panties and have sex with me. He didn't say anything, he just did it. By that time, I felt

I couldn't do anything; I just lay there and let him do what he wanted. One time I remember saying, 'I'm going to tell mom'. But my mom was working night-shift then, so she wasn't at home.

Willie called me a whore for having sex with him and threatened to tell others I was a whore. This cracked me up. I had nobody to talk to about what he was doing. I couldn't take it, so I tried to kill myself again. I took a larger overdose of Elsa's pills than I took the first time. I was told later that I went wild and turned the bed over. But I don't remember anything except falling asleep on my bed and then waking up in the hospital in a plaster cast. Apparently I was found passed out on the floor with a broken kneecap.

I always tried to avoid Willie after he sexually abused me because I was terrified of him. I couldn't be in the same room as him any more. As soon as he came into a room I was in, I'd go and lock myself in my bedroom.

All I could do to get back at Willie was to steal things and let him take the blame. My parents didn't believe that I would steal. They knew me as the good little girl who did everything for everybody and never talked back. Willie knew I'd done it, but he also knew that the grown-ups wouldn't believe him because he'd stolen a lot of money, forged cheques, and so on. So he'd get a hiding for what I'd done.

One day when we were all having lunch together when I was in standard eight [10th grade], I was telling my granny that I'd talked to my guidance teacher. The next moment Willie threw a pair of scissors at me. One of the blades went in one side of my arm and out the other. He did this because he thought I'd gone to speak to the teacher about what he was doing to me, although that wasn't true. He ran away after that. My uncle took me to the hospital for stitches, but my mom did nothing about it.

I became very close to my granny. She didn't know about the sexual abuse, but I used to hide behind her for protection. I was with her day and night. I even slept with her. I think that's why Willie stopped sexually abusing me.

I was so mad with Willie for many years that I wanted to get revenge by phoning his wife and telling her what he'd done to me. I still want to hurt him. I want to tell anyone who comes into contact with him, especially a woman, about the sexual abuse.

It's only since Willie divorced his wife that he came back into the family. I was so excited when he got divorced because I was no longer the only one in the family who'd messed up my marriage. But his return to our family has been haunting me because I don't want him in my life. Some people don't even know I have a brother because I don't classify him as a brother after what he did to me, and I don't speak about him.

Willie has a gun on him because he's a policeman, and I'm petrified of firearms and I'm petrified of him. I became hysterical the other night when he caught me on the phone talking to a friend. I'm scared my mom is going to tell him that I've been talking in therapy about what he did to me. Sometimes I want to kill him. I want to hurt people who've hurt me.

#### *Disclosure*

When I told my mother about Willie's sexual abuse she didn't believe me. She told me I wasn't going to force her to choose between her son and me. 'I love him, and that's it!' she said. Willie has always been my mom's favourite. He means the world to her because he's her only son. But Willie blamed my mom for the beatings by my stepfather and for 14 years he told her that she wasn't a mother.

#### *A Family Friend*

When I was 13 and staying with my mom in her apartment in Welkom, a 38-year-old family friend called Hendrik told me he had a new dress for me in his car. He said he'd give it to me if I'd have sex with him. I didn't have anybody I felt special to after my stepfather was out of my life, so I got involved with him. [Embarrassed laughter] It was my first new dress and I'll never forget it. He'd give me anything I wanted in return for sex. He spent a lot of money on me. He was like a sugar daddy to me. He bought me a ring and sweets. I let him buy sweets for Elsa and the others, but when he bought Elsa a birthday present, I was the hell in [furious] with him. I was very possessive and I didn't want him to buy anything special for anybody else.

My relationship with Hendrik lasted a few months until we moved to Cape Town. I felt a lot of guilt about it.

#### *An Uncle*

When I was 18, a group of us went to the beach one day. I met an uncle who was in his 60s there who I hadn't ever met before. He was a relative on my granny's side of the family [therefore probably English-South African]. He asked me if I loved him. I said, 'Of course I do'. Then he wanted me to prove it by having sex with him. He said he'd pay me. I didn't answer him; I just walked away.

This experience really broke me. It reminded me of what had been happening with my stepfather and all the others. If you love men or you care about them, all they want is sex. That's how it's always been with all the men in my life. I wished my uncle was dead, and I felt great when he died.

#### *Half-brother*

My father has a 19-year-old adopted son, André, who means everything to him. About two years ago we found out that André used to open the bathroom window and watch me and my mom bathe. That is when it also came out that André had sexually abused his sister Jenny from when she was five until she was 11 or 12. My mom reported André's behaviour to the welfare department, not because he sexually abused Jenny, but because she couldn't handle him. They sent him to Tenderton Home [a reform school].

#### *Sexual Harassment*

I've had problems with some guys at work who keep telling stupid jokes about sex, and one of them kept touching my breasts when he walked past me. It got me down but I couldn't do anything about it. There's another guy at work now who won't leave me alone. I don't know how to handle him. He wants to take me home and he wants to visit me at my home. His remarks leave me feeling that sex is all there is in life; it's all men ever want. I don't want to report him to my boss because I'm scared I'll lose my job, so I just try to avoid him.

## THE AFTERMATH OF INCEST AND OTHER SEXUAL ASSAULT

### **Impact on Family Relationships**

#### *Relationship with Mother*

I hated my mom for not being around when my stepfather sexually abused me. She told me recently that he abused her sexually too and that he constantly threatened her with his gun and stopped her from being with us. But all I can remember is that she wasn't there. Sometimes I'd make myself vomit to get her attention. Then she'd take me to a doctor to get an injection, so I'd have her for those few moments.

I'm very possessive about my mom. I don't know if I'm special to her, but I feel I am. It's probably because I don't talk back or ask her for anything. I'm petrified of my mom. I want so much to move out of this house and yet something is holding me here. I feel I've hurt her all my life. I'm trying to make up to her now for hating her so much, by doing whatever she wants.

#### *Siblings*

I don't know how far my stepfather's abuse went with Elsa or who he started abusing first, but there was a lot of friction between us because he



didn't give her any of the things he gave me. I feel that she and Willie and Beatrix have always pushed me away. All my life they kept reminding me about the gifts I got from our stepfather, and that I was always special, especially Elsa. I was always the favourite, with my granny as well. They also kept reminding me about Hendrik, who they called my 'sugar daddy', because of all the gifts he gave me. They didn't know he was giving me these things in return for sex. I hated their resentment so much that four or five years ago, I smashed the television my stepfather gave me.

Two months ago I gave away my whole trousseau. I decided I didn't want it because for me earthly possessions mean nothing, and I connected my trousseau with all the gifts I got in return for all the things men did to me.

I envy my sisters for having children, especially Elsa. I used to stay with her to baby-sit Pierre. I've always wanted to be her. My mom always says, 'Elsa's fine; she's coping'. My mom tells me I should take the abuse like Elsa has. But I know Elsa hasn't overcome her abuse because I've seen her taking out her anger on her son.

I've put my younger sister Beatrix on a pedestal. She wasn't sexually abused;<sup>1</sup> she makes friends easily and she has all the friends she needs. She passed her matric. She's married and about to have her second baby. I can't stand it! She's everything that I want to be, yet *she's* very jealous of me, and very hurtful to me sometimes.

### Depression and Suicide Attempts

The abuse has been ruining my life for a very long time. I tried to commit suicide three times when I was 13. I already told you about the first two times. To understand my third attempt you need to know that there were two very important things in my life when I was 13: playing the piano and being a library prefect. One day when I was very down, my sister Beatrix told the library teacher that I didn't want to be a librarian any more, so *she* became the library prefect. Then when I went to piano practice, a standard seven [9th grade] pupil told me I wasn't allowed to play the piano. So I felt there was no life for me any more and I tried to kill myself. This attempt wasn't as serious as the others and I was able to force myself to stay awake.

The fourth time was when I was 17 after Elsa told my mom about my stepfather's sexually abusing us. I took another overdose six months after my granny passed away when I was 18. Her death was a very big shock to me. She was *the* person in my life. I was happy when I was with her. During my high school years, she was the one positive thing in my life. She was like a mother to me.

After I took this overdose, I had second thoughts about dying, so I phoned the therapist I'd seen. He told me to wake up my mom or he'd have an ambulance sent to take me to hospital. I woke my mom and she took me to hospital where they pumped my stomach. When I got home, I just lay in my bed for two weeks. I lost ten kilos [22 lbs] because I didn't eat. I did nothing. The school principal begged me to go back to school, but I couldn't. When I started to eat, I couldn't keep anything down. I didn't care about anything any more.

I had a breakdown after this suicide attempt. I became an in-patient in Groote Schuur for three-and-a-half months. I sat for five weeks doing absolutely nothing. I never want to feel like that again. I was furious that I wasn't dead. I wanted to be with my granny [heaven].

My most serious attempt was last year when my husband was sexually abusing me [to be described]. When I'm depressed, I don't care about anything. I don't go out and socialise. On weekends I just stay in my bedroom and sleep all day with my light and my radio on. What I hate the most is waking up at night when everybody's asleep. This makes me very, very depressed.

I've been hospitalised many times because of my suicide attempts. Aside from the three-and-a-half months at Groote Schuur Hospital, I've been in Valkenberg [mental hospital] for three weeks and in a day clinic for two months, and in Victoria Hospital for a week. They wanted me to stay six weeks at Lentegeur Hospital, but I wouldn't. I was also admitted to Kenilworth Clinic.

I used to pretend I was okay but then I'd get very depressed when I was alone. I can't stop showing my depression any more, and I'm afraid my family won't be able to take this.

### Relationships and Sexuality

When I was 20 or 21, I got engaged to a very nice guy who I'd played music with at school. He was the first guy I ever had a relationship with. I allowed him to have oral sex with me but when he insisted I have oral sex with *him*, I totally freaked out. I became a little girl who couldn't protect myself, as if I had no say. When I said 'No', he just ignored me. That's what I hated the most. When I say 'no' people don't believe me. The oral sex broke it between us. It made me feel so dirty. It was as if everything in the past was coming back. So I broke off the engagement three months before the wedding. It took me about two years to recover from that relationship. Then I met Kobus.

*An Abusive Marriage*

Kobus boarded with us for three years. He was 26, a Mormon and a motor mechanic. My mom told him about the abuse which he seemed very understanding about. I liked him and felt I could talk to him. Kobus suggested we marry, and I agreed to it because I thought he'd understand how I feel about sex and because he said he wouldn't push me. But a month before the wedding, I didn't want to go through with it. I asked my mom to come to therapy with me so my psychiatrist could explain to her that I wasn't ready for marriage. But when we walked out of there she said, 'You are *not* going to change your mind a month before the wedding!' My mom wanted to see me married and having kids, so I married Kobus in 1991.

I was very scared on our honeymoon. We didn't have sex the first night but very soon I discovered that Kobus didn't believe in foreplay. He wouldn't kiss or cuddle. I hated it. I couldn't get undressed in front of him or stay naked. I was dead sexually. The abuse had turned me totally off sex which he couldn't understand. He told me that I was his wife and I should do what he wants. I told him 'No', but he still carried on. I had absolutely no say. I told him I needed time and that I couldn't have intercourse because it was too painful. He didn't believe me. He thought I was just trying to get out of it, so he forced himself on me. Once again, I reacted by becoming little Marie who couldn't even talk to him.

Kobus forced himself on me once a night when I wasn't working a night-shift. I didn't feel a thing but I decided I would have to let him do it because I couldn't stop him. Every time we had intercourse I felt so sick I vomited. I tried all sorts of ways to get out of it, like arranging to work a lot of night-shifts. Kobus noticed and complained about this. He told my parents that I wasn't interested in sex. Meanwhile, he kept on doing it. He wanted us to have children straight away. Although I also wanted children, I felt I wasn't emotionally ready to cope with them then, which he also couldn't understand.

I went to my gynaecologist because intercourse was very sore and I had started bleeding. He did an operation to repair me because I was torn there [vagina]. He said the bleeding was caused by tension. He didn't give me anything to help me cope with the pain; he just told me to relax. And he said that a woman should do whatever her husband wants. I lost all hope then that things could be better.

My husband was always in charge and he was also very possessive. I felt I was nobody. I couldn't speak to him after he forced himself on me but I spoke to Elsa and Lifeline [a suicide hotline] nearly every day. I tried to carry on and to keep going to work. When I phoned Tele-Friend, a Christian help line, they told me there was nothing that could be done about my situ-

ation, so there was nowhere else for me to turn. I wanted to be with my granny because I felt she understood me and that everything would be fine if I was with her. I wouldn't have any more abuse and nightmares.

I had only been married two-and-a-half months when I attempted suicide again last year. We were still living at home with my mother and she started nagging me because I was so depressed. I stopped caring how people saw me. I was in tears a lot. My work was going very badly. I was failing in everything. One day I didn't go to work and I took another overdose. My dad found me in my room and called an ambulance and I landed up in Victoria Hospital. The overdose affected my bladder so I had to stay in hospital for about a week.

I became hysterical every time Kobus visited me at the hospital, so I asked my mom to tell him not to come. When Kobus walked into the house after I came home from the hospital, I couldn't cope. I felt the same as when I see my brother – that he was going to hurt me again. I got hold of my psychiatrist and he booked me into Kenilworth Clinic that night. I had a nightmare about my stepfather while I was there. It was his abuse that ruined my marriage.

In one of my nightmares I dream that I'm killing the people I love, like my mom or my four-year-old nephew. When I wake up I feel so guilty for having such terrible thoughts that I want to hurt myself. I tried to kill myself after one of these nightmares by cutting my wrists with scissors. It wasn't too serious but my therapist was really angry with me. After that I couldn't communicate with her any more. I'm petrified of her now. I hate it when people get angry with me.

My psychiatrist asked Kobus why he'd married me. Kobus admitted it wasn't because he loved me. He said his parents put a lot of pressure on him to marry and he wanted to have children. When I returned from the clinic, Kobus left our home and filed for divorce the next day. When he came to get some of his things from our house, he brought the police with him because he was afraid my parents might be violent towards him. I became hysterical when I saw him. My mom was very distraught because it was the first time she'd seen me like that.

What hurt me the most was that Kobus and I had a temple marriage [Mormon] which means that you are to be together for ever, even after death. So I didn't only fail in my marriage and fail at being a woman. I also failed God.

I soon started to feel that my failed marriage was my fault because I hadn't given Kobus what he wanted sexually. So a week before the divorce came through, I suggested to Kobus that we go for sex therapy to see if we could work it out. He agreed and we went to see a Doctor

Gibson. The first few weeks were fantastic. For the first time in my life I had a real relationship. We went out with each other. We wrote letters to each other. We'd never done these kind of things before. Then six months later we started living together again.

But again I freaked out about having to be naked and about being massaged. I told Kobus I knew I wouldn't be able to expose myself in those ways. He badgered me about having sex again and I realised I couldn't do what Dr Gibson had taught us after all. Knowing it couldn't work, I became depressed again. Kobus became very possessive again; he wouldn't even allow me to see my mom. He also refused to go to church. I didn't want to live like that.

Kobus wasn't pleased when I told him I was going back into therapy. I went to my previous therapist twice a week and my psychiatrist once a week for Prozac. I told them I was really feeling down. When I'm sick of everything, I stop taking my tablets and go into a deep depression. I became very suicidal again so I was admitted to Lentegour Hospital and I didn't want to see my husband or anybody else.

Lentegour Hospital changed my medication because Prozac didn't work for me. But I couldn't keep any food down or the new anti-depressant tablets. The doctor at Lentegour wanted me to stay there for six weeks but I was concerned about being away from my job for so long. My job is the only thing I'm living for now.

I used to feel very sorry for Kobus when he cried. He knew he had me when I saw his tears. He'd cry and say he was sorry after he forced sex on me, but he kept on doing it anyway. I only saw what he was doing as rape after it was over.

Kobus spoke to our pastor about our problems. The pastor was very supportive of me and said we should separate. This time, I walked out!

### **Other Psychological Consequences**

#### *Self-Blame*

Being morally clean is very important to Mormons. Because I always blamed myself for what had happened to me, I felt I'd sinned and I was dirty and I wouldn't be forgiven. I feel I've ruined my life and I've disappointed God and let Him down. I think the abuse was His way of punishing me.

#### *Negative Self-Image*

It's as if there's a sign on my forehead saying, 'Abuse me!' Being a woman means being abused. I wanted to have a sex change operation when I was younger.

I feel I've disappointed the people I love. I'm not what they want me to be.

I've always tried to buy friends, including my sisters. I still do it, although I'm trying to stop. I used to give all my money to my sisters whenever they asked for it so I could have their friendship.

#### *The Meaning of Menstruation*

I feel it's a sin to have a period and it's a sin to be a woman. I didn't know anything about periods until two years ago [aged 23]. I thought my bleeding was a result of my stepfather's abuse. I now get regular injections to stop my periods because I get very depressed when I bleed. Periods reminds me of the abuse because I bled a lot when my stepfather did it.

#### *Relationship Problems*

I've been isolated my whole life. I'm different from everybody else. I find it very hard to talk and mix with people at work or with members of my church congregation. I'm still terrified of grown-ups even though I'm a grown-up myself. And since my mom started telling people about the abuse, I don't want to meet people because they'll know I've been raped. So I avoid most social situations.

I'm still looking for a father, even though I have my real father now. I want to lead a normal life but I don't believe there's such a thing as romance or love. I don't want to marry again but I do want a child. I love children and I'd like to be for a child what my mother never was for me. But I don't want to raise a child by myself.

#### *Addictions and Eating Disorders*

I didn't know that I suffered from bulimia until a therapist told me this recently. It started with the sexual abuse making me feel so dirty. Vomiting was such a nice feeling and made me feel cleaner. Then later on, I kept vomiting to get my mom's attention.

I used to be extremely thin until standard eight [10th grade]. I kept my weight down until my husband started abusing me. In the last two years, I've put on 30 kilos [66 lbs]. I lose weight, then pick it up again.

I've been addicted to Redupon [an appetite suppressant] as well as laxatives. I got off both about four years ago, but I went back on Redupon recently when my therapist, who I'm seeing twice a week, went off for three months to have a baby.

My dad is always criticising me for eating and being overweight and he caught me eating between meals a few times. I stopped eating with the family after that. I hate eating in front of people. This makes my dad very

upset because he's very into the family eating together and saying grace before meals. To punish me, he said he was going to lock me in my room so I couldn't get out.

I've just been through a period of starvation, but I started eating again when I saw a fantastic lady last week about my bulimia. I don't feel alone with the bulimia any more. I cried when I told her about vomiting and she was crying with me! I'm now eating cream-crackers so I can keep my weight down, and I've started meeting in a group with other bulimics.

#### *Nightmares and Flashbacks*

I have flashbacks sometimes, especially when I've been talking about the abuse. I'm very frightened of going to work when I'm having one. And as I told you, I still have terrible nightmares about what my stepfather did to me. They've come back since I've had to be in touch with my feelings about the sexual abuse [because of therapy]. It's as if the abuse is happening all over again.

I also have nightmares in which I cut off my breasts because I don't want to be a woman. I don't want men to look at me. I have nightmares every time someone hurts me, especially if it's a man. In my nightmares, I get abused by the people who abused me or hurt me. Although my dad didn't sexually abuse me, he rapes me in my nightmares.

#### *Stealing*

Two years ago I stole about R500 [£80/\$167] from my mom, then I left her a note and went to town. I didn't want to go home after that, but my mom wasn't angry with me when I returned. I'd have *preferred* her to be angry. If one of her other kids had done this, she'd have been furious.

I don't know why I steal. I've stolen Redupons and laxatives and shoplifted. When I get the hell in with myself, I steal tiny things even though I could pay for them. I was caught for shoplifting the other day, but I didn't get into much trouble for it.

#### *Academic Performance and Work*

*School Work.* I used to bunk [skip] school. I couldn't study or learn because of all the abuse. I couldn't remember anything. I only got 3 per cent for my final exams in standard six [8th grade], so I had to repeat the year. It was hard to accept this failure. I had to go to a guidance teacher for help when I was in standard eight [10th grade] because my work was pathetic. My granny helped me to study and got me to write down things

to help me remember them, but I went blank as soon as I walked into the classroom, particularly for tests.

*Job Problems.* I've had a lot of problems at work. On my last job, I'd do everything to try to please people. I'd take on too much work, then, when I couldn't finish it, I'd take it home and work on it through the night. I'd take tablets to stay awake and tablets to go to work the next day, so eventually I landed up in hospital.

My boss was very understanding about my needing time off for therapy. But the people I work with don't want me in the office because I don't talk to anybody. Twice now I've been in such a state that I couldn't work. I had to sign a form to say that I won't get depressed or upset at work any more. After I returned from the hospital, I had to sign another form warning me that I'll be fired if my difficulties at work continue.

#### *Religious Disillusion*

I couldn't believe that my stepfather would go to church with us while he was sexually abusing me. After a while I totally withdrew from the church and I still don't want to go. I hate God. If He's in control of everything, I can't understand why He let so many terrible things happen to me.

### THE STRUGGLE TO HEAL

When Elsa told my mom about my stepfather's abuse, I was sent to see Elsa's therapist. I couldn't understand why I was sent to a man. He even resembled my stepfather! He knew I'd been sexually abused by my stepfather but I couldn't speak to him about it so I just talked about my school work.

I was the eldest in a therapy group I attended about three years ago. There were sexually abused children in it from the age of five to twelve. I couldn't believe how nice it was to work with children. I'd never before looked back and seen myself as a little girl. When I started speaking to this therapist about my sexual abuse for the first time, I had a very hard time talking about it. I was all closed up. I felt that my therapist, like others, wouldn't understand my feelings and see it from my point of view. I felt I was in the wrong because I reacted so differently from Elsa. But finally it all came out. Because I'd always blamed myself for what happened to me, my therapist told me to look at an eight-year-old child and ask myself, 'Did she look for the abuse?' That made me realise that I couldn't have done anything to stop it. From then on I started feeling it wasn't my fault.

The therapist I see now is really fantastic. Most of my pay goes on therapy, but that's OK. I'm very impatient to be better. I always used to ignore feeling hurt or terrified or angry but now I'm trying to recognise and accept these feelings. And I always used to try to be perfect but now I'm rebelling against everything and breaking all the rules. For example, I started drinking coffee and smoking when I'm not at home, although my religion forbids it (my parents confiscate my cigarettes if I smoke at home).

I phoned Rape Crisis one day and they put me in touch with a woman called Susanna who was also sexually abused by her father. She has been wonderful and she means a great deal to me – more than my mother. She listens and hears my feelings. I feel I've really changed since I met her. I don't feel as alone with my problems any more. I keep phoning her because I can talk to her and I feel she understands me, whereas I can't talk to my mom.

Two weeks ago, Beatrix gave my brother Willie a letter I wrote asking him why he sexually abused me. I also told him that I'd spoken about it to others. He showed Elsa my letter and told her it wasn't true. But he's avoiding me, which is great. When a friend of mine confronted her brother about sexually abusing her, he raped her again. I've been scared of Willie doing that to me.

Until my husband abused me, I thought I'd forgiven my stepfather for what he did to me. Then I realised I was still sitting with all my hurt and anger. I plan to phone him and talk to him about the abuse some time because I feel it's the only way I'll be able to break away from it. Every VW I see reminds me of him because he had one. I want this kind of reminder to stop.

I love horror stories, especially movies. I substitute my stepfather, Willie, and all of the others for the characters in the stories so that it's them being cut up and killed. My church says I'm supposed to forgive, but I can't.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### Incest and Revictimisation

Incest survivors who were sexually abused by many different perpetrators, like Marie Malan, are even more likely to be blamed for the abuse than survivors who were sexually abused by only one perpetrator. The more perpetrators there were, the greater the blame tends to be. For example, a

Freudian-influenced clinician might see Marie as consciously or unconsciously placing herself in vulnerable situations out of a masochistic desire to be sexually assaulted. Such interpretations are not only cruel; they also reveal a total failure to understand children's powerlessness and the dynamics of incestuous abuse.

One of the most definitive findings in my probability sample survey of 930 women in San Francisco is that incest survivors were much more likely to be raped by nonrelatives<sup>2</sup> than women with no incest history (Russell, 1986). They were also significantly more likely to be raped and beaten by a husband, sexually abused by an authority figure and subjected to pornography-related sexual abuse (Russell, 1986). Clearly, revictimisation of incest survivors is a prevalent phenomenon. While any kind of victim-blaming interpretation of these findings must be firmly rejected, it is important to try to explain this phenomenon called 'revictimisation'.

Researchers David Finkelhor and Angela Browne (1986) hypothesise that there are four major trauma-related factors common to victims of child sexual abuse: *traumatic sexualisation*, *powerlessness*, *betrayal* and *stigmatisation*. The application of these four factors helps to explain why incest survivors are particularly prone to revictimisation.<sup>3</sup>

*Traumatic sexualisation* 'refers to a process in which a child's sexuality is shaped in a developmentally inappropriate and interpersonally dysfunctional fashion as a result of sexual abuse' (Finkelhor and Browne, 1986, p. 181). There are two seemingly opposite responses by many incest survivors to traumatic sexualisation. One is to become promiscuous (as Lara Newman did. See Chapter 5). This reaction often results when incest survivors cope with sexual abuse by learning to divorce sex from their feelings of love, caring and intimacy. Sex becomes a commodity – something they can use in a detached way to obtain rewards. Incest survivors who become prostitutes often exhibit this response pattern.

Aversion to sex in relationships that are otherwise desired is the other common response to incest victimisation. Marie, for example, found most sexual acts with her first fiancé and her husband repugnant. Elsa's reaction was similar, although less extreme. Elsa was able to tolerate sexual intercourse with her husband whereas for Marie, intercourse was always painful and violating. Marie was also manifestly traumatised by simply being naked with her husband. Fellatio was completely horrific to both these women. Their aversion to these sex acts was clearly related to their childhood experiences of incestuous abuse.

Like Marie, women who are averse to sex are very likely to be raped in their intimate sexual relationships. Most men assume they have the right to have sex with their wives when they want it, and they are legally

correct in this assumption in many countries.<sup>4</sup> Marie's husband Kobus, for example, felt entitled to rape her on a regular basis. Men engaged in sexual relationships outside of marriage also typically believe that once they have 'possessed' a woman sexually, she loses her right to reject their advances. These observations help to explain why adult incest survivors like Marie are frequently raped by the men with whom they are intimately involved.

*Powerlessness*, the second major trauma-related factor suggested by Finkelhor and Browne, refers to the process by which 'the child's will, desires, and sense of efficacy are continually contravened' (1986, p. 183). The powerlessness engendered by incestuous abuse typically involves the body space of a child being repeatedly invaded against her will. Two of the consequences of this powerlessness are the child's perception of herself as a victim, and a lowered sense of efficacy. 'Having been a victim on repeated occasions may make it difficult to act without the expectation of being revictimised', Finkelhor and Browne explain (1986, p. 192).

Marie's body and psychological boundaries had been violated so severely and frequently by her stepfather and other perpetrators that her sense of efficacy appears to have been completely shattered. When her 15-year-old brother Willie descended on her for his pound of flesh, she 'just lay there and let him do what he wanted' because 'by that time, I felt I couldn't do anything'. Nor was Marie subsequently able to reject men's unwanted sexual advances with conviction or assertiveness (for example, her first fiancé and the sexual harassers at her work). 'When I say "no" people don't believe me', Marie complained. Inability to resist sexual overtures in a predatory family and society tends to result in more frequent victimisation.

Marie was also intimidated by her stepfather's threat to do to her what the men in two pornographic movies were portrayed as doing to two women (one of them depicted rape followed by mutilation and murder) if she disclosed his sexual assaults. 'That's why I'd rather have died than tell anyone', Marie explained.

A child's feelings of powerlessness are typically exacerbated if the person to whom she discloses her experience of sexual abuse does not believe her. In Marie's case, the social worker who was the first person she told about her stepfather's abuse charged her with 'lying and looking for attention'. Her mother also disbelieved her when Marie revealed that Willie had sexually assaulted her.

Besides traumatic sexualisation and powerlessness, incest survivors typically feel betrayed and stigmatised. *Betrayal* in this context refers to the dynamic in which 'children discover that someone on whom they were [or

are] vitally dependent has caused them harm' (Finkelhor and Browne, 1986, p. 182).

A common consequence of betrayal is an impaired ability to judge the trustworthiness of others. This impaired capacity makes survivors more vulnerable to subsequent abuse, both sexual and nonsexual. In Marie's case, she trusted that Kobus, her husband-to-be, understood her antipathy to sex and that he would be patient and gentle with her. Instead, he eschewed physical affection and 'foreplay'<sup>5</sup> and raped her throughout their brief marriage. Marie's repeated victimisations gave her no basis for learning to distinguish men who are trustworthy from those who are not. Elsa was more fortunate in being loved and wooed by a suitor (Mark) who made no sexual advances towards her. Nevertheless, it was Elsa's inability to trust this apparently trustworthy man that ultimately destroyed their relationship.

The ultimate betrayal that is committed when a parent sexually violates his/her child adds greatly to the child's feelings of powerlessness. It is much more difficult to reject a parent, particularly a father – the supreme authority and power in a patriarchal family. This is all the more true when children are taught, as Marie and Elsa were, that 'he [the father] is the law'.

*Stigmatisation* is Finkelhor and Browne's fourth and final trauma-related factor that is commonly experienced by survivors of child sexual abuse. It refers to 'the negative connotations – e.g., badness, shame, and guilt' that are communicated to the child by the perpetrator and/or inferred from the abuse experiences 'that then become incorporated into the child's self-image' (Finkelhor and Browne, 1986, p. 184).

In general, whether or not incest survivors disclose the experience, they are likely to internalise the notion that they have lost their 'purity' and have become 'damaged goods'. Feeling dirty was one of the manifestations of Marie's feelings of stigmatisation. She even enjoyed vomiting because it 'made me feel cleaner'. And she would try to scrub herself clean after her stepfather's sexual assaults.

According to Finkelhor and Browne, feelings of isolation and a sense of being different because of the sexual abuse cause many survivors of child sexual abuse to gravitate to various stigmatised levels of society. Marie specifically mentioned that she had been 'isolated my whole life'. She described her isolation at school and at work, her lack of friends as an adult, her discomfort with all 'grown-ups', and her isolation among her siblings who felt intense jealousy towards her.

Marie also said she felt 'different from everybody else'. For a long time she believed she was the only one in her family who was being sexually



abused and she surmised that there must be something wrong with her to account for this. 'It's as if there's a sign on my forehead saying, "Abuse me!"' she declared. Marie's feelings of being different, isolated and bad are likely to have contributed to her inability to protect herself from unwanted sexual experiences and her submissive behaviour in abusive relationships.

Other significant manifestations of stigmatisation in Marie's case are her extreme sense of guilt, badness and shame. 'I'd always blamed myself for what happened to me', Marie admitted. 'I felt I'd sinned ... and I wouldn't be forgiven.' Indeed, Marie believed that being incestuously abused was God's punishment for her presumed badness. Self-blame contributes to despair and self-destructive behaviour (such as attempted suicides) rather than generating resistance and rage, and makes it more difficult to fend off predatory individuals.

Marie's sense of badness was no doubt intensified by the victim-blaming that her relatives heaped on her. Her second stepfather called her a whore and threatened to rape her; her brother called her a whore and repeatedly raped her; her uncle treated her like a whore by offering to pay her for sex, Jacobus, Hoffie's cousin, gave her a few pence for oral sex; and Hoffie and Hendrik paid for her sexual submission with gifts. Marie appears to have been too beaten down in her childhood to feel outrage at being branded a whore.<sup>6</sup>

Marie's shoplifting places her at risk of being arrested and incarcerated. Were this to occur, it would add to the stigma she already experiences as an obese, bulimic and psychologically fragile woman who has spent a considerable amount of time in mental hospitals.

In addition to Finkelhor and Browne's four trauma-related factors, other factors can be significant contributors to revictimisation, such as a child's personality or temperament, her ordinal position, the role she plays in the family and how her parents treat her compared to their other children. For example, Marie's intense desire to be special recurs throughout her story like a theme song. It presumably contributed to both her sense of powerlessness and her vulnerability to betrayal. For example, when she was 13 years old, she said she was willing to have a sexual relationship with Hendrik, a 38-year-old family friend, because 'I didn't have anybody I felt special to'.

Closely related to Marie's desire to be special was her desperate yearning for love. This also increased her powerlessness, and hence her vulnerability, to Hoffie's and others' sexual victimisation. 'He said he was doing it because he loved me', Marie reported. 'I've always wanted love and I'd do anything for it.'

One of the extraordinary ironies in Marie's story is the combination of her repeated sexual violations and her repeated claims to being 'special' –

special to Hoffie, to Spike ('I was always his special one among the kids'), to her real father before he remarried her mother and to her beloved grandmother. Although Marie described her brother Willie as her mother's favourite, she also described herself as special to her mother because 'I just do what she wants me to do'. It appears that Marie's parents and others rewarded her for qualities that made her more vulnerable to sexual assault. It is clearly very dangerous for a female to be submissive and co-operative in an environment pervaded by predatory males.

Some people interpret submissive behaviour by victims towards their perpetrators as a sign of indifference, lack of trauma, or even enjoyment. Marie's story demonstrates the spuriousness of these interpretations. Although she was not able to resist Willie's repeated rapes assertively, she was so disturbed by his hostile and sadistic treatment of her that she attempted suicide.

This analysis shows how incestuous abuse can disarm the child, adolescent or adult survivor, rendering her more vulnerable to other abusive individuals.

#### EXPLAINING COPING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ELSA AND MARIE

Although Elsa was also sexually abused by four perpetrators, she, unlike Marie, was immensely assertive in her resistance to their attacks. This may explain why she was subjected to far less sexual abuse than Marie – in both the number of perpetrators and the severity and frequency of the sexual abuse.

Elsa suggested several intriguing explanations for her and Marie's very different reactions to being sexually abused by three of the same perpetrators (Hoffie, Pieter and Jacobus).

What made me very determined and very aggressive about Hoffie's sexual attacks is that I had the responsibility as the eldest daughter to protect my two younger sisters at a very young age. Because my mum never stopped working, this responsibility continued through my teenage years. I think my mum's giving me so much responsibility at such a young age is what got me through all this.

Also, my mum didn't protect me the way she protected Marietjie. I believe that if a parent – after finding out that her child was sexually abused – provides her with total protection and allows her to do anything she wants, the child becomes weak. A sexually abused child wants her



protector to give her total attention, to feel sorry for her and to make her feel she's a very important person. When a child doesn't have that – as I didn't – she has to learn to take care of herself. I had to choose between becoming a very pathetic person or fighting back. I think I made it through all those devastating experiences because I had to fight for myself. My mother was involved with Marietjie, not me, because I was considered the strong one. 'Elsa will get through it', my mother used to say.

I think a child's personality also affects the way she responds to something like this. I have a very determined personality while Marietjie is the opposite. For example, when we were children we were supposed to go home right after school, but I sometimes stayed and secretly participated in sports. I'd tell my parents when I got home that the teacher had kept me at school because my homework wasn't done. Marietjie is like my mum whereas I'm more like my dad. My mum is very soft – a walkover who is used by everybody. People also walk over Marietjie. She isn't the fighter that I am. She's learned from the abuse that you do as people say, and she accepts everything that gets dealt to her. She's still like that today. She hasn't learned to say 'No', whereas I fought back from a very early age. Like Marietjie, I was very unhappy about what HOFFIE and the others were doing to me, but I was determined that they wouldn't do it with my permission. By fighting, I sometimes succeeded in stopping them. If I want something in life, I do everything I can to get it.

Also, Marietjie had a harder life than I did because she got a husband who was a double of HOFFIE. Kobus was very nice before they got married, so I didn't think he'd behave the way he did. In contrast, Mark gave me unconditional love for all those years without making any demands. I think he has something to do with the way I turned out.

Elsa's provocative theory that daughters who are required to be surrogate mothers to their younger siblings (typically oldest or only daughters) are more likely to be fighters who militantly resist their sexual perpetrators, deserves research attention. (Both Nida Webber and Elsabé Groenewald were also violent resisters who were oldest daughters [see Chapters 2 and 6]). That there may be a relationship between the relatively powerful role of the 'little mother' and a child's response to sexual violation seems highly plausible. Elsa's hypothesis that too much protection for an incest survivor has an infantilising effect that undermines her capacity to heal also merits further research.

If eldest daughters who are pressured into surrogate mother roles are more likely to manifest aggressive resistance towards their abusers, this, of

course, does not necessarily spare them from being victimised (as is obvious in Elsa's case). Indeed, feminist researcher and clinician Judith Herman found that 80 per cent of the survivors of father-daughter incest in her study were eldest or only daughters (1981, p. 79). Many of these girls were pressed into service as surrogate wives as well as mothers. In Elsa's case, she successfully resisted her stepfather HOFFIE's attempts to force her into a wife role on an ongoing basis, so he coerced his second more compliant daughter into being a more regular sexual 'partner'. As resistant as Nida and Elsabé also were, they were less successful than Elsa in escaping a surrogate wife role. This only goes to show that a child's resistance, no matter how determined, is rarely a match for much bigger and stronger male adults.

### THREE GENERATIONS OF INCESTUOUS ABUSE

Although the notion that incest tends to cluster in certain families is often exaggerated (perhaps because many people prefer to believe that most families are immune from this abhorrent crime), there is sound evidence for the existence of incest-prone families. Psychologist and researcher Kathleen Faller, for example, reports that 'mothers in situations of intrafamilial sexual abuse are frequently found to have been sexually abused as children' (1988, p. 105). And psychiatrist and researcher June Goodwin found that one or both parents of a quarter of the incest survivors in her study had also been incestuously abused (1982, p. 4). Clearly, the extended family of Elsa and Marie is an example of such a family. The Malans provide a case study of a family suffering from at least three generations of known incest victimisation involving (among others) Elsa and Marie, their mother and Elsa's son Pierre.

Faller offers many possible explanations for two or three generation incestuous abuse in which mothers are victims. She notes that some form of maternal 'incapacity' is a frequent characteristic of such families, for example, mothers with serious drinking problems, mental illness, mental retardation and/or physical incapacities (1988, p. 106). Faller suggests that, 'These kinds of problems mean that the mother is not available as a protector and in addition that she may not be a gratifying partner to her husband' (1988, p. 106). Of course, she may not be a gratifying partner because *he* is not gratifying or even tolerable to her, in or out of bed.

In contrast to the kinds of 'incapacities' mentioned by Faller, Mrs Malan's inability to protect her children appears to have been caused by at least two other factors: her role as exclusive breadwinner which

necessitated her working very long hours outside the home, and the fact that she was a victim of such severe battering and torture by her husband that her life was repeatedly at risk and, according to Elsa, she became a broken shell of a woman. Torture often has this effect.

Mrs Malan apparently told Marie that she (Mrs Malan) had also been sexually abused by Hoffie. Presumably, this means he raped her. Research and common sense suggest that wife rape typically reflects or causes a poor marital sexual relationship (see Russell, 1990), thereby serving to increase the likelihood that some fathers will seek sexual gratification from one or more of their children.

However, the focus on the poor parental sexual relationship that is frequently found in incest families often reflects an inappropriate mother-blaming approach to multi-generational incest families. Fallor rightly emphasises that,

The perpetrator is the person who does the abusing, not the mother or the child. While his behavior is motivated by multiple factors, the underlying cause is whatever in his personality or functioning compels him to engage in sex with children. The propensity to abuse may be enhanced by cultural supports, environmental factors, maternal dysfunction, marital discord, and sexual dysfunction in the marriage.... But the sexual abuse would not happen without there being an adult who has sexual desires toward children and the willingness to act upon them. (1988, p. 115)

Goodwin reports that 'In at least 30 per cent of families with more than one child, multiple children are involved in the incest' (1982, pp. 3-4). Hence, although the quantity of sexual abuse that occurred in the Malan family is unusually high, multiple victimisation is a well-known feature of many incest families.

#### THE IMPACT OF TORTURE

There are undoubtedly many instances throughout the world in which fathers have treated their daughters as savagely as Hoffie treated Elsa and Marie – or even worse. Nevertheless, the physical, psychological and sexual brutality to which he subjected them, on his own and with his two companions, is extreme. Without a doubt, it qualifies as torture: 'the systematic and deliberate infliction of acute pain in any form by one person on another, or on a third person, in order to accomplish the purpose of the former against the will of the latter' (Amnesty International, 1973, p. 31).

Amnesty International distinguishes between physical and mental torture, maintaining that: 'In general the effect of physical torture ... will be the same on any human system' (1973, p. 32). On the other hand, mental or psychological torture 'usually depends on the value system of the victim for its effect' (1973, p. 32).

Both physical and mental torture occurred in Mrs Malan's family. The value system that causes women like her to stay married to their torturers is often much more effective in locking them into this institution than the value systems of hostages, or prison or concentration camp inmates. High walls, barbed wire, guards and locked escape-proof cells are needed for prisoners and concentration camp inmates precisely because their value systems are usually inimical to those of their torturers (for a fuller analysis of battered women as torture victims, see Russell, 1990; Russell, 1994c).

Children are even more constrained than tortured wives by their physical dependence on their real or surrogate parents, as well as by laws which make it illegal for them to physically escape their families unless they can convince a court of law that they have been the victims of physical or sexual abuse. This is not to say that the value system of children is unimportant in such situations. They typically learn that their parents must be obeyed and loved, and that their parents are supposed to love and take care of them. These values intensify their mental suffering when their parents are cruel and rejecting.

Hoffie's methods of physically torturing his children included starvation and repeated beatings over many years. In addition, because he refused to provide them with any financial support, he was responsible for their becoming homeless and being separated from their mother, albeit temporarily, because of her inability to support them on her meagre salary. Hoffie also subjected Elsa and Marie to years of rape and other forms of sexual abuse – alone and with his two collaborators. Although their brother Willie was also a victim of Hoffie's torture, he became a perpetrator as well; he raped Marie in an attempt to destroy her and also attacked and wounded her with scissors. Similarly, Mrs Malan also played a role in the torture by beating up Elsa and Marie.

There is always an emotional dimension to physical torture. The emotional aspect of the torture was magnified for the Malan children because it was their stepfather, not an unrelated person, who tortured them. The fact that Hoffie forcibly prevented their mother from being able to protect them or even to show affection towards them also intensified the heinous nature of the torture.

Other examples of the mental torture to which Hoffie subjected his children include his frequent threats to kill them; his constantly terrorising

them with his gun; their having to witness him repeatedly beat and threaten to kill their mother; their being forced to watch him attempt (probably feigned) to drown her in the bath while forbidding them to cry; their having to see the pleasure he took in starving them and taunting them as they watched him eat; their having their gifts confiscated by him and sold for his own personal gain; their being manipulated by his divide and conquer tactics (such as his gift-giving to Marie) thereby creating immense hostility between the children.

In addition, HOFFIE forced Elsa and Marie to watch extremely violent pornography; intimidated them into keeping quiet about their years of sexual victimisation; and took delight in forcing Elsa to parade in the nude in front of himself and Pieter while they ridiculed her body and sexual organs.

Torture victims tend to regress in highly threatening situations. They frequently internalise their torturers' views because the torturers have the power of life and death over them. The victims typically become more attuned to their persecutors' moods and needs than their own because it is the torturer's will that prevails in these relationships. This may partially explain why most incest survivors blame themselves and/or their mothers rather than their perpetrators for their traumatic experiences. Elsa was so convinced that she was bad and worthless and deserved the torture, that she actively sought punishment from her mother when HOFFIE was no longer in her life. Indeed, it was at this time of relative freedom from abuse that she undertook her most serious attempt to kill herself.

Elsa provides a fascinating description of her and her siblings' reactions to their sudden liberation from HOFFIE's persecution. Perhaps she and her mother would have been less bewildered by it had they been able to conceptualise HOFFIE's reign of terror as torture. Most people probably have a much better understanding of wild and undisciplined behaviour by newly released prisoners of war, hostages or concentration camp inmates than by children newly released from a family that had been ruled by a sadistic father who had tortured them. This may be because the notion of torture is rarely applied to intrafamilial behaviour, no matter how cruel it is.

Marie and Elsa's stories show the devastation that can result when men with power over their families choose to abuse it and are not accountable to anyone for their behaviour. HOFFIE believed he had the right to sexually abuse his daughters, rape his wife, starve his children, beat up and torture his whole family, threaten their lives, and kill them – if he so desired. Marie, Elsa and their siblings were trapped for many years in a home that had become a torture chamber. Their stepfather was the sadistic master-

torturer; their mother and brother Willie – victims, collaborators and perpetrators.

## SEXUAL SLAVERY

HOFFIE's extreme sexism was manifested in his oft-expressed view that females in his family, no matter what their age, were obligated to serve his sexual needs. This amounts to a belief in a father's right to make sex slaves of his children, or, in Elsa's words: 'that fathers own their children and can do what they like with them'.

When eight-year-old Elsa screamed and begged HOFFIE to stop forcing her to hold his penis, she reported that 'he told me it was my duty so he could make me a woman'. When she resisted being raped by him and Jacobus and pleaded with them to rather kill her first, 'They said, "This is what womanhood is about."'

No wonder Marie didn't want to be a woman (she said, 'being a woman means being abused'). No wonder she wanted to have a sex change operation; had nightmares in which she cut off her breasts, and felt it was a sin to have a period and to be a woman. And no wonder Elsa, like Marie, felt 'at times that I was only created for a man's use'.

Although HOFFIE was the most savage of the Afrikaner perpetrators described in this study, several of the others were also brutal and authoritarian, and also manifested a sense of entitlement to have sex with their daughters. There were no comparable cases among English-speaking South Africans.

Marie and Elsa read earlier drafts of each other's stories. Despite the many negative things they said about each other, they did not convey any particular distress about this, nor about the fact that their stories would be published. Their brother Willie also volunteered to be interviewed for my study on the grounds that he too had been a victim of severe child abuse. Not surprisingly, he objected to being portrayed as an incest perpetrator.

Having presented the stories of three Afrikaner women, the next chapter will be devoted to the account of an English-speaking South African incest survivor who was sexually assaulted by her grandfather.

## 5 The Making of a Whore: Lara Newman's Story

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

### INTRODUCTION

Lara Newman (a pseudonym) was born in Johannesburg into a middle-class English-speaking South African family. She was 23 years old with two younger sisters aged 18 and 16 at the time of the interview in 1991. She was married and living in Cape Town with her husband, Brian, and two children – a boy aged five and a girl aged two.

After Lara's father matriculated, he 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 very hard-working and devoted to his occupation. Her mother left school after finishing standard eight (10th grade) and worked as a bookkeeper before becoming a full-time housewife.

Lara's maternal grandfather, who raped her, lived in Durban, a coastal city a few hundred miles from Johannesburg. The sexual assaults occurred over many years during holiday visits.

Although Lara went to school at a Catholic convent, she was brought up as an Anglican. Anglicanism remains her religious preference now. She was studying for a Bachelor of Accounting degree at the time of the interview. Her husband, Brian, passed his matric and is now a successful marketing manager.

I chose the title for this chapter – 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.

Lara's story provides many other insights, including the considerable 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 some incest survivors experience along with confusion and ambivalence. The analysis at the end of Lara's story will focus on the relationship between incest victimisation and prostitution.

as well as the association between incestuous abuse and sexual exploitation by therapists.

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, in contrast to the male-identified picture that unfolds in the following account.

The reader should be alert to the dissimilarities between Lara's story and the stories of Nida Webber, Elsa Foster and Marie Malan that appear to be related to ethnic differences.

### LARA'S STORY

#### **Family Background**

I love my dad. He's super. He's brilliant. 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. If my mother has hugged me ten times in my life, that's a lot. And she never complimented me when I was growing up. She'd always criticise me, saying 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're the best!'

My mom and her two younger sisters had a very strict upbringing. My grandfather [Lara's perpetrator] brought them up with weird ideas about sex and didn't allow them to have boyfriends or to wear make-up or to go out. My mom also brought us up very strictly. 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 mom didn't believe in spoiling us.

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 waist. My mom thinks children's sexual exploration is disgusting. How ironic that my grandfather taught her that sex is bad and that she must be good, and then he raped me!

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 with me when I started my period, I'd learned about sex firsthand as well as at school.

My mother taught us to 'respect your parents'. I treat them like God and I don't do anything to juggle their world. I don't like my mom but I do respect her. 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 was very, very vain and dressed to appeal to women. He'd wear cravats and paisley scarves, and he dyed his hair when it turned grey. He was successful with women but he got to an age where it became harder for him to get them because he wanted 20-year-olds. His womanising didn't prevent my mom from putting him on a pedestal. Although he died 11 years ago when I was 12, she has always talked a lot about him. It used to get on my nerves to listen to her tell me what an amazing man he was when I knew he was a complete pig.

### Incestuous Abuse

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

My family often spent Christmas at my grandparents' house in Durban. After lunch we all had afternoon naps. I was lying asleep on a bed one day when I was four-and-a-half years old, when I was woken by the feel of something behind me. My grandfather, who was 60 years old at the time, 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're 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 sodomised me that time or entered me vaginally from behind, but it was extremely sore. All the different times mesh into one and it's difficult to distinguish the first from all the others.

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 from the anal intercourse. Maybe it was also caused by the tearing of my hymen. The pain 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.

I don't know if my grandfather did anything to me *before* I was four. I 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.

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

I always saw my grandfather as a big, ugly man, though *he* thought he was very debonair. 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 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'd 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'd put it in my mouth. Then he'd 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.

When I was 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. My grandfather would do it to me every day or every second day, and sometimes twice a day. This continued for eight years with a break of one year when he and my grandmother 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'd 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 it was our *secrèt* and that I was so special to him *because* he abused me. 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 OK because I was his special little girl.

I don't think my grandfather was at all bothered by what he was doing to me. And I don't think it ever entered his head that he might be harming me.

Me and my sisters would get many more sweets when my grandfather was around. He'd 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 realised what I had to do if I wanted these treats.

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 having sex with him, but mostly he gave me things to eat.

I loved it so much when my grandfather started cuddling and kissing me. 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. And I started developing breasts when I was ten or eleven. I used to feel really good and special when my grandfather used to touch them. He'd say, 'I want to watch you shower.' I enjoyed him watching me as I soaped myself all over. Afterwards he'd 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're my woman.' He also kept telling me, 'You're 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 realised 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 girl, 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, 'I want to do this quickly', or 'No, I'm not ready yet. Let's go to the shop first.' And he'd say, 'Please', which I loved. He never said that when I was little, 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 began reading about incest and thinking, 'Hang on. My grandfather's doing this to me in real life!'

My grandfather had a shop in Durban where people bet on horses. He took me there once when I was wearing shorts. After fingering me he made me walk in front of all the men in the room while he stroked my breasts and said, 'This is my girl.' Some of them said things like, 'You're so lucky to have this girl.' I felt absolutely mortified with all the 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.

One time when I was 11, my grandfather had me on his lap while he was drawing. After a while he stopped drawing and started stroking me, which felt nice but dirty. Then he wrote on a piece of paper, 'You have such beautiful legs; 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 brave and I said to him, 'You're 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 life! Then he said, 'How can you call me that? I love you. I'd never hurt you. You're mine, and no other man is ever going to have you.'

I was taught at Catholic school that if I prayed for things, I'd get them. So every night I prayed, 'Please let my grandfather die'. One day when I was 12, my mother told me and my sisters that my grandfather was very, very sick and that she had to catch a plane to 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'd died because my prayers had been answered.

My grandfather didn't sexually abuse my sisters. They 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. I have a very, very strong suspicion that he abused one of my cousins who lived in Durban. She's about 20 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 any more, I'll go to Durban to speak to her. Right now my mother wouldn't tolerate my doing this.<sup>1</sup>

### *Secrecy and Disclosure*

I didn't tell my mother what my grandfather was doing to me until this year. I think he knew I wouldn't tell her when I was little. When I was a bit older, he told me 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 real mommy's girl who never did anything wrong. 'Lara, go to your room and tidy up', she'd 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.

When I was about seven, 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. Her adoration of him was another reason. I thought it'd devastate 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 [3rd grade]. She had a very liberal mother who gave Lauren a book on the birds and bees. When Lauren told me what she'd read I told her, 'That's what my grandfather does to me.' She said, 'Don't lie! Only mommies and daddies do it.' Once again I learned that I mustn't talk about it.

When I got home that day, I fished around in my parents' drawers and found a book on sex education that 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. The principal called me into her office to scold me. 'This is totally vile, my girl', she said. 'How could you do this? Sex is something between a married couple and you're not supposed to talk about it. I know what kind of woman your mother is, and if I told her about this, she'd be horrified and disgusted. Your mother has not brought you up like this. What has got into you?'

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

I met Brian, my husband, when I was 13 years old. He was the next person [after Lauren] I told about my grandfather. He was very understanding even though he had no knowledge of incest. He knew exactly how to treat me, and he still does. He told me, 'Tell your mother'. I said, 'Are you mad?' Every year after that he'd say, 'Will you tell your mother *now*?' I was so screwed up this year [1991] that I didn't care about my mother's feelings like I usually do. That's why I was able to tell her about it.

I opened up the conversation with my mother by saying, 'I have something to tell you, but I don't know if you already know.' Then I told her that my grandfather had sexually abused me without telling her any of the details about what he did to me. If I'd told her about the sodomy she'd have had a coronary. She asked me why I thought she might have known 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 I'd have taken you for a gynaecological operation at that age and not told you what it was for?' I said, 'Yes, I do.' My mom denied this emphatically. When I asked her to tell me the name of the doctor she said she couldn't remember it, nor where the operation was done. 'Very convenient!' I thought.

My mom said what I told her couldn't be true because she would've seen the blood. She said that when she lost her virginity on her honeymoon, she screamed when my father penetrated her, and that 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 many 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 think my mother *does* believe me but she doesn't *want* to believe me because she absolutely worshipped her father.

I used to tell my mom when I was little that I was very sore down there [her genitals]. I remember the burning sensation more than anything else. My mom didn't believe in going to doctors, so she'd say, 'Not to worry.' Then she'd 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 [said with great scepticism] even though my genitals must have been red? She kept doing this all through my childhood but claims she never noticed any redness.

I used to have 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. I think the infection never got a chance to clear properly because I was continually holding my bladder. I always had an infection of one kind or another.

My mom 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. 'Lara,



it's bad enough that you've told *me*', she objected. 'You've ruined my life!' 'Who the hell does she think it is who's been fucked all these years?!' I thought. 'And it was *her* father who did it to me!' I said, 'You're telling me I ruined your life because I told you, and at the same time you're asking me why I didn't tell you!' I hate my mother. I could cheerfully throttle her sometimes. If she didn't know about the abuse, then she's a lot more stupid and naive than I thought. But if I fully accept that she did know, I think I might kill her. I really do. I absolutely cannot tolerate her condoning such a thing.

I told my sister Melissa about it but Courtney still doesn't know. I told Melissa 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 but Melissa says it didn't. And she accused me of lying when I told her. I hate her for not believing me. I still feel very, very bitter towards her for this. 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. People's reactions make it hard to talk about it because people don't want to hear. It makes them uncomfortable. It's a dirty subject. They feel burdened by it and don't know how to talk to you afterwards. They start watching what they say. I have to educate my friends about how to handle me. And they're apt to start thinking, 'This woman must be fucked up.'

My mother doesn't think my children should ever know about what happened to me, but I plan to tell them when they're old enough. I believe they have a right to know.

### Sexual Abuse by a Therapist

I started therapy when I was 21 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 Chris Kruger [a pseudonym]<sup>2</sup>, a psychologist 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 I felt he understood what had happened between me and my grandfather. I was totally overwhelmed by him for the first couple of weeks. He was so attentive and caring, and he understood what I had gone through. He'd always say, 'Yes, I understand.' That's what I fell in love with. He was the first person who under-

stood my feeling dirty. But he also kept asking me about sex. 'Do you masturbate? How often do you masturbate? Do you like masturbating?' 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 I act so flirtatiously when I'm around older men that they probably think, 'This girl really wants it.' *Did* I want him? God, No! He's really revolting. He's old and fat with thinning hair. He has big jowls and rheumy eyes. He has many repulsive manners. He's 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 he'd been in the army and that he'd spent a lot of time on the border of South Africa and Namibia. He talked a lot about the atrocities on black women that the soldiers there engaged in. He spoke about women being hung from trees and having their breasts cut off and about women being tied up on beds and being raped by the soldiers coming through the border. Even now as I talk about it, it makes me want to be sick.

Eventually Chris told me, 'I can't do therapy with you because I love you and I think about you all the time.' When he asked me around to his place one afternoon, he told me his police buddies had been trying to get him to talk about something, so they'd put something in his drink, which had made him want me. His wife wasn't home so he took me to his bedroom and fucked me for hours and hours. Eventually I said, 'I really have to go home to my husband and children.' Knowing he'd made it hard for me really turned him on.

Chris was very sadistic. He started subtly using what I'd told him about my grandfather to hurt me. For example, I'd told him about the humiliating time upstairs at my grandfather's shop. When I was in bed with Chris later, he asked me, '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 to fuck me and I'd say, 'Go for it!' Chris must have realised the effect it would have on me.

My husband didn't know I was having an affair. I found the secrecy quite thrilling. It was a replay of the secrecy of my relationship with my grandfather when I was little. But when Chris started talking about heavy political stuff, I became more scared than I'd ever been before. For example, he told me he was involved with the Civil Cooperation Bureau (CCB)<sup>3</sup> which was hired to kill David Webster.<sup>4</sup> As our relationship progressed he used to threaten me by saying, 'Don't tell anyone about this

because if you do, the security branch [political police with a reputation for ruthlessness] will find out and they'll harm your children'. He also 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 Mandela was released from prison. His friend wasn't willing to do whatever it was, and two days later, this man's daughter was killed.

Chris said that he'd been offered a contract to kill Nelson Mandela, Alan Boesak and Archbishop Desmond Tutu.<sup>5</sup> He told me, 'If I accept the contract, you can go with me afterwards to the United States'. I was totally appalled by what he was saying, and I thought, 'If he really does these things and I'm involved, I'll die'. I would have committed suicide because I could never live with being involved in things like that.

I got deeper and deeper into Chris's stories until I felt totally enmeshed in them. I had gone 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. This made me all the more scared. When I talk about this stuff, I think, 'No wonder they [presumably doctors] want to put me in Valkenberg!'<sup>6</sup> This was a replay of my not being able to tell my mother about my grandfather because I didn't think she'd believe me. I was caught in a trap with Chris and I couldn't get out of it because if I told people what he'd told me, they'd say I was wacko.

My affair with Chris lasted about a year and a half. We had a lot of sex during that time. It ended in May last year [1990] because an old friend of my family came to visit 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 might go after my kids. I was afraid that my phone was being tapped [this was a common government-sanctioned practice in South Africa]. I became a nervous wreck while I was seeing Chris.

## THE AFTERMATH OF INCESTUOUS ABUSE

### Being a 'Bitch'

I was a bitch when I was a little girl at school. I was really sick and cruel and sadistic. I wanted to get back at everybody. I used to say to 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're going to switch on the current and all the blood is going to spurt out of you.'

### Groomed to be a Whore

It wasn't so much the loss of my physical virginity that was traumatising; it was the loss of my innocence. I feel that I've become purely available for men to have sex with.

When I was very young, my grandfather started showing me his books and magazines with pictures of lots of nude women in fishnet stockings and no panties. There were a lot of open legs and open crotches. He made me pose in seductive positions like the women in the pictures. He'd show me the pictures and say, 'Do you see how pretty this girl looks? You must sit with your arms on your hips and your legs spread open like she does.' Then he'd make me do just that. Or he'd show me a picture and 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 as a little girl, I'm sitting with my legs wide open more often than not. Little girls don't naturally sit like that. My daughter doesn't sit like that. He trained me into it. Often I still automatically sit with my legs up and my hands on my knees. It worries me that it excites me quite a lot when I talk about this, and 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. 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 cupboard to have me look at them with him. The flat was bare. All the furniture had been moved out. The game was for me to take off an item of clothing each time I sat down. When he had me lying on my back on the dirty floor, he put his penis into 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.

Because 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', he'd say. 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 in some way or other. I also reward myself with something to eat if I'm good, because that's how my grandfather used to reward me.

A lover of mine 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 I won't have any more of these relationships. But since Jeff screwed me, I wanted him to pay me by giving me the sweater. When I told my husband about this, he said, 'I don't know why you can't see that you're letting him buy you'.

That's when it hit home that my grandfather had bought me. That's 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 sweater 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 men try to make me orgasm, I tense my muscles and tell myself, 'Stop. Don't have it now because he's trying to make me have it. Do it a little later when I make it happen.'

I only feel in control when it's a use/abuse situation. This juxtaposition of being in power and being a victim doesn't make sense. I feel 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 he would've come anyway. I know 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.' My image of a whore is of 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.' 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 just lie there and say, 'Do what you want'.

I think I'd be a prostitute if I hadn't married Brian. 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 I was born for it.

I'd 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'd nab chartered accountants and attorneys. I'd be very good at it. I'd 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, 'OK, 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. Posing seductively is normal to me because of my grandfather's training. It's like being a circus animal. If you train them hard enough, they'll remember what they have to do. My posing gets me into a lot of trouble because men have been taught to react to the signals I've been taught to act. I really hate men for this. What my grandfather did has screwed me up completely.

For the sake of my ego I'd like to think – and for a long time I *did* think – that my grandfather wasn't just attracted to little girls in general, but that he was attracted to *me*; that I had some overwhelming allure. The thought of him having other girls would have shattered me completely while our relationship was going on. When I look at old photographs of me when I was small, I try very hard to find this overwhelming allure, but I can't.

But now I feel I'm like a fairy with a magic wand who has the ability to say to any man, 'You're going to fall magically in love with me and you're 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 have done to my husband. Ian is still totally besotted with me. He started carrying a gun in his briefcase and visiting me every day to check that I wasn't with anyone besides my husband. He's told me that if he finds me with anybody else, he'll blow both our brains out because he believes I belong to him. Both Ian and Jeff have told me they're obsessed with me, which makes me feel powerful.

Jeff took me to see a movie called *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. In one scene there was a girl who was always paid for her relationships with men. She loved a guy who gave her what she thought was money, but it turned out to be a letter saying that he'd 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'm the best fuck in Texas.'

I started shaking and crying when I saw this movie. I identified so strongly with that woman that I walked out. I feel 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's how I want to die because I'm used to that kind of treatment.

### **The Impact on 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 the picnics and the happy times, but it seems as if my whole childhood was a slow-play movie about being raped.

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

### **Marriage**

Brian asked me to marry him when I was 13. I slept with him for the first time when I was 16; he was the first man I slept with – not counting my grandfather. He made me pregnant before we were married so I had to leave school before I completed matric. When it came to sex, Brian was very gentle. He taught me that sex isn't love and love isn't sex, but that sex can be an expression of love. That isn't the kind of love I had when I was little. My vagina never gets sore with him because he really puts my needs first.

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've 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, and my orgasms have been getting more intense as I get older and more experienced.

I feel very, very lucky to have Brian. He's very warm and cuddly and understanding. But I also find my relationship with him scary because it's 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 act like a little girl with my husband sometimes. I do silly things like run outside in the rain without any shoes on and eat ice-cream before dinner. He says, 'Lara, you're not five years old any more.' I tell the kids not to eat sweets before supper; meanwhile I eat them because I feel a need to be a little girl sometimes. My husband is almost like my daddy. When I was having all my affairs and coming home late, he got quite upset about it, but all he said was, 'Is this the time to come home?'

One night I came home at 4 a.m. and I said to my husband, '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'd only been married to you for six months.' 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 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 want to do now has to do with what happened to you as a child. No matter who you run away with and no matter where you run to, you'll never be able to run away from your childhood.' He then suggested that I go into therapy. I realised that night that my husband really loves me. 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 said, 'I don't want to lose you. I love you so much. But you can't see it. And you can't see what you're doing to yourself.'

But Brian does get upset and angry with me sometimes. 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's very patient with me. And when I can't cope, he always looks after the kids. He sees that they're fed and clothed and taken to school.

When Brian kisses and touches me it feels nice, like it used to feel with my grandfather. I think it's 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 can feel love is when I'm making 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. 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's now totally anti-men so she doesn't understand how I could become so promiscuous. People forget that being promiscuous doesn't mean that you're loving sex to bits.

I don't feel bad about having had affairs. I was being bad to my husband but I was being good for the men I had 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 girl. It was confusing. I didn't know what was good and what was bad any more because if I was good for one, then I was bad for the other.

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 to make men cry. It's enough to give me an orgasm.

### **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. It bothers me that the guys in my last couple of relationships have sodomised me without my feeling it. When it started to get painful, I switched off. Then 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 centred 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 sodomised me a few times because I virtually begged him to. If you get men to a certain point, they'll do anything. I put lubrication on myself when I have anal intercourse with my husband. But I don't do this with other men so it's bloody painful. It's dry and it burns.

When I was having sex with one of my lovers, I turned over on to my stomach and told him I wanted it that way, so he sodomised 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 I'm your grandfather.' I said, 'Yes', but in my mind I said, 'Yes, Grandpa.'

In replaying my past through sodomy, I think I'm trying to get back to the feelings I had when I was little so I can somehow reclaim something I lost because of the abuse. I feel I've lost so much.

### **Other Psychological Consequences**

#### *Feeling Dirty*

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

#### *Flashbacks*

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 [a disinfectant]. 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. When it made me throw up, she'd say, 'See how good it is? It's bringing up all your phlegm.' Meanwhile I was heaving because I was thinking of that man.

#### *Self-Blame*

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 feel guilty of being naughty. There must have been something about me, something about the way I sat, something that I did, that made my grandfather rape and abuse me. And there's still something about me because my therapist, Chris Kruger, also landed up in bed with me.

I feel I should be punished because I was so bad. I don't believe people when they say that I'm not responsible.

#### *Self-Destruction*

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. Sometimes I mutilate myself. A couple of months ago I kept scratching and cutting myself all over. I made little nicks in my flesh and watched myself bleed. And 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.

### *Depression and Breakdowns*

I've been hospitalised for severe depression. Psychiatrists have put me on anti-depressants, but nothing has helped. I'm fairly normal now, but two months ago I went totally wacky, totally out of my mind. I was on pills and I was high most of the time. I slopped around and didn't dress myself properly. Then one day I cut my hand breaking a window to get into my brother-in-law Ian's house when he was suicidal. When I got inside, I started crying because of the pain even though I hadn't cried for four years. I still can't remember exactly what happened but Ian tells me that I spoke like a little girl and crawled around on all fours. I remember saying, 'I promise I'll be a good girl. I promise I won't be naughty any more. Please tell me I've been a good girl.'

Ian had to take me to a doctor for sedation. The doctor wanted to put me away in Valkenberg [a mental hospital]. He said it wasn't fair on my family for me to be behaving like that. But instead of Valkenberg, I landed up in the Kenilworth Clinic where I was put on etamine. I'll never forget the message I got from this experience: 'Don't feel. It offends us. Deal with your feelings quietly in a corner.' Since then, even when I'm in therapy, I tell myself I must calm down and pull myself back.

### *Inability to Feel*

Not feeling is a very big problem for me. I can describe exactly what I felt when my grandfather abused me, but I can't feel it. Sometimes I think it's going to take something major like losing a child to make me feel again. I describe what happened to me as if I'm reading a shopping list, without emotion. I cried a bit about it in my third session with Chris, but I haven't cried when I talk about it since then. I hated 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's winning. I have two children and a husband whom I love but I never get a really warm feeling about them. But the idea of feeling again is also very scary because I'm afraid of what will happen when I start to feel again.

My best friend at school was a nun who I fell madly in love with. I thought then that I had very strong lesbian tendencies but now I think I loved her more as a mother and that she loved me as a daughter. I started to feel again during my relationship with her. 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. That's the last time I remember feeling. I'm very scared that I'm never going to be able to feel again.

### *Identity Problems*

I'm my husband's wife and my children's mother and my mother's daughter. But I don't have a clear idea of who I am as a person except that my grandfather raped me. That's the only identity I have that's concrete and clear.

Everyone says my sisters are so sweet, so good, so kind. Maybe I'd also have been a sweet, kind, gorgeous little girl if I hadn't been fucked around. I wonder who I would've been and what I would have done if all the abuse hadn't happened to me. I don't know if I can reclaim my original identity because I don't know what I was before. I feel there's a whole part of me I don't even know about.

I'm even scared of being free of the abuse. I've hung on to the damage and the ways I've coped with it 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 OK or will they put it back together skew? If I'm whole and I'm free of it, who will I be?

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

### *From Victim to Abuser*

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

I've also 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 a pin because I didn't look at her. When I watch my two-year-old daughter now, I sometimes hate her. I can see why people abuse their children if they've been abused. I feel like taking a pole and ramming it up her vagina and saying, 'This is what happened to me. I'll do this to you so you'll know what it's like.' I'm so jealous of her for being so lucky. She has everything including a father who is fantastic with her. It isn't fair. I think, 'You little bitch! You've got it and I never had it.' I've never felt that way towards my son.

I'm really worried sometimes about what I might do to my daughter. I get these funny moods when my brain almost trips and I often become very aggressive and very violent. 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 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, I think by now I'd probably have abused my daughter so she'd have to live the way I had to.

### *Psychic Murder*

What my grandfather did has not just damaged me. It feels like he took my life. He stamped on it. Then he chewed it, put it in the fire, spat on it and said, 'Now that your life is screwed up, live it!' That's the destruction he's 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 a man tells me at work to do something I don't want to do and I don't have time to do but I say 'yes' because I can't say 'no' to him. It has damaged me as a mother because I'm 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.

## THE STRUGGLE TO HEAL

Aside from seeing Chris Kruger, I've done a lot of therapy in the last two years. I wouldn't have been able to talk to you about the sexual abuse like I've talked today without therapy. Because I've talked a lot about it now and I've been in a self-help group at Safeline [a facility that assists survivors of child abuse] with other incest survivors, I've realised that I'm not the only one who feels like a whore and who has all the other feelings I've told you about.

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### **Incest and Abuse by Therapists**

Although Lara did not marry a man who resembled her perpetrator, as many incest survivors do, she found herself in several extramarital sexual relationships with much older men like her grandfather. Besides being much older than she, Chris Kruger, her first therapist, was also married, physically repulsive (to her) and sadistic like her grandfather. While Kruger enjoyed frightening Lara with his horror stories and assassination

plots, her grandfather found pleasure from raping her as a child under the guise of love and humiliating her in public to impress his buddies.

There is considerable clinical evidence that incest survivors are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse by the male mental health professionals who treat them (e.g., Herman, 1981; Janice Russell, 1993). Feminist psychiatrist Judith Herman states, for example, that, 'Like other men, the therapist may find himself becoming excited by the victim's narrative of forbidden sexual activity' (1981, p. 186). Furthermore, 'The male therapist, because of his tendency to identify with the offender, also runs the risk of becoming sexually involved with the patient, either in fantasy or in reality' (Herman, 1981, p. 186).

Many therapists, particularly those who subscribe to Freud's sexist Oedipal theory, blame female victims for the incestuous abuse to which they are, or have been, subjected (Herman, 1981; Masson, 1984; Rush, 1980; Russell, 1986). The victims are perceived as seductive or as desirous of a sexual relationship with their male perpetrators, no matter how young they are or were at the time, and no matter how much they demonstrated their opposition. For example, child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Laretta Bender and her junior colleague Abram Blau went so far as to argue that the child was the initiator of sexual relationships even in instances when 'physical force may have been applied by the adult' (1937, p. 524). Those capable of believing such outrageous victim-blaming nonsense may have little difficulty in holding such patients responsible for sexual abuse by their therapists as well.

Herman provides 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. (1981, p. 187)

Although there is no way of knowing whether Herman's analysis accurately captures Kruger's thinking, her explanations for the vulnerability of incest victims to male therapists is strikingly applicable to Lara.

### Incest and Prostitution

Herman wrote the following insightful passage about one of the ways in which father-daughter incest relates to prostitution:

The actual [incestuous] 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*. (1981, p. 4; emphasis added)

Although the betrayal involved in father-daughter incest is typically greater than in grandfather-granddaughter incest, it seems reasonable to assume that Herman's analysis also applies to incestuous grandfathers. However, rather than focus on fathers as johns, I will suggest some of the reasons why incest survivors are much more likely to become prostitutes than women or girls who were never incestuously abused.

Several studies of female prostitutes have found that many of them were sexually abused as children (Bagley and Young, 1987; James and Meyerding, 1977a, b; Silbert and Pines, 1981). With regard to incestuous abuse by biological fathers, stepfathers, adoptive fathers and foster fathers in particular, psychologists Jennifer James and Jane Meyerding found that a quarter (25.5 per cent) of the 136 female street prostitutes they surveyed disclosed having experienced this form of victimisation (1977a, p. 1383).

In contrast, 4.5 per cent 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, it becomes apparent that over five times as many of the female prostitutes in James and Meyerding's study had been incestuously abused by a father or father figure than was the case for the women in my survey. In explanation, James and Meyerding speculate 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 lessen one's resistance to viewing oneself as a saleable commodity' (1977b, p. 41).

Lara, who articulated feeling dirty (resulting in feelings of shame) and responsible for her abuse (guilt), clearly suffered from a debased self-image. 'I feel like I'm just a usable commodity for any man to come along and say, "Cheers! .... Let's turn you over and do it"', Lara explained. These are not the words of a woman who engages in sex with many different partners because she finds it so pleasurable. They are the words of a woman whose past abuse by her grandfather has trapped her in a compulsive, self-destructive role of sacrificing herself to service men's sexual desires. 'I feel that I'm purely available for men to have sex with,' Lara said. Despite the bitterness conveyed by this statement, she also considered being good at sex as 'the only positive legacy that my grandfather has left me'.

David Finkelhor and Angela Browne also suggest that feelings of stigmatisation cause some incest survivors to gravitate to prostitution because this identity and way of life affirms their feelings of badness and satisfies their self-destructive urges (Finkelhor and Browne, 1986). This observation may help to explain why Lara was so drawn to prostitution; she believed she deserved to be hurt and saw to it that she was (consider her compulsion to initiate anal sex, for example).

Although Lara did not actually become a prostitute (that is, get paid for sex), she exhibited many of the attitudes and behaviours – whether real or feigned – that are common among prostitutes. For example, she was compulsively flirtatious and sexually provocative; she found gratification in being an object of men's desires; and she had a singular aptitude for seducing and pleasing men sexually. Lara also relished having multiple sex partners, took pride in 'being a good fuck', and wanted to be remunerated for having sex with men.

Lara describes how her grandfather trained her to develop these attitudes, aptitudes and behaviours. For example, he taught 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'). When Lara realised that her grandfather was paying her for sex, she started to manipulate him into giving her larger gifts. On becoming an adult, this lesson manifested in Lara's need for gifts from her sex partners to compensate her for feeling sexually used by them.

Incest survivors like Lara who react to their victimisation by becoming promiscuous can often tolerate the risky and abusive lifestyle of prostitutes more readily than women without such a history. After all, being a prostitute often has much in common with being an incest victim. In

addition, some of the same coping strategies that survivors develop in order to be able to endure their traumatic experiences of sexual violation also enable prostitutes to bear their lives of sexual abuse and violence. For example, many incest victims learn to dissociate<sup>7</sup> during acts of sexual assault thereby distancing themselves from their physical and/or psychological pain. This defence mechanism is equally helpful to prostitutes.

Prostitute survivor and political activist Evelina Giobbe reported that 30 per cent of a group of prostitute survivors divulged 'that their pimps regularly exposed them to pornography as a seasoning technique' (1993, p. 2). Lara's grandfather, like many other incest perpetrators, also used pornography to train her to behave like a dutiful male-defined sex object. Although he was not a pimp, since he didn't seek financial gain by farming her out to turn tricks, the way Lara's grandfather trained her gratified not only his own desires but those of other men with whom she subsequently had sex.

Despite Lara's feelings of powerlessness with her grandfather and subsequently with other men, she found a way to empower herself in sexual relationships, even with her grandfather. During the last three years of her relationship with him when she became a little more powerful, she'd say things like, 'OK, I'll give it to you when I'm ready'.

Instead of rejecting her prostitute persona after her grandfather died, Lara acted out various manoeuvres that made her feel less powerless, such as seducing men ('I get such a thrill from being in charge and being in power and making a man totally want sex'), encouraging their obsessive adoration of her, demanding some kind of payment for sex, and hurting and rejecting men.

Herman noted that some of the survivors of father-daughter incest in her sample

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.* (1981, p. 97; emphasis added)

This description fits Lara to a tee. Many 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 married an unusually kind, understanding and long-suffering man. Brian appears to have been extremely unpossessive and supportive of her. This may be a key reason why Lara has not become a prostitute (although she still may; she was only 23 years old when interviewed). The fact that

Brian was a successful businessman may be another factor. Poverty obviously drives many girls and women, including incest survivors, 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. As an adult, Lara actively initiates the recurrence of painful and traumatic experiences like her grandfather's anal rapes, despite the intense self-hatred and physical pain that results from her compulsion. Her description of her feelings during sexual acts reveals the enormous complexity of the power dynamics she experienced as well as her extraordinary capacity to recognise and express all the nuances involved.

### The Realities of Prostitution

Lara's notions about prostitution are highly romanticised. 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 customers, rapists and serial killers, as well as the police, and given their vulnerability to AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, their work is also frequently physically damaging and sometimes fatal.

In a study of 130 prostitutes on the streets of San Francisco, psychologist Melissa Farley and prostitute survivor Norma Hotaling have documented some of the violence reported by these women, as well as the high prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) – a psychological disorder associated with severely traumatic experiences – they found in this population (Farley and Hotaling, 1995). Forty-one per cent (41%) of their prostitute sample met the criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD (p. 5). Many of their respondents also reported being subjected to extreme levels of sexual and non-sexual violence. For example:

- Over two-thirds (68 per cent) reported having been raped since entering prostitution; almost half (48 per cent) had been raped more than five times while engaged in prostitution; and close to half (46 per cent) reported having been raped by one or more customers (p. 3).
- Eighty-two per cent (82%) 'reported having been physically assaulted since entering prostitution'; and well over half (55 per cent) reported having been physically assaulted by one or more customers (p. 2).
- Eighty-three per cent (83%) 'reported having been threatened with a gun, knife or weapon since entering prostitution' (p. 2).

- Close to half (49 per cent) reported having 'pornography made of them while they worked in prostitution'; while almost a third (32 per cent) reported that 'they had been upset by customers' attempts to make them do what had been seen in pornographic videos or magazines' (p. 5).
- Prostitutes are also disproportionately targeted by serial killers and other misogynist murderers (Caputi, 1987; Radford and Russell, 1992).

Because many prostitutes favour decriminalisation, well-meaning progressive people often assume that they should therefore endorse this policy. Obviously, those engaged in illegal behaviour are likely to prefer it to be made legal, and those employed in a particular job cannot be expected to argue for its demise, even if the job is destructive to them. Hence, the fact that many prostitutes advocate decriminalisation does not mean it is the best policy for them or for society.

Prostitution is an institution that exploits women, many of whom have already been severely sexually victimised 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. Merely seeking to rehabilitate and relabel the social identity of prostitutes (as 'sex workers', for example) is not what is needed. In addition, Farley and Hotaling note that *legalising* prostitution 'would further normalize the harm, exploitation, and human rights violations' that they document in their study (1995, p. 7). Normalising prostitution also 'normalizes hatred of women' (Farley and Hotaling, 1995, p. 8). Farley and Hotaling's objections to legalisation are equally applicable to decriminalisation.

I believe that prostitution should remain illegal, and that customers and pimps should be incarcerated for sexual exploitation. The widespread practice of punishing the victims, instead of those who victimise them, is blatantly sexist. It reflects the fact that it is largely men who make 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 gender equality.

Since the majority of prostitutes – possibly all of them – are forced or driven into this role by poverty, entrapment by pimps, socialised into it by a history of incestuous abuse and/or other kinds of physical or emotional violence or abuse, arrest and incarceration are cruel and inappropriate ways to treat them. One of Farley and Hotaling's most significant findings is that fully 88 per cent of the prostitutes they interviewed reported that they wanted to leave prostitution immediately (p. 5). In addition, 73 per cent said they needed job training, 78 per cent said they needed a safe

place to stay, 48 per cent said they needed personal counselling or support, and 28 per cent said they needed protection from their pimps (p. 5). Funding must be found to meet these needs.

Clearly, if Lara were to become a prostitute, it would indicate the degree to which she would remain a prisoner of her grandfather's training, thereby aggravating, not healing, the many problems she still lives with today.

## VIOLENCE IN AFRIKANER AND ENGLISH-SPEAKING SOUTH AFRICAN HOMES

Brutal as Lara's grandfather was in raping her anally when she was only four years old and repeating this act many times thereafter, he was not otherwise physically violent towards her. Nor did Lara mention her father ever being violent towards her or to her mother. However, Lara did describe one incident when her mother beat her very hard on learning that she was engaged in sex play with her girlfriend and her girlfriend's brother. Severe as was the sexual violence of Lara's grandfather, the magnitude of violence in Lara's family of origin was nevertheless significantly less extreme than in the homes of Nida Webber, Elsa Foster and Marie Malan, and Elsabé Groenewald (to be described in Chapter 6). The absence of paternal despotism in Lara's family is another notable ethnicity-related difference.

This is not to say that parents and grandparents in English-speaking South African homes are never very violent or authoritarian. But judging from the 20 interviews with incest survivors and my own first-hand knowledge of English-speaking South Africans, I believe that there tends to be significantly more violence in Afrikaner homes, and that paternal despotism and patriarchal attitudes and behaviour also tend to be more extreme in the Afrikaner community.

On the other hand, there appears to be greater emotional distance between Lara and her parents, particularly her father, than was the case for the Afrikaner survivors and their fathers. Emotional distance, like violence, tends to have very negative consequences. Lara appears to have been quite deprived of physical affection from both of her parents which presumably increased her vulnerability to the apparently loving, seductive manipulations of her paedophilic grandfather.

Scientifically sound studies are needed to evaluate my impressionistic observations about some of the salient differences in the families of Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans.

## 6 The Divine Right of the Father: Elsabé Groenewald's Story

'Because I'm his daughter, my father seems to think that what he did to me was fine – that this gave him the right to do whatever he wanted.'

### INTRODUCTION

Thirty-six-year-old Elsabé Groenewald (her real name) is an Afrikaner who lived with her Afrikaner husband, Louis, and their two daughters, 12-year-old Marlése and 7-year-old Monique, at the time of the interview in 1993. Elsabé and Louis owned a home in Goodwood – a predominantly Afrikaans suburb of Cape Town.

Elsabé is the third child of eight, and the oldest girl. She has two older brothers, four younger sisters and one younger brother. Her eldest brother, Johan, who was five years older than she, committed suicide in 1985 when he was 34 years old. Her second brother Hennie was raised by their grandparents. Thirty-five-year-old Maria is one year younger than Elsabé, followed by Miriam (34), Elize (33), Thys (29) and Lena (27).

Elsabé matriculated from high school when she was 19, after which she worked in the newspaper business for many years – in advertising, marketing, photography and journalism. She quit her job at the end of 1990 'when everything came crashing down', and became a full-time housewife. Elsabé, who described herself as working class, said her husband also matriculated from high school before joining the police force, where he still works.

Elsabé described her parents as 'very Afrikaans'. Her husband is an Afrikaner who works in a profession in which few English-speaking South Africans are employed. Elsabé mentioned that she has few English-speaking friends.

Elsabé's father left school after standard six (8th grade); her mother, who is retarded, dropped out of school some time earlier than this. Mr Groenewald's main occupation was as a shunter and guard for the South African Railways. Although Elsabé described her father as having 'quite a

lot of money' and her mother as having 'the most exquisite clothes you can imagine', she said that they were 'dirt poor' during her younger years 'because my father blew the money on booze'. Because she felt inferior about being poorer than the other children at her school, Elsabé felt she had to prove herself by fighting a lot.

Elsabé was born in 1956 on her family's farm near a small village called Clanwilliam. Her family moved to Stanger, Natal, when she was five years old. 'We've lived all over the place', Elsabé told me. 'After Natal, we moved to the Karoo [a large semi-desert region] where we lived in different small villages most of the time – Leeu-Gamkalike in 1967 when I was 11, then Prince Albert when I was 12, and Victoria-West near Hutchinson when I was 13.' Elsabé described these villages as 'the kind of places where you don't talk about things like incest because people don't believe it happens there'.

Elsabé's family moved from the Karoo to Hermon in the Cape Province when she was 14. Later that year, her father kicked her out of the house and she went to live and work in a place called Wellington. Then, when she was 17, she moved to Paarl where she completed her last two years of high school. At 20, she moved to Goodwood where she still lives.

When asked about her religious upbringing, Elsabé said that she and her siblings had been raised without any 'official church upbringing'. However, she described her mother as 'very NG [the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, or Dutch Reformed Church in English] now'. 'As for my father, one day he'd go to the NG Church and the next day he'd be in a drunken stupor.'

Elsabé defected to the Apostolic Faith Mission after her parents cast her out of their home in 1971. 'The Dutch Reformed Church was too uptight for my liking', Elsabé explained. 'I've stayed a Christian since then, but I'm with a charismatic faith called the Lighthouse Fellowship now.' Elsabé has become very religious and 'the Lord' clearly plays a major role in her life. Her concept of Christianity prompted her to expect Christians to be virtuous and loving people.

Elsabé's story provides a vivid portrait of an Afrikaner father who feels entitled to have sex with his daughter. Even in old age, he remains unrepentant about having forced her into a long-term sexual relationship with him. Elsabé's account takes us back to the question raised in the introduction regarding the connection between some Afrikaner men's sense of entitlement to dominate and exploit black South Africans and the females in their homes.

About the interview, Elsabé said, 'I never thought I'd get upset if I had to tell my story again, but it's been a shock to put myself back into that pain'.

## ELSABÉ'S STORY

**Family Background**

One of my great grandfathers opposed a corrupt South African governor called Willem Adriaan van der Stel. He was banished from South Africa for many, many years. All through my family tree, my people had a fighting spirit. Maybe that's where I got mine.

I was badly burnt on my legs and stomach when I was eight months old. [Elsabé raised her skirt to show me the large, plainly visible scars on her legs.] The story is that my mother or my father put fire to my bed. It's no use asking them about it because my mother always says my father did it and he always says it was her.

My mother is retarded. If you look into her eyes sometimes it's like looking into a blank space. She never showed that she loved me. My eldest brother Johan was the most important one in the family to her. Even though I did better academically than he did, my parents always made excuses for this.

I only realised recently that what happened to me, and the whole situation in my home, was evil. When I went to school my mum would send my younger brother and sisters after me to yell, 'Gebrande bene!' [burned legs]. That's how far gone she was. And she'd lock the food cupboards and go away for a couple of days at a time without leaving any food for us. She was afraid we'd eat all of it and there'd be none left for my father. So we had to beg for food and steal fruit.

When I went to boarding school at 13, I was very uncertain of myself and I didn't get on well there. But as time went by, I started to realise that there was nothing wrong with me. I used to beat up lots of boys at school to hide my upset and to put fear into them so they wouldn't tease me and my brothers and sisters because we were poor and didn't have the things they took for granted, like having enough to eat and having school clothes [school uniforms are usually worn in South Africa]. I only had one dress but no shoes.

*Mother's Assaults*

My parents assaulted and abused me and didn't allow me to be my own person. My mother really hated me. She used to beat me with anything she could get hold of, like a hose-pipe or the thick sticks that were used for flags on the railways that my father brought home. She'd hit me in such a way that it'd put my fingers out of joint. She half-killed me with a broom once. Another time she threw me behind a cupboard after I'd passed out from the hiding she gave me. I came to about three hours later.

I was the one in the family she went after. Once when we were sitting talking in the kitchen at the old coal stove in the middle of winter, my sister Maria was playing with a ball when she accidentally threw it in my mother's face. Everybody burst out laughing because my mother looked so shocked. I was astonished that my mother didn't hit Maria. Had it been me, she'd have killed me.

My mother would also lock me out of the house in the middle of winter, even when it was snowing. There was a little outside room where we used to keep our coal. Sometimes she'd punish me by kicking me out there for a long time without any food. She would've killed me if I'd gone back into the house, so I'd sit there and get black from the coal. When she wasn't looking, my sisters and brothers would smuggle food out to me. They knew they'd get a hiding if our parents found out they were feeding me.

When my mother kicked me out in the summer when we lived in the Karoo, I'd go out into the veld [open fields]. The wild dassies [small rock rabbits] got so used to me they wouldn't even bother about me. There was an old man living out there who gave me carrots and milk and honey. I found the old grave of an Englishman when I was out in the veld. People told me that at dusk he'd rise up from his grave. I wasn't scared sitting out there at midnight, but I became so afraid and lonely sitting in the middle of nowhere after I heard this story that I wished I'd die when the sun started setting. Based on what I knew about the Anglo-Boer War [the war between Britain and the Afrikaners] at the age of 11, I thought the Englishman would kill me if he saw a Boer [Afrikaner] like me.<sup>1</sup>

I always had a soft spot for my mum despite her constant meanness and violence towards me. I'd always go that extra mile for her. I wasn't that bothered by her beatings because I understood that she felt threatened by my presence. But it caused me to snap one day when I was 13 or 14. I was sitting under the fig tree studying when my mother came out and told me to scrub the floor and the table. I told her I was studying for exams and asked why she didn't make use of the maid. She responded by going to fetch a stick to hit me. I got up and pushed her against the wall and said, 'Don't you ever hit me again!' That was the only time I ever attacked my mother. She ran out the gate to go and tell my father what I'd done. I knew he'd beat me for what I did because he always took every chance he got to get at me. I was so fed up with my parents that day that I went to fetch my father's big hunting gun. I nearly killed him that day but my brother stopped me.

*Father's Violence and Abuse*

My father is nearly seven feet tall. A lot of people were afraid of him because of his size. He's very intelligent but he's a horrible, egotistical

man with a mean, devilish quality about him. Now that he's staying with my sister with no job and no pension, he just lies around her house. He thinks he's God's gift to this earth. He even chases my sister and her family out of their own home when he gets drunk.

My father's father was a sweet old man who I liked very much. He never raised his voice and I never felt threatened by him, so I don't know where my father gets his attitudes from. His mother, who I was named after, was very abusive and quite threatening, but my father was very fond of her.

There's something very evil about my father. He was a violent pig, especially when he got drunk – which was quite often. He'd beat up whoever he could get hold of. He hit my mother as well as us children. I remember very well when he started hitting me. I was four years old and he was drunk. I was very, very small and I was terrified of him when I was young. There was no pattern to his assaults except that he was usually drunk. Liquor was the first thing he'd buy when he had money. He used to hit me and my eldest brother Johan with his fist, then chase us out of the house. Sometimes we had to stay in the veld for days on end, sleeping out there, until he was sober enough for us to go back home.

There was a big field across from our second house in Stanger, Natal. I was sitting there one day at dusk when I was eight, and an old black man passed by. I called him and said, 'Listen old father, do you want to earn 50 cents [8 pence/\$0.16 cents]?' This was a lot of money at that time. He said, 'Sure'. While pointing at my home, I told him to 'go into that house tonight and kill that man and that woman, and I'll pay you tomorrow morning'. I can still see the way that man looked at me before he walked away. I was a bit relieved he didn't do it because I was afraid he might kill my brothers and sisters as well.

My father's mother died on a Saturday when I was 11. We were living in a small village of about 20 houses in the Karoo at the time. After attending my grandmother's funeral, Johan asked me to go with him that night to play games in a hall. My father told us to be back by midnight, but we got home a bit late. My father didn't mind my brother being late, but he was very mad with me. He was sober that night, but that didn't stop him from hitting me with barbed wire. Johan nearly killed my father when he hit me with the wire.

#### *Parents' Extramarital Affairs*

I was nine when I became aware that my father had other women. When my mum was in hospital having my youngest sister Lena, I was awakened in the morning by what I thought was a baby's cry. I thought my mother

was back and I ran to my parents' bedroom. When I opened the door I saw that an Indian woman who worked for us was in bed with my father.

Another time when I was about 12 or 13, my mum was in hospital after trying to commit suicide. My father was with another lady called Miss Swanepoel at the time. They'd go to parties together. Looking back now, I realise that he must have had many other women. I remember him picking up blond women when we went to Beaufort West together.

My father lost interest in having sex with my mother. I think this is what pushed her over the edge and caused her to try to commit suicide. Because he went around with other women, my mother felt she needed other men. So, as far back as I can remember, she was always going off and leaving us for days at a time. Johan and I had to look after the younger children when she disappeared. I remember a man friend of my mother's with curly black hair. Even though I was very young, I knew something was going on between them because he'd come to the house at odd hours. I also sensed this with other men who came to see her. They'd give us children money and tell us, 'Go and swim', or, 'Go to the bioscope' [movies], or, 'Go and buy sweets'.

#### *Father's Violence towards Mother*

My father beat up my mother a lot. One time he threw a huge meat knife at her. It missed her and stuck in the pantry door behind her. Another time when I was 11 and my parents were having an argument, my father wanted to chop up my mother with an axe. My younger brother and sisters were terrified and fled for their lives, but I never left my mother alone with my father when he was in this kind of mood. He was very drunk and yelled to me that he wanted the axe, but I kicked it under a bed so he wouldn't find it. He called me into another room and told me again that he wanted the axe. My mother was pleading with me not to give it to him. Although I told him I wouldn't give him the axe, my father eventually made me so mad that I said, 'Fine! Here's the axe. Kill my mother. And when you've finished with *her*, you'll have to kill *me* because otherwise I'll tell the police that you knew exactly what you were doing. Either you'll be hanged or you'll sit in jail for the rest of your life knowing that you left your children without a mother or a father.' He left my mother alone after that.

#### *Being a Fighter*

I've always been a fighter for as long as I can remember. Although I was afraid of my father when I was small, I never let him know it and I'd yell at him instead. When things were very bad before I even started sub A

[1st grade], I'd lie in bed or sit outside and look up into the sky and think, 'Maybe the Lord planted it in me to fight'. I'd also remind myself that 'This can't last for ever'.

My brothers and sisters weren't aggressive like me, except for my youngest brother Thys; but that was many years later. I don't know why I was the only fighter. I was that way even before I had to behave like an adult when I was eight or nine.

When I was five and my brother Johan was 10 and much bigger than me, he started chasing after me to hit me. I managed to find a rake and put it down with its points facing up. He stepped on it and got quite badly hurt. I'm sure God must have given me this strength otherwise I don't know how I'd have managed. I always found some way to protect myself – except with my parents. And when I got a bit older, I always got back at my father one way or another. For example, one time when he was going to hit my little brother Thys, I climbed into a fig tree and waited for him. When my father passed by, I jumped down, then kicked, hit and bit him before running away. He would've killed me if he'd got hold of me that day.

My greatest concern was to stop my father from hurting my brothers, my mother and my sisters. Even when I was young, I used to attack my father when he went for any of them. I'd go for him with my feet, my hands, everything! I'd also kick him or hit him when he beat me. I gave him as good as I got. Johan tried to help me, so he also landed up in the line of fire.

If I couldn't get my father immediately, I'd get him later. After he hit me, he'd walk around for days watching me. It gets very, very hot in the Karoo, and one summer I put a pound of butter in an enamel plate and left it on top of a tank where it boiled in the sun. Then I climbed on to the tank and waited for my father to come home for lunch. When he passed by the tank, I threw the boiling butter on his head, and it burned him all over his face.

I love cats and I had two of them when I was about seven. When my father got mad he'd want to kill them, so I often had to hide them. When he wanted to kill them one day, I got very angry and started yelling at him. He reacted by chasing after me as I tried to run away from him. I was running on the stoop [porch] when I saw a hose-pipe, so I ran to the tap and turned it on. Water spewed all over the stoop and my father slid on it and broke four ribs when he hit a wall.

Although my father assaulted my brothers and sisters, he always hit me first. It seems that he wanted to control me, to force me to submit to him, but I wouldn't. I remember looking at him one day when I was 11 or 12

and realising that I wasn't afraid of him any more. I think he singled me out so much because he hated my lack of fear.

When my father came into the kitchen drunk one day, Johan crouched in the corner in fear. I hated to see my eldest brother do that, and I thought to myself, 'I won't crouch for my father!' Even if he wanted to kill me today, I'd never do that. When my father punched me that day I just stood there and yelled at him, 'You can kill me, but I won't crouch in the corner!' This made him furious.

Another time when I was 12 or 13, my father was driving me and the other kids somewhere. He was drunk and nearly smashed into a petrol [gas] tanker that was going in the opposite direction. So I told him to let me drive home, which he did. But he was very abusive, yelling at me while I drove. After we got home and I started making his lunch, he said, 'I'll see you on your knees before me before I'm through with you!' I was furious with him for trying to get me to submit to him again. 'Not as long as I live will you see me on my knees before *you* or *any* human being!' I swore. He jumped up and twisted my arm, nearly breaking it as he tried to force me on to my knees. It was very sore, but I told him, 'You can break my arms and legs, but I *won't* kneel before you!' I could hear my arm cracking when my mother walked in. She stood up for me for the first time; she took off one of her high heel shoes and hit my father on the head with it.

Once when I was 13, I waited for my father to pass through the wooden gate attached to the huge concrete walls around the house. When he came at around half-past twelve, I shot out a piece of concrete wall just behind his head with a .303 [gun]. I could've killed him if I'd wanted to because I know how to shoot, but I just wanted to make a point by giving him the fright of his life. He was screaming and pleading with me for his life because he knew how angry I was with him, and he promised he'd never touch me again. A little while later, he jumped me from behind and nearly killed me. He hit me very, very hard on the mouth with his fist. It didn't heal for a long time; you can still see the scar on my lip.

### *The Final Straw*

I challenged my father all the time. For example, one time when I was 14 and we were living in Hermon in the Cape Province, my aunt [father's sister] came to visit us unexpectedly. She asked my father why he was drunk and he said it was because of me and my mother and the rest of his children. I said, 'It has nothing to do with us. It's because you don't have any backbone and you're too weak to face the world.' Then I got up and went to make tea. My father came after me and nearly killed me. As soon



as I could get away from him I started running and he chased me out of the house. My mother didn't try to stop him, she just yelled at me, 'Get out, and don't ever come back!'

That's when I left home. I ran away to Wellington and started working at the South African Dried Fruit Corporation. The magistrate got me the job because the people I went to stay with were friends of his. The managing director of the corporation knew I wasn't 16 [the age required for the job] and that I planned to go back to school after a year. He was very sweet to me and gave me a huge office and told me I was his secretary. All I had to do was sit there, phone my friends and make coffee for him.

My parents separated not long after they threw me out of the house in 1972, and divorced a year later. The police phoned me when I was 16 to tell me that my father was in prison for not supporting his kids, so I bailed him out and got him a job. He disappeared after that, eventually landing up in the Transvaal. My sister Miriam went there to bring him back here to live with her family where he's been ever since.

#### INCESTUOUS ABUSE AND PARENTAL VIOLENCE

The first time that I remember, I was about four years old. My father called me into the lounge when everybody else was asleep. He made me stand next to him and told me to feel in front of him. I touched him there and I felt a huge stem. It gave me such a fright. That memory terrifies me even now. Then he got down on his knees and pressed his thing against me. Before long he took me into another room and told me I had to stay with him. Then there was the awful pain as he pushed himself against me and tried to penetrate me. I remember it as clear as daylight.

My father usually made me undress, then he'd rub himself against me and do other things that I can't remember except for the pain. He was always silent at these times. It happened quite often, perhaps about two or three times a week, and always when he was sober. Every morning I woke up in so much pain, I used to cry and cry. I couldn't wee because of the pain from vaginal infections. I remember waking up one day in terrible pain and with a high fever. I couldn't understand why my mother couldn't see what was happening.

I can remember my father having full intercourse with me when I was 12, but I can't remember when he started doing that. He was a terribly angry man. He was never tender towards me. One time when I was 11 or 12, I looked up into his face while he was doing it and I saw such hate in his eyes. Both my parents hated me. It was quite a relief when they hit me

and chased me outside because it meant that I didn't have to go to bed with my father.

I was 13 when my father told me I must move into his bedroom and stay with him like a wife. He and my mother had stopped sharing a room by then. This made the whole situation even more terrible for me. I kept telling him that he could use my body as much as he wanted, but I didn't belong to him and he couldn't destroy me. I lived with him for a year like that until he kicked me out of the house when I was 14.

My father tried to do it with me once more after that. Just before he split up with my mother when I was still 14, he came to visit me in the boarding house I'd moved into in Wellington, and he wanted to get into bed with me. I told him to get out.

#### Trying to Make Sense of Father's Abuse

My father is a very arrogant and self-centred man who thought he was God's gift to women. Because I'm his daughter, he seems to think this gave him the right to do whatever he wanted. He's never told me he's sorry for what he did to me. And I think he beat us up because he was afraid we'd see his weaknesses. Showing weakness made him ashamed. Men aren't supposed to be weak in the Afrikaner home.

When I was small, I just accepted what my father did to me [sexually]. When I got older, I thought he was messing around with me because of my mother's affairs, so I blamed her for it. But then I found out about my father's affairs – my mum also told me in a letter recently that he'd had lots of other women – so now I think he used me when he didn't have any ladies around. I remember that he left me in peace sometimes like when he was busy with the Swanepoel woman. He couldn't care less whether he has sex with women or girls.

About a year after my parents divorced when I was 15, I saw my father in Cape Town. He was living with another woman and he told me not to be afraid of him because, 'My sausage is for this lady only'. I could have kicked his teeth in for thinking I would let anything like that happen with him.

I'm the only one of the girls in my family that my father molested. I always thought that if I didn't agree to do it, he'd turn to my brothers and sisters or he'd hurt them physically. Later, I couldn't care why he was doing it to me as long as he wasn't messing around with my sisters. That was the most important thing to me because I loved them so much. My father must've known from the way I went for him when he assaulted any of them that I would've really hurt him if he'd ever touched one of them [sexually].

Sometimes I'd look at my sisters and wonder if protecting them was worth me allowing my father to do what he wanted with me. 'Don't they deserve to feel what I feel?' I asked myself. Sometimes I look at them now and think they've been quite privileged to have escaped what I had to put up with.

I always used to wonder if there wasn't something I could've done to keep my father away from me. But by the time I could've done something, the damage had already been done. After all, what could I do when I was four years old? Maybe when I was 14 I should have really hurt him badly.

My father showed up when my mother, who had remarried, visited Louis and me on the day we got engaged. After I walked my father to the corner and kissed him goodbye, he became vulgar and slapped me on my face because he still felt I belonged to him. It didn't upset me because I knew he couldn't touch me any more. Some time before that he'd told me that I'd find myself a rich husband and he'd be something in my past. But he wasn't ready yet to let me go.

### **The Secret Becomes Known**

Although my father didn't tell me not to tell what he was doing to me, I understood that I couldn't talk about it. I was very upset that I couldn't tell my mother after he did it the first time.

When I was seven, somebody told me that a girl who lived a few blocks away from us was being molested by her father. I thought we were the only two people on earth who this was happening to. Every time I looked at that girl I felt sorry for her because I knew what she was going through.

We lived in a small Karoo town when I was 12 where people must have known what my father was doing to me. When a guy I quite liked told me that somebody had told him that my father was having sex with me, I went berserk because it felt so shameful. I didn't deny it but I told him to go away and never come close to me again. When I came home one snowy night, I found him sitting with my mother in the lounge. Maybe she was the one who told him. Anyhow, when he heard me coming in the back door he ran for his life into the snow.

After working for a year at the Dried Fruit Corporation, a social worker helped me to go back to school. I wanted to go to a normal school but she said the welfare department wouldn't allow this because I'd been sexually active, so they sent me to an industrial school instead. I'll never forget her words — 'sexually active'. I was so mad that she'd think that way about what I'd gone through.

### **Husband's Reaction**

My eldest brother Johan committed suicide about six years ago when I was 30. I was still hurting about it when I told my husband about how my father had molested me. He didn't say anything; he just got up and left the house. I was devastated by his reaction. He was the first person I'd told and I thought he'd at least give me some sympathy. That very same night he had a sexual relationship with another woman who was staying with his brother. I felt shattered and utterly lost when I found out about it. It brought me closer to the edge. He said he did it because I'd hurt him so much for so many years and he wanted to get back at me. He'd never gone with another woman before and he's never done it since.

My husband said it was my fault that my father molested me. He still blames me for it. He believes that I wanted sex with my father. This was the worst thing he could have said to me. If he was to say it now, I'd laugh at him because I know there's no way I could've asked for it. I was four years old! How could I have asked anybody to do that to me even when I was 14 years old? It's stupid to believe such a thing, but I didn't realise this at the time.

My husband gets mad at me when I talk to people about what my father did to me. He doesn't want to hear about it and two or three times he's told me, 'Just shut up, you who had sex with your father!' His mother fooled around a lot, so he thinks that's what women do, and why should I be different? As a policeman, he comes across a lot of 13- and 14-year-old street prostitutes. He thinks, 'They're such young women and they're already doing it!' He doesn't think about what might have happened to them to bring them to do that. Because I'm so strong, he thinks I should've been able to stop my father one way or another.

### **Siblings' Reactions**

I had always assumed while it was happening that I was the only one my father was doing it to, but later I started wondering if this was true. When I asked my sisters the other day whether he had ever tried anything with them, they said no.

If I feel that the moment is right with one of my brothers or sisters, then I tell them about it. But when I was young, I thought they'd tell me I was lying. When I finally told some of them about it, they didn't react. It was like, 'So what? It's no big deal.' I think now that they must've already known about it, but they deny this. They knew he was drinking

and beating me and Johan, but to them, my father was perfect. They know now that I'm telling the truth about him but they don't want to discuss it.

My brother Hennie only found out about it a couple of years ago because he was raised by our grandparents and went to boarding school, and although he and I have always had a very close relationship, I didn't have a chance to tell him because somebody else was always around.

### **Mother's Reactions**

I spoke to almost everybody about my father's molestation except my mother. I wrote to her recently about it because I couldn't speak about it over the phone. I told her I was very sorry I'd never told her about it before, and that whatever she may think, I never invited my father to have sex with me. If I could offer an excuse, I'd say that at first I didn't know what was happening. I didn't understand that his so-called way of expressing love was very wrong. I didn't know when I was four years old how parents are supposed to express love. Later, when I understood it was wrong, I did it to stop him hurting my sisters. I asked her to please forgive me if she thinks I'm guilty of anything. I also asked her why she never did anything to stop it, because I know she knew about it.

My mother wrote to tell me that she'd known about it and that she had reported it to social workers and policemen who told her I'd have to have a check-up with a doctor. She said she didn't want to put me through the shame and embarrassment of being examined by a doctor. She also told me that she loved me and was sorry about what my father did to me. She said she knows it wasn't my fault. I think she has been affected by the programmes on TV that say that molested children aren't responsible. But she isn't intelligent enough to figure out for herself *why* I'm not to blame, so I can't be sure she'll continue to think this way. She can suddenly get into a violent mood and I can't vouch that I won't blow my top if I see her. But I know now that she loves me, and I don't want to try to get her more involved in this whole business because it'd be like pulling a little child into it.

I think my mother thought what happened with my father was more of an insult to *her* and her position as a wife than as a terrible experience for me. I think that was why she hit me so much. She always felt competitive with me, which is why she always challenges me on everything, and also why she gets mad that I now have such a good relationship with her second husband.

### **Confronting Her Father**

My father knows now that everyone in the family knows what he did to me. I've warned him that if he ever touches a child again, I'll go to the police and tell them everything and he'll spend the rest of his days in prison. He was surprised when I said this. 'How dare you say a thing like that!' he scolded me. 'You don't understand and you never will!'

### **OTHER SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE FAMILY**

I have a feeling that my mother was sexually abused as a child, but she always talks about her father as being perfect so I've never asked her about it. I liked my grandfather and he never tried anything with me, but I think he might have tried out my sister, Maria, though she won't admit it. A lot of women who've been molested seem to feel that sex is the only thing they're good for. Maria still thinks that submitting to sex is the only way to keep a man happy. She's a very sweet person but she has a deep fear of men. She was too afraid to tell her second husband when her daughter failed at school.

I think my father molested a niece of mine when he went to stay with my sister, Elize, in Hartenbos. After three months with her, Elize suddenly told him to get out. Whenever I spoke about it to anyone in the family they wouldn't tell me what he'd done. I think they know I'd have a big reaction if they told me he'd molested Elize's daughter, so they just said, 'Trouble, trouble, trouble', and that he couldn't behave himself. I'm sure my father has touched other girls too. I've heard persistent rumours about him doing such things.

My sister Miriam told me recently that she wants to help a woman and her little girl, but it's not possible now that my father is staying with her because he won't leave the child in peace.

### **SEXUAL ASSAULT BY OTHERS**

#### **Sexual Abuse by Father's Friends**

Mr Retief, a friend of my father, tried to molest me when I was about seven or eight years old. My father and my brother Hennie and I were visiting Mr Retief when he was sick in bed. My father left to go somewhere and Mr Retief sent my brother away, then he asked me for a glass of

water. When I brought it to him, I saw he was naked. I started running away but he came after me so fast that I realised I wouldn't be able to get out of the front door in time, so I hid in a cupboard until my brother came back.

When I was 12, Mr Sarel, a 30-year-old singer who was another of my father's friends, always wanted me to sing with him. Although it wasn't true, he kept telling me how well I sang. I was very happy about this and wondered if I could become a Barbara Mandrell. When we were walking home together from a social event one day, he showed me his penis. I kicked him in the balls so he never did this again.

I was on the farm of Wessels de Villiers, who was also a friend of my father, one hot afternoon. I went for a swim in the dam with him, his girlfriend and a bunch of other people. When he came over to where I was standing in the water, I moved away a bit but he came after me. Then he bumped against me and I discovered that he must've taken his costume [bathing suit] off. I got out of the dam as quickly as I could, and that was the end of that.

### **Protecting Her Daughters**

I've told my kids about sexual assault but they've never been afraid of it. Even before I told them what had happened to me, they'd come to tell me if something uncomfortable happened to them. Marlèse used to earn pocket money by selling jewellery for a man who lived nearby. She and Monique didn't trust him so they didn't go inside his house. I've now found out that he molested his own child. Once or twice he did things to Marlèse like trying to hug her and trying to put his head on her tummy. She didn't like it so she told me about it. I knew this was just the beginning of something more serious, so I called him in and asked him about it. He said he was just joking with her. I told him that she didn't like it and I reminded him that she was a child, and I told Marlèse to rather go and clean Maria's house if she wanted to earn extra pocket money. My kids are very aware of sexual abuse and they know that they can come to me about it or go to their father if I'm not available.

### **THE AFTERMATH OF INCESTUOUS ABUSE**

It felt as if I was locked up somewhere and there was nothing aside from the abuse. I wouldn't admit to anybody for many years that this experience was destroying me. I don't know if I'll ever be completely whole. I

haven't spoken to anybody who has experienced this kind of thing who is able to get totally free of it.

### **Sexuality and Relationships**

According to the Bible, if you have sex you are joined as one and your spirits become one. I wanted to keep my body clean and to be holy for my future husband, but my father forced himself on me. The thought of becoming emotionally and spiritually one with him really threw me. My body, which should've been kept for my husband, was taken from me against my will. A clean body isn't much to be able to give your husband, but I couldn't even give my husband that much. Now I understand why I felt so filthy all the time. I still feel bad sometimes about having lost my virginity before I was married.

In the Dutch Reformed Church they teach you the ten commandments and tell you, 'Don't whore around; don't sleep with another man'. The church considers it whoring around even if your father forces you to have sex with him. So I felt very guilty. And according to my stupid, immature ideas, I believed I had come between my parents. This made me feel terribly guilty towards my mother but I also hated her for not helping me.

I didn't want anything to do with sex until I met a guy called Charl when I was 19. He had exactly the same personality as my father. I didn't realise the similarity at the time and I allowed him to use me. I only found out he was married after I fell pregnant. He was on a special assignment from England, and his wife and kids had stayed at home. When Charl found out I was pregnant, he laughed and said I should've taken precautions and that he was glad he was married.

What was so strange was that my mother knew that Charl was married but she never told me. She actually made appointments for us to go out together. Then, when I told her I was pregnant, she told me not to bring my bastard into her house. Where was I going to go, and what was I going to do, I wondered. I took an overdose of pills that night, but they weren't very strong so they just put me out for a couple of hours. I don't think I really wanted to kill myself; I think I was trying to get rid of the child or to get attention from my mother.

When my son was born, my mother made it obvious that she couldn't care less about him. I tried to look after him for three months. When I couldn't manage any longer, I paid somebody to look after him, but I soon found I couldn't afford this. I didn't feel I could say to Charl's wife, 'Your husband needs to support this child', because she and their five children

weren't to blame. So I had my son adopted. But I still miss him very much, especially on his birthday.

I didn't go out with a guy for a long time after that. When I started going out again, I didn't have sex. A doctor I went out with said to me, 'Elsabé, even if you said "yes", I wouldn't have sex with you because you're so innocent'. I could be such a big phoney! When I started having sex with two or three guys the year before I met Louis, I found that they liked me for the sex.

A woman who was a lesbian came into my life when I needed somebody to love me. She wanted to get physical but I never allowed her to. I knew I would feel very sorry about it afterwards because it wasn't what I wanted, so I'm thankful I didn't do anything with her.

### *Marriage*

Louis and I got engaged and married in 1979 when I was 22. For some reason I didn't have dirty feelings about sex with Louis. Our sexual relationship was all right, apart from the usual ups and downs. Maybe it was helpful that I was used to submitting sexually to a man.

After having a child out of wedlock and then having Marlése, I went to a gynaecologist who told me that part of my hymen was still stuck inside me. He had to do a D and C to remove it. I was very upset to think that it was still inside me after all I'd been through. It seemed like a very bad joke. Although my son's birth was natural, I had caesarean sections for my two daughters.

My husband loved me from the beginning of our relationship, but I couldn't figure out why he – or anyone else – could love me for myself. So slowly but surely I destroyed my marriage. Because I didn't want him to love me, I'd tell him about my past boyfriends and make-believe boyfriends. I didn't realise what I was doing at the time. My husband couldn't take it so being young, and not knowing how to deal with it, he hit me. I used to think that there was nothing wrong with a husband beating his wife, and I even thought I may have been looking for it, but later I realised I didn't deserve it.

Sometimes I'd hit my husband and threw things at him. After we'd been married a while I'd go for him every time he said something I didn't like. I'd beat him and he'd beat me in return. I did everything a wife wasn't supposed to do. I also told people that my husband beat me so they'd feel sorry for me and blame him.

My stepfather wouldn't even talk to my husband because he had beaten me up, and he still won't today. He's such a nice-guy Boer farmer, he'd never hit a woman. The traditional Boer is very gentle. His only ambition is to see there's food on the table for his family. I told my stepfather that

I'd hit my husband, and he said, 'I couldn't care less. You didn't deserve to be hit by him. You're a woman, not a hitting-bag.'

When friends of mine visited, my husband would ask me to come to bed early because he works shifts. But I'd sit with my friends until three or four in the morning. When I went to bed, he'd ask me why, when he'd asked me to do something, I'd do the opposite. I'd say, 'Don't you want me to be with my friends?'

I was always running down my husband. I used to tell him how bad he was. I'd go on about it night after night and week after week. One day he blew up and gave me a smack when we were in the kitchen with my friend Alana. She said, 'That's it!' I just kept quiet. I took the punch like a real Christian, and I never told Alana what had gone on before. She said, 'You're coming with me now!'

I went to the church and told everyone that my husband was assaulting me and that I'd done nothing to him. By then I actually believed he was in the wrong. I also reported that he was hitting me to the police department where he worked. My husband stuck with me through all of this. Finally, I looked at myself and I saw what I was doing. Then I had to turn around and tell all those people that I'd hit my husband first all along.

It wasn't right for my husband to hit me. But sometimes you need to smack a child to get him right. I'd really pushed him over the limit. My husband was never a violent person. He has only once in his life shot at a person on his job. Sometimes I fetch him at the police station and I hear the coloureds and blacks – who he can't stand – swearing at him to his face and calling him the worst words you can imagine, and he just laughs it off. He doesn't get upset that easily, so I must've pushed him very far for him to hit me.

Strangely enough I never thought that my husband would abuse our children. I've always trusted him. He's never given any suggestion that he'd hurt me in that way. The other day the police force's social worker asked me if I thought my husband had ever molested my children. I thought, 'What a cheek!' She asked this question just because I've been molested.

My husband was upset when I told him about my son, and he's still upset about it. But my daughters were happy when I told them about their brother, and they hope to meet him one day.

### *Other Psychological Consequences*

#### *Repression and Denial*

For a long time I made myself forget all the sexual things my father did to me. I still don't remember a lot of them except for the pain.

After I became a Christian in 1984 when I was 28, I felt that I shouldn't have any hang-ups about what my father did. So I forgave him and thought I was completely over it. I even told him I was sorry I'd hated him for all those years for what he did to me. I didn't realise I was still walking around in pain about it and that I still saw myself and my mother as the guilty ones. I used to sit hour after hour praying and crying without realising what I was upset about. I just didn't want to know.

When people asked me how I was, I'd say, 'Fine'. I never went to God and said, 'This happened to me and I'm in terrible pain about it'. I never said to myself, 'Elsabé, you have to face that this happened to you'. Instead, I wondered, 'How can I still have pain when it's all over and done with?'

### *An Inauthentic Self*

The molestation destroyed my belief in myself. I always tried to prove to people that I was the best at everything. For example, I memorised every answer in Trivial Pursuits. My friends were always astonished that I could do that. I was a phoney. I painted a different picture of myself from who I really was. I was saying, 'Look at me. I'm the daughter that everybody would love to have.' I wanted people to think I was a good person who loved everybody. If I saw somebody hungry and hurt, I'd give them something to eat because I thought that I loved them. But it actually had nothing to do with love. I was very dishonest about myself to impress people.

### *Addiction, Depression and Attempted Suicide*

I was very depressed about two years ago. I was afraid to live. I was afraid to laugh. I was afraid that if people saw me as a human being, they'd take advantage of me. I always expected everybody to want something from me so I could never allow myself to be vulnerable.

My husband and I had everything we needed, but I started destroying all of it about two years ago. I started blowing all his money. I used to buy, buy, buy. I put us in debt for thousands and thousands of rand. I also smashed his cars.

I used to have terrible nightmares about being chased. I started taking sleeping pills and tranquillisers when I couldn't sleep at night. Before long I was abusing them. Sometimes I needed six or eight to get to sleep. The more I took, the more I needed. It went from bad to worse, then even worse. I became a drug addict.

I found a doctor who wrote prescriptions for me. He didn't check when last I'd had one. I became cunning and went to different pharmacies to get

them filled. I'd also ask my daughter Marlése to go and fetch the prescription. I stopped caring whether or not my children saw me swallow the pills. They couldn't understand why I took them or why my personality started changing.

Everything came to a head about six months ago. Nothing was working any more, so I tried to commit suicide by drinking down 60 sleeping pills. It's a miracle I didn't die. Even though my husband knew I'd taken an overdose he didn't take me to the doctor or to hospital. We didn't communicate much at that time, but I know that I'd hurt him and the children so much that perhaps he thought my dying would be the best thing that could happen.

I slept for three days after my overdose. When I woke up I realised that I was still bothered about what had happened to me as a child and that I'd been lying to myself about being over it. I finally understood that I'd have to come to grips with it. I couldn't run away from it any longer. And I had to face my true self and recognise that I'd only been pretending that I loved people and that I was such a good person. And I knew I had to tell somebody about it.

The terrible thing was that I had to see my father nearly every day because I saw a lot of Miriam and he was living with her. When I went to my brother-in-law Gert's birthday party about a year ago, my father asked me to dance with him. I accepted because it would've upset everybody if I'd said no, but dancing with him was very hard for me. That was the first time in my life that I could admit to myself that I hated my father. Christians aren't supposed to hate.

Only then did I realise that I hated myself and held myself guilty for what had happened with my father, even though there was no way I could've got him to do what he did to me. I had to allow myself to hate him even though it upset me a lot. When I didn't have anybody to listen to me, I talked to the Lord. I'd tell Him about the anger and hate I felt towards my father, especially the hate.

My children didn't understand why I tried to commit suicide so I decided to tell them why I was the way I was. They'd seen me as a very strong person until I started falling apart two years ago. I told them about my father molesting me and that I hadn't been able to deal with it before and that I'd never gone for help. I told them how sorry I was that I'd messed up their lives for nearly two years. I knew that I'd put them through the grinder. I didn't hit them but I had abused them verbally. I warned them that I'd continue having a hard time dealing with it and asked them to please stick it out with me, which is what they've done.

**Psychosomatic and Physical Ailments**

Before I attempted suicide, I very suddenly started having blackouts. My children had to phone the emergency rescue guys for help. After doing some tests on me, the neurologist said I'd had an epileptic fit, although I'd never had one before. The fits happened three or four times but they stopped after my suicide attempt when I started remembering more about what my father did to me.

I have all sorts of other psychosomatic and physical problems. I have headaches. Sometimes I haven't been able to walk. I had to have a hysterectomy a couple of years ago because I had so many fibroids. And last year one of my ovaries had to be removed and they had to clean up the other one. They'll also have to remove one of them some time. I had an operation for a hernia, but although I kept myself quiet and didn't do any hard physical labour to aggravate it, it seems that the operation didn't do much good as my hernia is now back in its full glory.

**Recent Relationships within the Family***Siblings*

My eldest brother Johan killed himself in 1985 when he was 34 because he couldn't handle finding his friend hanging in his garage. I was very mad with my parents when Johan did this because I felt they'd wasted all their money on him. I'm sorry now that I ever felt that way, but I used to feel that he'd messed up my life. He meant everything to my parents who thought he had a strong personality but he just crumbled if something challenged him.

*Mother and Stepfather*

My mother is one of those bitchy types of women who are always afraid that other women will take their men. After she divorced my father, she married a beautiful man who is a farmer. At first I didn't trust him at all. I felt threatened by him when I went with him into the veld [open fields]. But I came to realise that he really loves me and wouldn't do anything to harm me, so now I really love him and we have a good relationship. I call him 'father'; he's the only father I ever had.

My mother told my stepfather about what my father did to me, but that only made him love me more. He's even kinder towards me than towards his own two children and often tells me how much he loves me. When we came back from the veld, my mother was rude to both of us. That's when I realised that she's jealous of our relationship and she doesn't trust us.

My [step]father gave me some of his late wife's jewellery which should belong to his own children. It shows how much he cares for me. And he really understands me. I used to go to visit him and my mother now and again when I was working about 200 kilometres [77 miles] from where they live. When my husband phoned me there about four years ago, my mother said to me, 'Why don't you tell him that you've been whoring with your father?' She was still holding my father's molestation against me.

When I became an adult, I couldn't really blame my mother for all her violence and abuse, like locking me out of the house. She didn't really know what she was doing. I feel sorry for her now; she's so insecure.

*Father*

I don't believe my father thinks he caused me any suffering. He knows about my suicide attempt but he thinks I did it because of my husband, not him. If I could face my father now with the truth of what he did to me and how much he has destroyed me for 35 years, I think he wouldn't know what I was talking about. To him it was just a physical act.

But I believe deep down my father must have a sense of guilt otherwise why does he shut up the minute I walk into the room, even when he's in the middle of shouting at my sister? He doesn't shut up for anybody else.

My father is very afraid of me. I'm the only one he's afraid of. Some time ago he started running Miriam down when he was drunk. I said, 'You shut up!' and he did. When Miriam has trouble with him she asks me to talk to him. When I walk into their home he's like a baby. He knows he can't intimidate me and that I see right through him. My brothers and sisters are all afraid of him, but I'm not. If somebody has threatened you with a gun for 14 years, you'll not be afraid of them later on.

I've now forgiven my father for what he did. Knowing that there's nothing I can do about it has helped me a great deal with my attitude towards him. When you lose an arm, you just have to deal with it. I can't avoid him now that he's living with Miriam because I can't stay away from her. I even took him into my home for two weeks when Miriam and her husband wanted to go on holiday and didn't have anywhere to leave him. It was quite a risk with my two little girls. They don't like or trust him at all. They talk to him because they see me talking to him and they know that I've forgiven him.

My father is actually very talented. He draws beautifully and he makes music, but it's all gone down the drain. He's not disabled, but he's a pathetic human being. After my mum left him, he got worse and worse. He kept losing jobs. He just lies in bed without moving all day and every day. He doesn't help in the house or outside. He doesn't do a thing.



Miriam's family supports him, which is hard for them because he eats so much. Once he got R1200 [£200/\$400] from somewhere and he went to town with it and drank himself stupid. He didn't go home until his money was finished. But when he doesn't have money, he doesn't drink for months.

I don't feel my father has power over me any more. It's not going to mean a thing to me when he dies, though to be quite honest, I'd save him from dying if I could. After all, he can't do anything to hurt me any more. He's too afraid even to talk back to me and he's not worth being mad at. He's a toothless, bearded old man, so why worry about him?

### THE STRUGGLE TO HEAL

I was always a fighter until I gave in the last two years. I didn't have the time or the luxury to cave in before that; I had to keep going because of my husband and children. But eventually my past caught up with me, and I'm glad it did.

I was able to change after my suicide attempt because I did a lot of praying. By breaking me down the Lord showed me who I am, what I am, and where I'd land up if I didn't change, and I'm grateful for that. I believe these realisations were the answer to all my prayers all those days and nights that I sat here crying and praying, 'Lord, show me what it is'.

Somebody phoned the social welfare department and told them I'd tried to commit suicide. Months later, the social worker visited me to ask about it. That was the first time I had to talk about it. The welfare department nearly took my children away but I was saved by becoming friendly with the social worker. I agreed to talk about what had happened to me in a group set up by the social welfare department. I was very happy when I learned that other women had been through the same kind of experience as I had. I also saw a psychiatrist once a week for two months, but she didn't do a thing for me.

I'd become estranged from a lot of people because I hated myself and I'd built a wall around me. I realised that I'd been hurting everybody who cared for me – both in my family and among my friends. I came to see that whenever I talked about what my father had done to me, I'd do so in order to convey what a very strong person I was. I was saying, 'Look at me. I forgave my father for molesting me.' I also fooled myself into believing I was strong, but I was lying to myself. I'd made all the right noises that a Christian is supposed to make, but I wasn't dealing with my real pain and anger. The strange thing is that when I started being honest about what happened, I stopped smoking and using pills.

After a while, I had to realise that my father is a human being as much as I am. I've also done things that have hurt others. Maybe I still do. What he has done may be worse in my eyes than what I've done, but I have to separate what he did from him as a human being. I came to realise that Christians aren't supposed to hate because hate is such a destructive force. It eats away at you all the time. Holding on to it would've destroyed me, so I had to rid myself of it. I don't know where I'd have been today if I'd nurtured that hate every day while sitting at home alone with the children away at school. I'm not going to pretend I like my father. He knows I don't. But there's no hate in me for him any more, only pity. And although he's old now, he may still want to change.

Strangely enough, I wouldn't want my past to have been any other way. Because of it, I've learned to be a different kind of person from my sisters and brothers. It made me a stronger person than they are. It made me have to struggle. There's pain but also a new kind of freedom. I'm on the road now, and I don't mind telling my story publicly now, not even to newspapers.

My husband and I had very bad fights about twice or three times a week. But I've changed and things are very different between us now. He thinks I changed because of seeing the psychiatrist, but I think it's because I came to terms with myself and what happened to me.

I have so much peace in me now. Sometimes the old anxieties and fears return and I feel I'm only hanging in by my teeth and that I'm not going to make it through the day. But I feel very comfortable right now. I was never easy-going like this before. Bad things sometimes turn out to be the best thing for you. My best friend, who's very sensitive, told me years ago that she felt I was hiding something deep down in myself. The other day she said to me, 'Only now are you really human'.

### AFTERWORD

#### Six Months Later

Part of my inner healing has enabled me to become very much my own person, strong and sure of myself. But not before discovering that I was afraid of people, including my husband. I suppose this was the last of the psychological gates that had to come down. Something happened between me and Louis – we became strangers. As close as we were before, the separation today is just as big. Louis has now started divorce proceedings. It wasn't because of any sudden conflict. We're like good old friends now.

I had another great discovery: my relationship with Louis was one of need. Sure, I love him, but as a person, not a husband. The idea that I need a man was probably something out of my dark past. One thing is certain: I don't need a man to set my emotional pace. Maybe one day I'll marry again, maybe not. For now I'm free – emotionally, spiritually and physically. Once the divorce is over and done with, I'll have to start a brand new life – a life that I'm eager to explore.

I'm waiting, praying and preparing myself for my new life. Whatever I do, it must be because I'm certain that God wants me to do it and that He will be glorified because of it. He was, is, and always will be, the first love of my life. I also have two wonderful and beautiful daughters, and friends who would cross oceans for me. For now, it leaves me with nothing else to desire.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

### Elsabé as the 'Little Mother'

Elsabé was the oldest daughter in a family with a mother who was mentally retarded and battered by her brutal and sexist husband. As previously noted, many researchers have reported that mothers in incestuous families are often 'ill, incapacitated, or for some reason emotionally unavailable' to their husbands and children (Herman, 1981, p. 45). According to Herman,

The families adapt to this stressful situation by reassigning many of the mother's traditional obligations to the oldest daughter. The family may come to rely on this daughter for a large part of the housework and child care and for emotional support and comfort. For the daughter, the duty to fulfil her father's sexual demands may evolve almost as an extension of her role as 'little mother' in the family. (1981, p. 45)

It is hardly conceivable that Elsabé was already acting as 'little mother' to her family when she was four years old (the age she was first molested by her father), but she clearly did take on the role of protecting her younger siblings at a very young age. Her mother was either unfit and/or unwilling to fulfil this responsibility. Indeed, Elsabé even became her *mother's* protector at times, despite the hatred, violence and emotional abuse she received from her. 'My greatest concern was to stop my father from hurting my brothers, my mother, or my sisters', Elsabé explained. 'Even when I was young, I used to attack my father when he went for any of them.' When her father was looking for the axe to attack her mother,

Elsabé kicked it under a bed so he wouldn't find it, adding that, 'I never left my mother alone with my father when he was in this kind of mood'.

Whereas Nida Webber's mother did not fit Herman's portrait of the weak, incapacitated or unavailable woman often found in families where father-daughter incest occurs, Elsabé's mother does fit this profile. Herman also points out that, 'Mothers who have been rendered unusually powerless within their families, for whatever reason, tolerate many forms of abuse, including sexual abuse of their children' (1981, p. 47). Herman's observation helps to shed light on Mrs Groenewald's collusion with her husband's sexually abusive behaviour. Elsabé noted that her mother was suicidal when her husband withdrew from her sexually, and that Mrs Groenewald was jealous of Elsabé for being the recipient of her husband's sexual interest. These are hardly the reactions of a woman with any power vis-à-vis her husband.

Like many other incest survivors who are thrust into this little mother role, Elsabé was even willing to submit to her father's sexual abuse because, 'I always thought that if I didn't agree to do it with him he'd turn to my brothers and sisters or he'd hurt them physically'.

Elsabé appears to be convinced that she was the only child in her family whom her father abused sexually. Her sisters also denied having been molested by him. It is very common for incest survivors to believe that they were the sole victims. But they are frequently wrong in their belief. Even if it were true that Elsabé was the only target of her father's predatory behaviour while she remained at home, it is very improbable that such a man would have refrained from sexually assaulting one or more of his other daughters after Elsabé left home at the age of 14.

### The Fighter

Elsabé described herself as having 'always been a fighter for as long as I can remember'. And what a fighter she was, despite the fact that her major opponent was an unusually large, vicious, capricious and murderous man. 'I always got back at my father one way or another', Elsabé said, with pride. Her strategies included throwing boiling butter on his head, causing him to slip and break four ribs, shooting at him and thereby reducing him to screaming and pleading for his life, and offering 50 cents [8 pence/\$0.16 cents] to an old man to kill him and her mother.

Elsabé frequently defied her father's orders with remarkable assertiveness and courage. When he tried to force her to kneel, she boldly exclaimed: 'You can break both my arms and both my legs, but I *won't* kneel before you'. And she stuck to her guns despite the fact that she

could hear her arm cracking. Another time when her father was punching her, she said, 'I just stood there and yelled at him, "You can kill me, but I won't crouch in the corner!"' She also dared to tell her father that she didn't belong to him and that he couldn't destroy her.

The discrepancy between Elsabé's acquiescence to her father's sexual abuse and her assertive resistance to his physical and emotional abuse is very conspicuous. Whether or not her explanation that she continued to submit to his sexual demands in order to 'stop him hurting my sisters' is deemed satisfactory, it is important to refrain from interpreting her lack of resistance to her father's sexual assaults as a sign of consent or an indication that she was not severely traumatised by his attacks. Elsabé makes it clear that she would much prefer to be struck than sexually victimised: 'It was quite a relief', she said, 'when my parents hit me and chased me outside because it meant that I didn't have to go to bed with my father'. It is also clear that she was able to be assertive when she was sexually abused by other adult males. In one case when she was 12 years old, she even kicked the balls of her father's friend who exposed himself to her.

I have never before read or heard accounts by incest survivors that match the degree of violent resistance and physical courage evident in the stories of Elsabé, Nida Webber and Elsa Foster. Whether it has anything to do with their being Afrikaners, I do not know. Elsabé mentioned that she had always been a fighter from a very young age and suggested that it might be part of her family heritage. She also maintained that a person who has been threatened with a gun for 14 years loses their fear later on. However, it is abundantly clear that this experience or its equivalent does not obliterate fear in everyone.

It may be remembered that Elsa Foster attributed her fighting spirit in part to the protective role she played towards her younger sisters in a family with an absentee mother. She also believed that it was her mother's failure to respond to her abuse with empathy and protectiveness that forced her to 'fight for myself' – in contrast to her sister, Marie, who was babied by their mother (according to Elsa). Both these explanations also apply to Elsabé, who was also cast in the older-sister protector role and whose mother also failed to protect her, despite being aware of her husband's incestuous attacks. Further research is needed to evaluate the validity of Elsa's thoughtful hypotheses.

The willingness of all three of these fighting women to use their real names in this book is an additional manifestation of their courage. Could it be that they feel more open to speaking out and being identified as incest survivors *because* they fought back so determinedly? Whatever the

answer, their militancy in this context did not spare them from experiencing devastating pain and trauma as a result of their abuse.

### Violent Resistance

I wonder how many women readers identified with Elsabé's many acts of violence against her father, or Nida Webber's act of stabbing her step-father close to his heart, her enjoyment in doing this and her continuing desire to kill him. Had Elsabé and Nida been males, only a few people would probably be surprised or judgemental about their acts of violent resistance. But because they were adolescent girls at the time, some people might find themselves being more critical of, or challenged by, these women's heroic stories.

Most people accept or even respect men who use violence to defend themselves when attacked, as well as men who initiate violence against targets that are deemed acceptable (such as people who are defined as 'the enemy', whether in peace or war). In contrast, most people are shocked by violent behaviour in women and girls, regardless of the context. For example, feminist writer Dee Clarke notes that:

The very possibility of female rage and revenge is frightening and shocking to us – more shocking and frightening than any image of female enslavement, suffering, or death.... The image of a woman killing a man – not for his or the reader's obscure sexual satisfaction, but in cold vengeance – is blasphemy. (1992b)

Women have been 'turning the other cheek' for centuries. This non-violent response has failed to stop the continuing escalation and increasing savagery of male violence against women. According to Clarke, growing numbers of women in the United States are questioning the belief that 'female violence ... will only escalate male violence' (1992a). A feminist button made by activist Nikki Craft reads, 'Men don't take us seriously because they're not physically afraid of us'. Clarke expresses the same idea.

Men commit the most outrageous harassments and insults against women simply *because they can get away with it*: they know they will not get hurt for saying and doing things that, between two men, would quickly lead to a fist fight or a stabbing. There are no consequences for abusing women. (Emphasis in the original; Clarke, 1992a)

'If the risk involved in attacking a woman were greater', Clarke concludes, 'there might be fewer attacks' (1992a).

Feminist scholar Janice Raymond has also observed that, 'Women are expected to react and pick up the pieces of violence against women but not to act offensively' (1990, p. 5). The rape crisis centres and battered women's shelters epitomise this tradition. Raymond notes, for example, that after Marc Lépine committed femicide against 14 women engineering students in Montreal in 1989 simply because of their gender, no one appeared to worry that women might retaliate. 'National, religious, racial, and ethnic terrorism generates public expectation of reprisals, but not gender terrorism', Raymond points out (1990, p. 5).

In recent years, films such as *Fatal Attraction* and *Basic Instinct* have attempted to demonise women who attack men. In contrast, the film *Thelma and Louise*, which touched a nerve in many women, heroinised the two women characters for their violence, especially the fatal shooting of a rapist. The belief that killing a rapist is justified was expressed in a real-life situation in Johannesburg, South Africa, when women, terrorised by a local serial rapist, put up posters of a woman holding a shotgun accompanied by the caption: 'Men and Women Were Created Equal, and Smith & Wesson Make Sure it Stays That Way' (Margaret Auerbach, personal communication, 10 September, 1993).

In a speech commemorating the victims of Marc Lépine, well-known feminist writer Andrea Dworkin expressed regret that she had not reacted to attacks on her with greater, perhaps even lethal, violence. 'Like many women', she told her audience, 'I have a long history of violence against me, and I say, to my increasing shame, that anyone who has hurt me is still walking around' (1990).

When women whose lives are in jeopardy because they are unable to escape abusive relationships kill their abusers, they should not only be *supported*. They should be *heroinised*. JoAnn Little is one North American woman who was championed by many politically left people for killing a prison guard after he raped her in prison. Had her rapist been her father, her brother, her husband, her lover, her date, her friend, or her political colleague, rather than a prison guard, few, if any, of these people would have taken up her cause.

I believe we should be celebrating girls and women who kill their abusers, rather than patronisingly trying to explain away their acts as indicative of momentary or long-term insanity or the so-called battered woman/child syndrome. As criminologists Allison Morris and Ania Wilczynski point out, explanations for criminal acts by women 'are sought within the discourse of the "pathological" and the "irrational"' (1994, p. 205). The same applies to women's acts of violence. The fact that women who kill their abusers often have to suffer heavy conse-

quences for their behaviour is all the more reason to heroinise them for their courage.

Most politically progressive people understand that the liberation movement in South Africa had to resort to violence in pursuit of justice and equality. Freedom fighters for this cause who successfully executed violent acts against colluders and other human symbols of apartheid were commended or heroinised by supporters and participants in the movement for so doing. Female 'freedom fighters' who use violence against males who commit atrocities against women and girls should also be commended. Since the male-dominated justice system serves by and large to protect rather than to punish male perpetrators of sexist violence, it is understandable that women would seek justice by other means. It is not reasonable to have one standard for those who have employed violence to fight social abominations such as apartheid or Nazism, and another for women who fight male supremacy.

### The Divine Right of the Father

Just as females are typically viewed as the property of males in patriarchal societies, children are almost universally seen as the property of their parents. Some fathers assume their property rights include the right to sexual access, particularly to their daughters. Author Louise Armstrong maintains that an incestuous father must have 'a sense of paternalistic prerogative in order to even begin to rationalise what he's doing.... He must have a perception of his children as possessions, as *objects*' (1978, pp. 234-5). For example, one stepfather who sexually abused his daughter in my San Francisco study told her when she was 14 years old, 'I've been your father since you were three. I've been a good father. You owe it to me' (Russell, 1986, p. 229).

Judith Herman also identifies a feeling of entitlement as characteristic of incestuous fathers:

Implicitly the incestuous father assumes that it is his prerogative to be waited upon at home, and that if his wife fails to provide satisfaction, he is entitled to use his daughter as a substitute. *It is this attitude of entitlement - to love, to service, and to sex - that finally characterizes the incestuous father* and his apologists. (1981, p. 49; emphasis added)

Since Herman's study was based on a sample of incest survivors in therapy, this statement may not apply to all, or even many, incestuous fathers. However, it definitely fits Elsabé's portrait of her father. For example, Elsabé reported that her father felt entitled to require her to move

into his bedroom 'and stay with him like a wife' when she was 13 years old. It is difficult to believe that the whole family was not aware of this new arrangement, given its blatancy. Because she was his daughter, 'he seems to think what he did to me was fine – that this gave him the right to do whatever he wanted', Elsabé explained.

According to Elsabé, her father also felt entitled to have sex with other women and children. For example, when his wife was in hospital giving birth, Elsabé found him in bed with the Indian domestic worker. This, of course, was another gross act of sexual exploitation. Even though Elsabé's mother also had affairs, this was after her husband lost interest in her sexually. She was so upset by his rejection that she attempted suicide. He, on the other hand, did not appear to care about her infidelities.

When Elsabé threatened to report her father to the police if he molested any more children, he was outraged: 'How dare you say a thing like that!' he objected, as if he had no reason to be ashamed about all the children he had sexually abused.

According to Elsabé, her father also felt entitled to her obedience and submission. He went to great lengths to try to coerce her into subservience. When Elsabé defied him, he nearly broke her arm in an attempt to force her to kneel.

Elsabé described her father as being 'a violent pig' who felt entitled to physically attack all members of his family, particularly his wife and Elsabé, and especially when he was drunk. This included hitting Elsabé with barbed wire and planning to chop up his wife with an axe. On several occasions, Elsabé mentioned that her father would have killed her or her mother if he could have got hold of them when at the peak of his rage.

Elsabé's father also felt entitled to financial support and domestic service by his daughter Miriam and her husband. For example, he failed to make any financial contribution to them while living with them. According to Elsabé he just lay around her sister's house believing that he was 'God's gift to this earth.... He even chases my sister and her family out of their own home when he gets drunk!' Elsabé raged.

Elsabé's father presumably felt entitled in all these ways simply because he was the father in an Afrikaner nuclear family.

### **Incest in the Afrikaner Community**

Elsabé maintains that there are two kinds of Afrikaner men: the 'traditional nice-guy Boer' who is 'very gentle', like her stepfather, and the dominating Boer patriarch who feels entitled to act in dictatorial and

exploitive ways in his family. Elsabé believed the latter type of Afrikaner to be in the majority: 'Most Afrikaans men are so full of themselves and their male roles', she said, contemptuously. Her own father was clearly an extreme example of the tyrannical Afrikaner. Elsabé described him as 'mean' and 'devilish' and 'a very arrogant and self-centred man' who thought he was 'God's gift to women'.

'Men should not be weak in the Afrikaner home', Elsabé declared. When she dared to tell her father that 'he was a weakling and amounted to nothing', her parents kicked her out of their home despite her young age (14 years old).

On being asked how prevalent she thinks incestuous abuse is among Afrikaners, Elsabé surmised it to be 'very common' because the father has so much power in the Afrikaner family. 'You tend to draw people to you who've had the same experience as you', Elsabé explained, 'so I've mainly heard about fathers, fathers, fathers. Maybe Afrikaner fathers think it's their duty to show their daughters the ropes', Elsabé suggested. She said she knew a man 'who said he'd rather show his daughter the facts of life before any other man does. That's the way these very patriarchal men think.'

Elsa Foster also believes, 'There's definitely a lot of sexual abuse going on among Afrikaners'. Because she, like Elsabé, has become outspoken about her incest experience, many other women have also spoken to her about being sexually abused.

Kathy Schultz (her real name), a lesbian incest survivor interviewed for this study, was sexually abused by her much older English-speaking twin stepbrothers. Having worked for many years at the Rape Crisis centre in Cape Town, she was unusually knowledgeable about incest, having counselled many survivors in the course of her work. Like Elsa and Elsabé, she believes that incest is very prevalent in the Afrikaner community:

I come from a predominantly Afrikaans family where the tradition is that you honour your mother and father. It's not acceptable for an Afrikaner girl to tell her mother or anyone else that a member of her family is abusing her. That's why it's impossible to accurately assess how much incest is going on. But I believe an incredible amount of it is occurring in the Afrikaner family. Most Afrikaner women I've spoken to have been abused by uncles or fathers or brothers. Knowing the pain that I went through, I can't stand the thought that there are millions of other girls and women going through the same experience as me.

Incest is definitely spoken about less often in the Afrikaans than in the English-speaking community. This could be because the family tradition among Afrikaners is so strong, and because they are more

dominated by religion and the NG Kerk [Dutch Reformed Church], and because they are less open-minded.

All the survivors I interviewed who expressed an opinion on the prevalence of incestuous abuse in the Afrikaner community believe that it is very high – although not necessarily higher than among English-speaking South Africans. This issue will be further explored in the next chapter.

## 7 Conclusion: Paternal Despotism in Private and Public Life

'You can't have a democratic state without having a democratic family.'

Gloria Steinem, 1995<sup>1</sup>

### AUTHORITARIAN AND BRUTAL TREATMENT OF BLACK SOUTH AFRICANS

Before launching into an unflattering portrayal of white South Africans, it is necessary to emphasise that a small number of Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans have dedicated their lives to the struggle for racial justice in that country, and some of them have lost their lives for this cause. The simplistic portrayal of all white people as extreme racists and all black people as noble enemies of injustice is all too common outside of South Africa. Readers should bear this in mind as they read the following pages because it becomes too cumbersome to repeatedly refer to 'many', 'most' or 'the vast majority' of Afrikaners and/or English-speaking South Africans every time these groups are mentioned.

Although the authoritarian and brutal treatment of black people by Afrikaners has been voluminously documented, the fact that Afrikaners are more implicated in this behaviour than English-speaking South Africans is less widely known outside the country. While the vast majority of white South Africans have shared the desire to maintain white power and privilege, there have nevertheless been significant differences in the ideas of Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans about how to do this, as well as in the extremes to which they have been willing to go in attempting to perpetuate white interests.

The Afrikaner patriarchs<sup>2</sup> held the reins of power in South Africa for more than 40 years. They believed that they were God's chosen people whose divine mission was to establish control over the indigenous people, whom they viewed as inferior heathens 'damned to servitude' (Giliomee, 1979, p. 92; also see De Villiers, 1987, p. 310). 'United by a belief in the

God-given nature of white supremacy over blacks', most Afrikaners 'viewed the state's monopoly of force and authority over the individual as a divine gift' (Danaher, 1984, p. 66). Whether or not these religious beliefs served to generate or to intensify Afrikaners' racism, or merely reflect their political interests, is an old debate that I am in no position to resolve. More importantly, religion and politics were so thoroughly integrated for Afrikaners that trying to separate them is a questionable enterprise.

Although sharing the Afrikaners' view of black people as inferior heathens who needed to be converted to Christianity, English-speaking South Africans have been far less inclined to draw on religion to justify their racial prejudices and politics. Perhaps their sense of superiority has been so firmly in place for such a long time that they did not feel the need to turn to the Bible for justification. Whatever the reasons, the fact remains that English-speaking South Africans have been significantly less fanatical in both their religious and their political beliefs.

While English-speaking South Africans have deplored the extreme manifestation of Afrikaner racial politics, they have nevertheless enjoyed the benefits of white privilege that the Afrikaners' policies preserved. While portraying themselves as blameless critics of apartheid, they relied on the Afrikaners to do the dirty work of maintaining white supremacy. It is obviously impossible to know whether English-speaking South Africans would have become more fanatical about their racial politics had they been the dominant force in the South African political scene after 1945.

Not only have Afrikaners been primarily responsible for maintaining white privilege and power in recent years by virtue of the fact that they governed the country from 1948 until 1994; they have also demonstrated a fervent sense of righteousness and devotion to this task. This has enabled them to feel justified in their heinous acts of exploitation and savage behaviour towards black South Africans.

The policy of apartheid that the Afrikaners devised is a unique manifestation of racism peculiar to South Africa. It is also the most extreme form of anti-black racism ever articulated and systematically implemented by white people in the twentieth century. Two examples of blatant racist statements made by representatives of Afrikanerdom over the years may help to convey their fanatical pro-apartheid and sexist mentality.

G. F. van Froneman, Nationalist Party Member of Parliament who later became the Deputy Minister of Justice, Mines and Planning, said in 1969:

This African labour force [in the 'white' areas] must not be burdened with superfluous appendages such as wives, children and dependents who could not provide service. (Bernstein, 1975, p. 12)

The Dutch Reformed Church – the largest of the Afrikaner religious denominations – endorsed the following statement in 1974:

That families in many cases cannot live together is true but it is also true that they are granted the opportunity to visit each other – provided of course they are willing to comply with the relevant regulations and they do not disregard this privilege. (Bernstein, 1975, pp. 12–13)

As these two quotations make clear, black Africans were treated as expendable units of labour. When the 'white' economy did not need them, they were forced to return to their so-called homelands regardless of their family ties in the 'white' areas. If they remained in the 'white' areas illegally, they were under constant threat of arrest and deportation. The inhumanity of this policy becomes even more evident on knowing that the 'white' areas constituted 87 per cent of the land in South Africa.

Apartheid, then, was essentially a policy of institutionalised brutality entailing poverty, unemployment, hunger, malnutrition and starvation for many black South Africans. One African woman, recently abandoned by her husband, described her situation as follows:

Before he left we used to take turns to look for work because the children can't go to crèche because there's no money. Sometimes they lie awake at night crying. I know they are crying because they are hungry. I feel like feeding them Rattex [poison]. When your children cry hunger-crying, your heart wants to break. It will be better if they were dead. When I think things like that I feel worse. It's terrible when a mother wants to kill her own children. (Wilson and Ramphele, 1989, p. 97)

Not only was the violence of apartheid systemic and thoroughly institutionalised, but it was manifested in countless vicious acts at all levels of society, from high government officials to the ordinary man on the farm. For example, Audrey Coleman, an activist in the Detainees Parents' Support Committee in 1987, reported that the security police often used to detain apolitical African children to frighten them. In one instance she knew about first hand, the police had picked up a 13-year-old African boy they saw walking barefoot in the street, and questioned him about the stoning and burning of a house. When he denied having done either, they told him that if he didn't admit to these crimes, they would keep him in prison for ten years. On reiterating his denial, they detained him for nine months, never notifying his parents about his fate (Russell, 1989, pp. 89–90).

Another example is provided by Afrikaner journalist Rian Malan who reported an incident in which an African man, Dennis Mosheshwe,



accidentally intruded on a gathering of Afrikaners who were partying outdoors one afternoon. Because he was 'insolent and surly' and swore at one of them, another of the men, Augie de Koker, goaded on by other partygoers, ended up torturing him to death. Malan described Mosheshwe's corpse as follows:

There had been bleeding from the nose and ears. There was no skin on the soles of the feet. His ribs had caved in on one side. One hand was twisted like a claw. The ears were partially torn off the head.... The face was a mask of coagulated blood. The lips were swollen; the nostrils ripped off the upper lip. (1990, p. 110)

Among his other vicious acts, de Koker had jumped up and down on Mosheshwe's genitals. He had also tried to lynch Mosheshwe but failed because he was too drunk to get the rope over a tree branch (1990, p. 110).

According to Malan, there is even an Afrikaans word – *kafferpak*, meaning a 'kaffir<sup>3</sup> hiding', to describe this kind of savage beating, 'of the sort whites have been administering to blacks since the day we set foot on this continent' (1990, p. 111).

It is no exaggeration to describe apartheid as an entrenched reign of terror and deprivation for black South Africans.

#### AUTHORITARIAN AND BRUTAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE AFRIKANER FAMILY

In her analysis of white settler societies from their origin in South Africa in 1652 until the end of the nineteenth century, South African historian Cherryl Walker emphasised the connection between the Afrikaners' patriarchal beliefs and their religion. She maintained, for example, that

The hold of the Dutch Reformed Church, with its fundamentalist reading of the Bible and rigid adherence to patriarchal ideology, remained a strongly conservative force ... in the Afrikaner community. (1990, p. 318)

More specifically, Afrikaner patriarchs used the Bible to justify men's 'God-given' right to rule over women and to monopolise political power (Cronje and Venter, 1958, p. 57; also see Walker, 1990, p. 317). Although the trend towards secularisation that typically accompanies industrialisation has undermined the influence of the Dutch Reformed Church in the contemporary Afrikaner community (as is evident to an exaggerated extent in the Afrikaner families described in this book<sup>4</sup>), this does not

mean that the patriarchal and racist attitudes institutionalised in this religion have not remained embedded in Afrikaner culture.

Whereas the Christian denominations to which English-speaking South Africans subscribe (Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, etc.) are also very patriarchal, religion has never been as central to their lives as it has been to Afrikaners. While most English-speaking South Africans disapprove of women who deviate from traditional sex roles, they have been less apt than Afrikaners to see such women as 'sinners'.

Afrikaners have long considered it to be the duty of Afrikaner women to treat their husbands with reverence, to be the helpmates of their men, to raise the children and supervise the household, and to be willing to sacrifice their sons and husbands to preserve the divine right of *die volk* (the Afrikaner tribe) to rule over black people (Cock, 1989, p. 64; Cronje and Venter, 1958, p. 54, 57; Walker, 1990, p. 317). Afrikaners have also considered it to be the duty of their daughters to obey their fathers (Cronje and Venter, 1958, p. 54).

The exceptionally hierarchical relationship between parents and children in the Afrikaner family is reflected by the fact that even today, 'it is rare for the young to address either parent with the egalitarian *jy* [you]' (Seegers, 1990/91, p. 7). The following examples of paternal authoritarianism described by Elsa Foster (Chapter 3) and Nida Webber (Chapter 2) would be highly unusual in English-speaking South African homes:

You never asked HOFFIE questions and you never challenged him. You just said, 'Ja, Pa'. If you asked him why, you got a double hiding. What he said was law and you accepted it. With God you have an option, with HOFFIE you didn't. (Elsa Foster)

If my father tells you it's raining outside when the sun is shining, it's raining.... My father is the boss and you are the maid. (Nida Webber)

Perhaps the divergent histories of the Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans can shed some light on the different degrees of authoritarianism in the families of these two white ethnic groups. Historian Robert Shell, for example, who differentiates between patriarchal and paternalistic family forms, maintains that the paternalistic family mode of management brought to the Cape by the early European settlers – the forebears of the Afrikaners – was transformed over time into a more patriarchal mode. In contrast, the British settlers who arrived over a century later in 1795, imported their more paternalistic family form with them (1994, p. 411). According to Shell, the patriarchal family 'was more chauvinistic, more starkly based on sexual differences', and women and children in the patriarchal slave owning families 'were on almost the same low level as the

slaves and servants' (1994, p. xxvii). Although control in paternalistic families was also vested in the father, 'the mother could more easily assume some spousal authority' (1994, p. xxvii).

Whether or not these historical differences have continued to shape the families of white South Africans in the twentieth century, the stories of the Afrikaner incest survivors presented in this volume expose the violent and tyrannical behaviour of their fathers in the privacy of their homes. Elsa Foster and Marie Malan's stepfather HOFFIE, for example, starved his children, humiliated and raped his daughters, raped his wife, beat up and tortured all the members of his nuclear family, and repeatedly threatened their lives. He fashioned his home into a kind of mini-concentration camp.

Elsabé Groenewald's father also repeatedly beat, raped and threatened to kill her, constantly tried to force her to show deference, and threw her out of the home to fend for herself when she was only 14. He also savagely attacked his wife and intended to axe her to death on one occasion. One of Elsabé's parents tried to burn her to death when she was a baby; Elsabé's mother also hated, beat and humiliated her, and frequently supported her husband's violent attacks on Elsabé.

Nida Webber's stepfather raped his wife, taped up his daughter's mouth to silence her when he raped her, physically assaulted her many times, threatened to kill her mother if Nida didn't submit to his sexual abuse, and treated her like a servant. There are undoubtedly many instances throughout the world in which fathers have treated, and continue to treat, their daughters as, or more savagely, than these three men. Nevertheless, the physical, psychological and sexual brutality of these Afrikaner fathers towards their daughters, as well as towards their wives (except in Nida's case), is extreme.

It is true that parents, especially fathers, in English-speaking South African families are also authoritarian. But as Elsa pointed out, they tend to be significantly less so than Afrikaner parents. Incest survivor Eastlynne Nelson-Tansley (her real name) agreed with Elsa on this matter. 'Based on my experience in Afrikaner culture,' she said, 'Afrikaans men express their aggression more readily than men from British backgrounds, and they are also more authoritarian. The English-speaking South Africans are more "hands-off", but I think there's a lot of emotional abuse and neglect in these families'.

By 'hands-off', I understand Eastlynne to be saying that English-speaking South African men are less violent than Afrikaner men. Whether or not this is a correct interpretation, 62 per cent of the 13 Afrikaner incest perpetrators in my small study of 20 survivors subjected their victims to severe or very severe violence as well as incestuous

abuse, compared with only 20 per cent of the 10 perpetrators who were English-speaking South Africans (see Table 2 in the Appendix). The Afrikaner perpetrators were also more likely than the English-speaking South Africans to possess or use a weapon in connection with the abuse (see Table 2 in the Appendix).

In using the term 'hands-off', Eastlynne may also have been referring to the fact that English-speaking South Africans tend to be less physically affectionate than Afrikaners. Lara Newman, for example, remarked that her parents hardly ever touched her. Although she adored her father, and her parents remained together, she barely mentioned him in her narrative about her life. It seems reasonable to infer that he was distant and removed from Lara. This kind of emotional and physical distance on the part of parents towards their children is quite common in English-speaking South African families.

Although the Afrikaner parents in this book were also not described as physically affectionate, I have often heard Afrikaners characterise English-speaking South Africans as distant and physically unaffectionate compared to Afrikaans people.

Unlike Elsa and Marie, the English-speaking South African survivors in the study enjoyed some right to free speech at home. In addition, there were no cases in this ethnic group that even came close to the degree of terror and persecution described by Elsabé, Nida, Marie and Elsa. When Bridget Carter (a pseudonym), an English-speaking South African survivor of brother-sister incestuous abuse, asked her father not to kiss her on the mouth again, he quietly complied – not just on that occasion but from that time on. When Lara chided her abusive grandfather for the way he had treated her, he cried. It is impossible to imagine the fathers of Elsabé, Nida, Marie and Elsa reacting in a similar fashion.

However, this comparison is complicated by the fact that there are significant social class differences between the families of the Afrikaner and English-speaking South African survivors in this study. All nine of the English-speaking survivors were middle class whereas five out of the nine Afrikaner survivors, including the four whose stories are told in this volume, are working or lower class (see Table 1 in the Appendix). Many United States studies have shown that violence within families tends to be more severe in the lower class (e.g., Strauss *et al.*, 1980).

The class differences between these two white ethnic groups are not just coincidental, however. Most of the English-speaking South African population is middle class, whereas a large percentage of Afrikaners are lower class. Therefore, it is reasonable to compare the behaviour of Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans despite the class differences noted.

In addition to greater authoritarianism, the fathers of the Afrikaner women interviewed also revealed a significantly greater sense of ownership of their wives and children than did the English-speaking South African fathers. For example, Elsa reported that her stepfather, Hoffie, believed that 'fathers own their children and can do what they like with them', and that 'his whole family thought like that'. And Elsabé testified that, 'Because I'm his daughter, my father seems to think that what he did to me was fine'. We are accustomed in the United States and Britain to incest perpetrators denying charges of abuse, but the fathers of Elsabé, Marie and Elsa had such robust feelings of entitlement that they chose to defend rather than deny their incestuous behaviour.

Afrikaner fathers appeared to enjoy more power in their homes and to feel more entitled to sex with their daughters than did English-speaking South African fathers. For example, Hoffie appears to have believed that female members of his family were duty-bound to be his sexual slaves. He told Elsa, 'Every father does this to make his little girl grow up'. When eight-year-old Elsa screamed and begged Hoffie to stop forcing her to hold his penis, he told her it was her duty so he could make her a woman. When Elsa resisted being raped by Hoffie and Jacobus and pleaded with them to kill her first, they told her, 'This is what womanhood is about.'

Similarly, 13-year-old Elsabé's father told her that she must move into his bedroom and stay with him like a wife. Being his daughter, he believed, 'gave him the right to do whatever he wanted'. The sense of entitlement expressed by these two fathers is a manifestation of extreme sexist and paternal authoritarianism.

Judith Herman contends that there is a direct link between male domination in the home and the occurrence of father-daughter incest:

As long as fathers dominate their families, they will have the power to make sexual use of their children. Most fathers will choose not to exercise this power; but as long as the prerogative is implicitly granted to all men, some men will use it. (1981, p. 202)

Herman explains in the following passages why she believes the traditional division of labour between males and females in the patriarchal family also promotes incestuous abuse:

Whereas male supremacy creates the social conditions that favor the development of father-daughter incest, the sexual division of labor creates the psychological conditions that lead to the same result. Male supremacy invests fathers with immense powers over their children, especially their daughters. The sexual division of labor, in which women

nurture children and men do not, produces fathers who are predisposed to use their powers exploitively. The rearing of children by subordinate women ensures the reproduction in each generation of the psychology of male supremacy. It produces sexually aggressive men with little capacity to nurture, nurturant women with undeveloped sexual capacities, and children of both sexes who stand in awe of the power of fathers.

Wherever these conditions obtain, father-daughter incest is likely to be a common occurrence. In any culture, the greater the degree of male supremacy and the more rigid the sexual division of labor, the more frequently one might expect the taboo on father-daughter incest to be violated. Conversely, the more egalitarian the culture, and the more the childrearing is shared by men and women, the less one might expect to find overt incest between father and daughter. The same logic applies to particular families within any one culture. The greater the domination of father, and the more the caretaking is relegated to the mother, the greater the likelihood of father-daughter incest. The more democratic the family and the less rigid the sexual division of labor, the less likely that fathers will abuse their daughters. (1981, pp. 62-3)

If Herman's analysis is correct, as I believe it is, father-daughter incest can be expected to be more prevalent among Afrikaners than among English-speaking South Africans.

According to Nida, most Afrikaner men 'think that they should be the bosses in their families and that women must be the maids'. She described the sexual division of labour in her own family of origin as very traditional and rigid. 'My father believes it's a woman's duty to wash the floors and the windows, to iron, and so on', Nida complained. Her story provides many examples of her stepfather's zealous commitment to these sexist notions.

As previously mentioned, when mothers are unable or unwilling to play their traditional role, the eldest daughter is typically forced to take it on. For example, because Hoffie refused to contribute to the financial support of his stepchildren, his wife was obliged to work long hours outside the home. Instead of Hoffie, who worked at home, assuming the responsibility of child care and housework, Elsa was forced into domestic service at a very young age. Similarly, because Elsabé's mother was mentally disabled and irresponsible, leaving her family for weeks at a time, the responsibility for child care was thrust on Elsabé at a very early age. As recently as 1993, Marike de Klerk, the Afrikaner wife of former South African president de Klerk, declared that 'A woman is there to keep her man high'. Her sexist pronouncement reflects the widespread acceptability of women as servants in the Afrikaner family.

In Chapter 6 I discussed the tendency for daughters who play the 'little mother' role to be forced to become 'little wives' as well. This tendency also suggests a connection between rigid sex roles and father-daughter incest.

In summary: Afrikaner fathers are unusually powerful, patriarchal and authoritarian, with a robust belief in their right to dominate their families and to behave violently towards them, coupled with strong feelings of ownership and entitlement to domestic and sexual services. These observations provide yet another basis for expecting incestuous abuse – particularly father-daughter incest – to be especially prevalent among Afrikaners. Elsa's suggestion of 'a connection between the incestuous abuse of children and the widespread acceptance that the father's word is law', combined with her observation that Afrikaners are more prone than English-speaking South Africans to subscribe to this authoritarian norm, leads to the same conclusion.

Interestingly, when selecting only the most traumatic experience of incestuous abuse reported by each of the 20 survivors interviewed, 78 per cent of the Afrikaner perpetrators were fathers compared to 38 per cent of the English-speaking South African perpetrators. However, although this difference in percentages is large, it cannot be considered reliable because of the small sample and the unscientific manner in which it was selected. Further research is needed to verify whether Afrikaner men are really more inclined to sexually abuse their daughters than English-speaking South African men.

In conclusion, this exploratory study offers tentative support for the hypothesis that the greater authoritarianism and propensity for violence of Afrikaner men as compared to English-speaking South African men has resulted in more brutal manifestations of this crime among Afrikaners than among English speakers. In addition, many reasons were offered for expecting that incestuous abuse may be more prevalent among Afrikaners than among English-speaking South Africans. A rigorous national study is needed to evaluate the validity of my tentative conclusions, including attempting to ascertain whether the prevalence of incestuous abuse is indeed more prevalent among Afrikaners than English-speaking South Africans.

Some possible reasons why Afrikaner men have been so brutal in their racial and sexual politics will be examined in the following section.

## THE AFRIKANERS' RACIST AND SEXIST POLITICS

### Self-Interest

The reasons Nida's, Elsabé's, and Marie and Elsa's fathers violated, tortured and terrorised them are different from the reasons that Afrikaner

men chose to exploit, torture and terrorise black people. With black people, Afrikaners, most of whom were peasant farmers, were initially engaged in an intense power struggle for land. With their access to superior weapons, the Afrikaners eventually succeeded in defeating, then controlling and exploiting the indigenous black peoples. Enormous cultural differences between the Afrikaners and black ethnic groups combined with racism to make any form of integration anathema to the Afrikaners, who presumably believed that if they did not maintain their superordinate position, they would probably become a powerless minority group at the mercy of a vast majority of black Africans. To them, democracy meant loss and powerlessness, possibly annihilation.

However, Afrikaners' peasant background had much in common with Africans' way of life. Both these peoples also lacked the education, skills and cultural experience to compete effectively with English-speaking South Africans when the economy shifted to a more industrial base in the early twentieth century. Hence Afrikaners were much more motivated than English-speaking South Africans to impose legal restrictions preventing Africans and the members of other black ethnic groups from competing for jobs.

Afrikaner fathers are not engaged in the same kind of power struggle with their wives or their children. Children's dependence on their parents or other adult caregivers is biologically based and therefore inevitable. Culture plays a very important role, however, in magnifying or reducing the power disparity between parents and children, as well as between parents. As previously noted, this inequality is particularly marked in Afrikaner families, making it more likely that the fathers who enjoy this power will abuse it.

But there are also many similar reasons motivating Afrikaners to keep black men and women, as well as white Afrikaner women and children, subservient. Doing so enhances Afrikaner men's feelings of power and superiority. Afrikaner men also profit economically by barring women and black people from well-paid, prestigious and powerful occupations. In contrast to the legal restrictions imposed on black people, religion and tradition, not laws, have sufficed to keep most Afrikaner women from competing with their men in the job market or in public life.

Afrikaner men also benefit by keeping women and black people as their servants and sexual servicers. Black women, particularly those employed in white homes and on white-owned farms, have frequently been subject to rape and sexual exploitation by the white 'baas'<sup>5</sup> and/or his sons (see, for example, Russell, 1990, Chapter 12). Elsabé, for example, found her father in bed with the Indian domestic worker when her mother was away giving birth. Many Afrikaner men also believe they are entitled to sexual access to their wives whenever they so desire, and, as we have seen, some

feel entitled to treat their daughters – women in the making – as servants and sexual servicers.

### The Militarisation of Afrikaner Males

The militarisation of Afrikaner males, all of whom were required to spend two years in military service (reduced to one year in 1990), has had profound implications for their treatment of women and black people. The primary purpose of this militarisation was to preserve white privilege in the face of black demands for justice. Although the army was sent outside South Africa's borders to destabilise neighbouring countries, particularly Marxist-controlled Mozambique and Angola, and to attack black South African refugees who resided in neighbouring territories, it was mostly utilised to quell black resistance within South Africa.

While English-speaking South African males were also conscripted into the army, more of them served as officers and many were able to avoid being drafted in one way or another.<sup>6</sup> Not only did Afrikaners form the backbone of the army, but they also greatly outnumbered English-speaking South Africans in the police force.

Afrikaner men, already dehumanised by their socialisation as males (e.g., only sissies cry), have been further dehumanised by their training to kill black people, many of them fellow South Africans. As Canadian peace researcher Barbara Roberts has noted:

A soldier must learn to dehumanize other people and make them into targets, and at the same time to cut himself off from his own feelings of caring and connectedness to the human community. His survival and competence as a soldier depend on this process. Military training is socialisation into masculinity carried to extremes. (Cited in Cock, 1988, p. 10)

Consider the degree of dehumanisation necessary to perpetrate the kind of atrocities described by the former army psychologist who sexually abused Lara Newman, for example: hanging black women from trees, cutting off their breasts, and tying them on beds so that large numbers of soldiers could more easily rape them (Chapter 5).

A white South African mother lamented:

We allow the might of the army to swallow the boys we, as mothers, have spent eighteen years turning into civilised human beings (sic), caring and considerate of others (sic), and in two years *turn them into efficient, largely unthinking, killing machines*. (Cock, 1989, p. 64, emphasis added)

Although soldiers everywhere are trained to kill, it is probably unique to South Africa for every able-bodied member of the ruling group to be subject to conscription. In addition, soldiers in most other countries are trained to kill people deemed enemies in foreign states, not the oppressed peoples in their own countries.

Since Afrikaner supremacy was maintained through the barrel of a gun, there were very few restrictions on ownership of firearms by white males. Afrikaner men owned, on average, at least one gun each (Hofmeyr, personal communication, 20 November 1992). Many of them also owned and used sjamboks – long animal-hide whips frequently used by the police for 'crowd control'.

Ostensibly, Afrikaner men owned weapons to protect their families from *die swart gevaar* (the black peril). Some of them also used these weapons to threaten and coerce members of their families to do their bidding. For example, Nida mentioned that her stepfather had a sjambok 'because he needed a weapon to keep the blacks from coming into the yard whenever they wanted to'. But when Nida was 16 years old, her father used it to whip her (see Chapter 2). Even when these men do not actively threaten their families with their weapons, the very fact that they possess them can be intimidating, especially for those who have witnessed them being used on black people.

### The Effects of Oppression

Obviously, apartheid has been immensely damaging to black South Africans, both materially and psychologically. Those who have been subjected to particularly brutal treatment – such as severe poverty, forced emigration, banishment, beatings, torture, incarceration, solitary confinement, the torture and assassination of loved ones – have been even more severely injured. Damaged human beings are easier to oppress and people who are deprived of adequate education and job skills are more easily dominated.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, sexism has damaged women and girls both materially and psychologically. When this harm is compounded by the long-term destructive consequences of incestuous abuse (as well as rape, beatings, torture, and/or the misogynist murder of loved ones), the victims have typically suffered from even more severe consequences. A poor self-image, feelings of worthlessness, self-destructive impulses, eating disorders, relationship problems, and so on, seriously handicap many survivors' development and achievement, to say nothing of their health, happiness and fulfilment. These injuries often make it more difficult for women to

compete in a male-dominated society, thereby making it easier for men to maintain their positions of power over women.

This study provides examples of the deterioration in academic performance that frequently coincides with the onset of incestuous abuse. This abuse often continues to have a destructive impact on survivors' educational and occupational goals and performance. For example, one survivor stated that, 'My mother told me I didn't do well at school after the time my father started doing oral sex on me'. Another reported, 'I was not achieving at school so I dropped out in standard eight [6th grade]'. A third said, 'My academic work went down completely as a result of my father's abuse'. Marie described the severe job problems she experienced because of her inability to concentrate, her excessive desire to please and her repeated psychological incest-related crises that often made it impossible for her to work at all. Nida's school performance plummeted after her mother learned about her father's abuse but did nothing to stop it. From being one of the best students in her class, she ended up failing her final high school examinations.

Some incest survivors also marry young in order to get away from the abuse at home. In my San Francisco study, incest survivors became mothers at a significantly younger age than women without a history of incestuous abuse (Russell, 1986). Maternal responsibilities, particularly at a young age, can make it even more difficult for women to realise their career and creative potentials.

The more handicapped survivors are in obtaining work skills or in retaining their jobs, the more dependent they are on finding and staying with a partner who can support them. This, in turn, often traps them into remaining in abusive relationships. Nida might well have left her violent husband sooner had she acquired job skills that would have enabled her to support herself and her child. Without such skills she was dependent on the charity of friends to house, clothe and feed her and her son when she finally left her husband. Subsequently, she had few options open to her besides trying to find another husband. As Herman has so eloquently stated: 'For those who aspire to an image of free womanhood, incest is as destructive to women as genital mutilation or the binding of feet' (1981, p. 125).

### Summary

Research indicates that Afrikaners have been significantly more extreme and vicious in their racial politics than English-speaking South Africans. My research also suggests that they have been more extreme and vicious

in their *sexual* politics, as manifested in their incestuous behaviour. I have pointed out some of the ways in which Afrikaner men's treatment of women and black people are similar and motivated by the same ideological and economic factors. This analysis, combined with the stories of the Afrikaner incest survivors interviewed for this study, suggests that a significant relationship exists between Afrikaner men's authoritarian racism in the public domain and their authoritarian sexism in the private domain.

Future research will have to determine whether Afrikaners' racial politics is a manifestation of their sexual politics at home (as is implied by Gloria Steinem's quote at the beginning of this chapter), or whether their sexual politics is a manifestation of their racial politics, or some combination of these two possibilities.

### THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RACIAL POLITICS AND SEXUAL POLITICS: AN AFRIKANER'S ANALYSIS

S. I. du Toit, an Afrikaner professor of psychology, also maintains that there is a connection between the racial politics of Afrikaners and violence in their homes. As will become evident in the following pages, his reasoning and analysis constitute a stunning example of how racism and sexism can distort the perception of facts as well as theory.<sup>8</sup>

Several South African studies have documented that Afrikaner men are more inclined than men from other ethnic groups, including English-speaking South Africans, to perpetrate 'family murder' or 'familicide' (du Toit, 1990, p. 289; Graser, 1992, p. 183).<sup>9</sup> Du Toit defines familicide as occurring when 'the father or mother kills the rest of the family, and then commits suicide, or at least makes a serious attempt to do so' (1990, p. 288). In fact, it is mostly the fathers who do the killing.<sup>10</sup>

Du Toit considers the Afrikaner father's 'feeling of responsibility for the family' to be 'the essential and characteristic feature of the South African [Afrikaner] family murderer' (1990, p. 294). 'Because he [the father] sees himself as the person who determines their lives, he feels he should be able to solve all their problems', du Toit contends. This 'creates a situation wherein he [the father] feels that their lives depend on this [his] responsibility' (1990, p. 297). Hence, when he is hit by hard times, such as unemployment or 'a feeling of hopelessness' because of his 'unmanageable responsibilities', he murders his wife and children.<sup>11</sup> Du Toit claims that the peculiar 'brand of familicide' found in South Africa 'occurs very seldom in other Western countries' (1990, p. 289).



Du Toit arrived at his conclusions by studying the available literature and newspaper accounts about familicide. He considered the following kinds of statements, of which he cites only four, as evidence for the Afrikaner father's strong sense of responsibility for his family: One father said: 'I want to save the children and take them with [me]'; another left a note declaring: 'We love each other, all must go together'.

According to du Toit, the intense sense of responsibility felt by these fathers also characterised the first Dutch settlers, whom he erroneously refers to in typical white South African fashion as 'the founders of South Africa'. He argues that these settlers 'assumed guardianship over the local population' and therefore 'did not massacre the indigenous population of the entire country in significant numbers, as was done in many other countries colonised by whites' (1990, p. 296). It appears that du Toit considers his early forebears as noble, if foolhardy, for their allegedly unique way of handling indigenous black South Africans.

Equating guardianship with a sense of responsibility, du Toit argues that this sentiment has played a vital role in the way Afrikaners have treated black people throughout the ages. More specifically, he maintains that 'Guardianship preceded apartheid and directed its course' (1990, p. 296). He goes on to claim that Afrikaners assumed the right to determine the lives of black people 'for everyone's good' (1990, p. 296), and that most whites considered this 'natural, and even as the will of God' (1990, p. 296). While conceding that the assumption of such a right is 'abhorrent', du Toit nevertheless offers the following whitewashed 'white man's burden' perception of apartheid.

Although brutalities have been committed through the ages, no government has ever before taken the risk to subject people to such control.... The author [du Toit] ventures to suggest that [other] authorities in the past shrank from that degree of control over the lives of people because of all the encompassing responsibility it would create. South Africa was perhaps the first country to discard the wisdom of the ages by undertaking the right to determine the lives of other people with its consequent burden of responsibility. (1990, p. 297)

Du Toit's racist romanticisation of Afrikaners' treatment of black South Africans would bring a happy smile to the lips of former prime minister Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, were he still alive. Du Toit's effort to ennoble his people's treatment of black people is typical of Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans alike. The view that white South Africans brought civilisation and Christianity to pagan black 'savages' and provided them with education, housing and other social

services, for which whites have received no acknowledgement or gratitude, was a favourite refrain of white South Africans before former president de Klerk was pressured by a failing economy into a policy of reluctant reform.

Du Toit goes on to argue that the Afrikaners' presumed right to determine the lives of others 'has filtered through to the family life patterns of some families' (1990, p. 297). So, while Gloria Steinem maintains that the power structure of the family determines a society's political system, du Toit contends that the causal relationship goes in the opposite direction. He also raises the question of 'whether the phenomenon of the extended suicide [familicide] manifested at [the] micro level could be manifested too at [the] macro level, in the form of a national suicide' (1990, p. 297). Some Afrikaners believe this is exactly what happened with De Klerk's alleged capitulation to black people that culminated in the end of white rule in South Africa in 1994.

Criminologist Roland Graser's in-depth study of nine family murders – six involving perpetrators who were fathers, and five of whom were Afrikaners – does not support du Toit's observations and analysis of familicide (1992). Graser's case-by-case analysis of the motivations for the five Afrikaner murders is completely inconsistent with du Toit's over-responsibility theory. According to Graser, for example:

The trigger event for this family murder appears to have been the insults which his wife hurled at him [her husband] shortly before he shot her and the children. (1992, p. 37)

The major precipitating factor of this family murder is clearly the fact that Mrs Parsons had left her husband and that, in spite of his continuous pleas for her to return, she had refused to do so. (1992, p. 23)

Mr Parsons was reported to have said to his sister-in-law: 'My wife is *my* wife and my children are *my* children and they shall not leave me. I will rather die together with them before that happens' (1992, p. 21).

A third case involved a classic battering husband (Mr Keet) who had beaten his wife savagely on several occasions and had frequently threatened to kill her and their young daughter. The assaults and murder threats were reported to the police, who did nothing. According to Graser, 'The most obvious precipitating factor was Mrs Keet's leaving her husband and refusing to return to him' (1992, p. 46).

These examples hardly fit du Toit's notion of men who murder their wives and children because of an overdeveloped sense of responsibility for their families. On the contrary, these tragedies suggest the same sexist motivation so frequently reported in other countries (see Radford and Russell,



1992). Most men in patriarchal societies continue to view their wives as their property. Such men often respond with outrage if their wives initiate an end to their relationship, especially if the breakup is unwanted. Hence, women who exercise this right risk being beaten, raped and murdered by their husbands. When husbands are sufficiently depressed or dependent on their wives to wish to end their own lives in response to such rejection, the woman and children are likely candidates for familicide.

Perhaps the Afrikaner patriarchs' sense of entitlement to control the lives of black people that was legitimised in public life until very recently is also manifested in their greater sense of entitlement to determine the lives and deaths of their families. There is a great deal of truth to Lord Acton's observation that 'power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely' (Cohen and Cohen, 1960, p. 1).

## CONCLUSION

In South Africa, as elsewhere, sexual violence against females, including incestuous abuse, has been privatised and depoliticised. It is typically seen as 'merely' a personal problem. Instead, it should be recognised that this manifestation of sexism has been institutionalised throughout South Africa, just as racism and homophobia have been.<sup>12</sup> Singling out women's subjugation from other forms of oppression and deeming the former as personal and the latter as political is illogical and sexist.

The personal accounts in this volume show the devastation that can result when men rape or molest their relatives, particularly their daughters. Sexually abused children are trapped in their homes at the mercy of their perpetrators as surely as incarcerated inmates are trapped in prisons or the locked wards of mental hospitals. Children are trapped by laws that make it illegal for them to leave their homes without their parents' permission. They are trapped by economic dependence. They are trapped by social policies that frequently ignore, discount or punish child victims of incestuous abuse, even in instances where these crimes are reported to the appropriate authorities. They are trapped by values that consider children to be the property of their parents, and values that honour family privacy over the well-being of those who have little or no power within this institution. They are trapped by sexist values that dismiss parental physical violence as 'discipline' and, in the case of sexual abuse, that blame the victims for 'allowing' it.

The fact that men are typically the primary breadwinners also makes it extremely difficult to intervene constructively in cases of father-daughter

incestuous abuse that are reported to authorities. When fathers are convicted for this crime, the family loses its primary source of income. This frequently has dire economic consequences for the rest of the family. Because of the high stakes involved, incestuously abused daughters are often betrayed by their economically dependent mothers who side with their husbands (see, for example, Faller, 1988). Hence, the economic power of males helps to shield incestuous fathers (in particular) from receiving the punishment they deserve. Instead, betrayed and victimised daughters are often punished by other family members for disclosing such abuse. This reaction tends to intensify these girls' feelings of powerlessness as well as their fathers' sense of power, and frequently leads to the resumption of the sexual abuse (as occurred with Nida Webber, for example) (Herman, 1981).

In cases where the authorities have become involved, the victimised daughters are often removed from their homes and forced to live in institutions or foster families where they are at great risk of being sexually revictimised. As Herman points out, 'Once a girl has been branded as an incest victim, many men will find her sexually interesting and treat her like public property' (1981, p. 138). Hence, Herman continues, 'It is not unusual for the daughter to be subjected to sexual attentions from foster fathers and other members of the foster families' (1981, p. 138).

The stories of Elsabé, Nida, Elsa and Marie reveal what some Afrikaner men are doing in the privacy of their homes. These abusive fathers behaved like petty dictators who believed they had the divine right to repeatedly rape and beat their daughters. These young girls were treated far more brutally in their homes than most white South Africans who have been incarcerated in prison, whether for political or criminal offences.

The five incest survivors whose stories have been told in this book are among a growing number of women who are willing to expose some of the vile secrets of white South African men – secrets survivors have been forced to lock up in their bodies and psyches for many years. Their stories show the devastation that can result when men with power are not accountable for their behaviour. The tyranny of white people over black people in South Africa has gone hand in glove with the tyranny of men over women and girls. And as John Stuart Mill so wisely noted over a century ago, 'It is perfectly obvious that the abuse of power cannot be very much checked while the power remains' (1970, p. 217).

# Appendix: Tables on Russell's Sample of Incest Survivors

Table A1 Information on Sample of Incest Survivors by Ethnicity

Demographic Factors	Afrikaners	English-Speaking South Africans	Total
	N = 9	N = 9	N = 18
Mean Age at Interview	29 years	37 years	
Mean Number of Siblings	3	3	
Survivor is Eldest Child	3	4	7
Education			
Some Tertiary Education	3	6	9
High School Graduate	3	2	5
High School not Completed	3	1	4
Social Class			
Middle Class	4	9	13
Lower Class	5	0	5
Sexual Preference			
Heterosexual	6	5	11
Lesbian	3	4	7
Current Marital Status			
Married	3	2	5
Divorced or Separated	2	1	3
Single	4	6	10
Number of Children Raised			
0 Children	5	7	12
1 Child	2	1	3
2 Children	2	0	2
3 Children	0	1	1
Religious Background			
Dutch Reformed Church	4	0	4
Anglican	0	4	4
Roman Catholic	0	2	2
Methodist	0	1	1
Baptist	0	1	1
Mormon	2	0	2
Apostolic	1	0	1
No Religion	2	1	3
Number of Incest Perpetrators per Incest Survivor			Total
1	3	8	11
2	4	1	10
3	1	0	3
5	1	0	5
Total			29

Table A2 Information on Incest Perpetrators and their Abuse, by Ethnicity<sup>1</sup>

	Afrikaner Perpetrators	English-Speaking South African Perpetrators
1. Type of Relative	% (N)	% (N)
Father	54 (2)	30 (2)
Stepfather	(5)	(1)
Brother	8 (1)	50 (3)
Stepbrother	(0)	(2)
Grandfather	(0)	10 (1)
Uncle	15 (2)	10 (1)
Cousin	15 (2)	(0)
Father's stepcousin	8 (1)	(0)
Total	100 (13)	100 (10)
2. Age of Survivor at Onset of Incestuous Abuse	% (N)	% (N)
Before 5 years	31 (4)	40 (4)
6-10 years	31 (4)	30 (3)
11-15 years	38 (5)	30 (3)
Total	100 (13)	100 (10)
3. Frequency of Incestuous Abuse	% (N)	% (N)
1-5 times	38 (5)	20 (2)
6-20 times	23 (3)	20 (2)
21-100 times	8 (1)	30 (3)
> 100 times	31 (4)	30 (3)
Total	100 (13)	100 (10)
4. Duration of Incestuous Abuse that Occurred More than Once	% (N)	% (N)
< 2 years	30 (3)	25 (2)
2-10 years	60 (6)	75 (6)
> 10 years	10 (1)	0 (0)
Total	100 (10)	100 (8)

Table A2 continued

	<i>Afrikaner Perpetrators</i>		<i>English-Speaking South African Perpetrators</i>	
<b>5. Severity of Sex Acts</b> (determined by the most serious sex act(s) perpetrated)	%	(N)	%	(N)
Intercourse, oral/anal penetration	46	(6)	50	(5)
Fondling	46	(6)	30	(3)
Other sexual touching	8	(1)	0	(0)
Non-contact sexual abuse		(0)	20	(2)
<b>Total</b>	100	(13)	100	(10)
<b>6. Severity of Force or Violence Used by Perpetrator</b> (whether or not associated with the incestuous abuse)	%	(N)	%	(N)
No violence	23	(3)	50	(5)
Some	15	(2)	30	(3)
Severe or very severe	62	(8)	20	(2)
<b>Total</b>	100	(13)	100	(10)
<b>7. Weapons Ever Used by or Known to be Available to Perpetrator</b>	%	(N)	%	(N)
Yes	54	(7)	30	(3)
No	46	(6)	70	(7)
<b>Total</b>	100	(13)	100	(10)

1. For those incest survivors who were victimized by more than two relatives, this analysis is limited to the two perpetrators whose abuse caused them the most distress. The degree of trauma resulting from the abuse is the criterion for determining priority.

Information on the ethnicity of two perpetrators is missing for Table A2.

## Notes

### 1 INTRODUCTION: OPENING THE DOOR IN WHITE SOUTH AFRICA

1. The Human Sciences Research Council in South Africa partially funded this study.
2. Girls and women sexually abuse relatives in a small percentage of cases. Although many boys are also sexually abused (mostly by male relatives), the vast majority of incest victims are female, and the vast majority of incest perpetrators are male (Russell and Finkelhor, 1984).
3. Afrikaners are white South African descendants of the early Dutch, German and Huguenot settlers. (See Glossary for this and other unfamiliar South African terminology).
4. For a discussion of the politics of white feminists conducting research on black South African women, see Russell, 1995e.
5. The offspring of such intermarriages usually identify themselves as belonging to one of these groups rather than describing themselves as having a mixed heritage.
6. In both these cases, the incestuous abuse continued after their arrival in South Africa, otherwise they would not have been included in the study. The interview with one survivor who immigrated from Zimbabwe was excluded for this reason.
7. The exception was due to a faulty tape recorder.
8. Shorter versions of two of the five cases have been published (Russell, 1993a; Russell, 1993c; Russell, 1995d), as also were two cases that are not included here (Russell, 1995a; Russell, 1995b).
9. Interestingly, two out of four of the black incest survivors interviewed also had no objection to using their real names. Both of them were so-called coloured women.
10. Although I identified myself as a white English-speaking South African at the beginning of this chapter, I found it necessary to consult with another member of this heterogeneous group regarding what term best describes us. When in South Africa, I used the term 'English South African' without focusing on the fact that many people in this so-called group do not have British ancestry. My consultant, Kenneth Carstens, recommended the term 'English-speaking' South African as more appropriate, especially for an international readership.
11. Many of the politically active coloured people have rejected this label and refer to themselves instead as 'black' or as 'so-called coloured'.
12. This is not to say that Western nations are dealing with the problem satisfactorily. Indeed, they are currently in the grip of a major backlash initiated by the false memory movement.
13. For a thorough documentation of this statement, see Russell, 1995c.
14. The categories included in this definition also apply to relatives who are half, rather than full, blood relations.
15. Most of this section was previously published in Russell, 1995e.

16. The pound and dollar value of rands does not reflect their buying power within South Africa.
17. For a more detailed description of the authoritarian and sexist system of justice in South Africa, see Russell, 1995e.

## 2 'IT FELT SO GOOD TO STAB MY FATHER': NIDA WEBBER'S STORY

1. I initiated a television documentary on incestuous abuse in South Africa in 1991 in which three of the women I had interviewed told their stories. It was shown on the MNET channel many months later.

## 3 'KILL ME, RATHER!': ELSA FOSTER'S STORY

1. Researcher and psychiatrist June Goodwin maintains that the simultaneous occurrence of incestuous abuse and 'hysterical epilepsy' – both very uncommon conditions – 'suggests a causal link' between them (1982, p. 101). In all six of the cases Goodwin located, the survivors 'experienced relief from their hysterical seizures when psychotherapy began to explore the incest experience' (1982, p. 104). Goodwin also mentions that 'all six of these teenagers had either threatened or attempted suicide' (1982, p. 172). Elsa also attempted suicide twice (to be described shortly).
2. André is Elsa's adopted half-brother – the adopted son of her biological father by his second wife.

## 4 'THERE'S A SIGN ON MY FOREHEAD SAYING, "ABUSE ME!": MARIE MALAN'S STORY

1. In 1993, Marie found out that Willie had also sexually abused Beatrix.
2. Since sexual assault by relatives is the criterion for differentiating incest survivors from women with no incest history, rape by relatives must be excluded from this comparison.
3. My application of Finkelhor and Browne's theory to explain revictimisation is more fully explicated in Russell, 1986.
4. In countries where wife rape is illegal, like Britain, South Africa and many states in the United States, the criminalisation of marital rape is still relatively new. (According to Laura X, an expert on marital rape in USA, wife rape is still not a crime in 33 states 'if she's asleep, drunk, drugged, unconscious or otherwise legally unable to consent due to a particular disability. It is illegal in all 50 states only when force or weapons are used in the commission of the rape' [Allen, 1996, p. 1].) Many of the citizens of these countries are ignorant of these legal reforms, and for those who know about them, attitudes cannot be expected to keep pace with the law.
5. 'Foreplay' is in quotes because this word implies that sexual touching is just a prelude to intercourse. In reality, what men consider foreplay is often the climax of pleasure for women (see Hite, 1976).

6. While some progressive people reject a pejorative view of prostituted women, the term whore was clearly used in a denigrating fashion in Marie's family.

## 5 THE MAKING OF A WHORE: LARA NEWMAN'S STORY

1. Over a year after this interview, Lara told me that she had 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 Lara's cousin, who, Lara said, continues to experience many severe problems as a result of these assaults. Lara noted that her cousin had the same phobic reaction as Lara to the smell of a disinfectant called TCP (Lara's reaction to be described shortly). This detail authenticates both of their experiences. Lara also learned that her grandfather had molested other young girls in his neighbourhood. These discoveries ended her illusion that she had been the only little girl in her grandfather's life.
2. Lara said she wanted to prosecute Dr Kruger for sexually exploiting her when she turned to him for help, but her efforts have so far proved unsuccessful, so his name has had to be changed.
3. The name of a covert unit of the army used for assassination and dirty tricks.
4. David Webster was a well-known anti-apartheid activist who was murdered by the CCB.
5. An earlier version of this chapter was rejected by the *The South African Sociological Review* in 1993 in part because of this politically sensitive information. In find it reprehensible that an allegedly progressive journal would opt to suppress this material.
6. Valkenberg is a notorious mental hospital in Cape Town.
7. The term 'dissociation' refers to a psychological defence whereby an individual is able to split her/himself off from her/his bodily experiences. Many incest victims dissociate during the sexual assaults.

## 6 THE DIVINE RIGHT OF THE FATHER: ELSABÉ GROENEWALD'S STORY

1. Elsabé's intense fear reveals the deep animosity and suspicion that characterises the relationship between Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans, particularly in the past.

## 7 CONCLUSION: PATERNAL DESPOTISM IN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIFE

1. 'Women of Vision', a PBS-TV programme based on personal interviews with several women writers, which aired on 4 April 1995, is the source of this quotation.
2. I use this phrase from time to time as a reminder that white women have also been excluded from playing a significant role in shaping government policies in South Africa.

3. The word 'kaffir' is a derogatory word for Africans equivalent to the word nigger in the United States.
4. The religious background of four of the remaining six Afrikaner survivors in my sample was Dutch Reformed Church (see Appendix).
5. 'Baas' is Afrikaans for boss – the term of address black people are expected to use for all Afrikaner men, not just their male Afrikaner employers. Young Afrikaner males are often referred to in the diminutive 'Baasie'. Black domestic workers are expected to call their English-speaking male employers 'Master,' and their female employers 'Madam'. Employers' daughters are typically addressed with 'Miss' preceding their first names, and 'Master' preceding the first name is considered the appropriate form of address for employers' sons.
6. My four brothers, for example, all managed to avoid being drafted without any difficulty.
7. Of course, some people respond to adversity, including very extreme adversity, by becoming even more exemplary human beings, for example, many of the individuals who fought against apartheid despite the horrendous suffering this brought them (see Russell, 1989, for many moving examples of extraordinarily courageous women anti-apartheid activists).
8. Du Toit's racist and sexist article was published by the prestigious South Africa-based Oxford University Press as recently as 1990.
9. The murder of wives and children by their husbands is the only form of violence against women that has attracted more than a token amount of scholarly attention in South Africa. But the misogyny expressed in this crime – frequently motivated by the husband's anger towards his wife for leaving him or threatening to leave him – is totally obscured by the terms 'family murder' and 'familicide' used in this literature. Misogyny is also erased from several male scholars' analyses of this phenomenon. For example, although J. A. K. Erasmus found 'the loss of a love-object to strongly prevail in most cases of familicide', he does not address the misogynistic implications of this finding (cited by du Toit, 1990, p. 299). Nevertheless, the literature on familicide, most of it in Afrikaans, is extremely revealing in unintended ways about the relationship between Afrikaner patriarchy's racial politics and their behaviour in their homes.
10. In a 10-year newspaper survey on familicides from 1978 to 1987, criminologist Roland Graser (who uses the term 'family murder') found that 67 per cent of the perpetrators were males and 33 per cent were females (personal communication, 30 March 1995).
11. Du Toit notes that other writers suggest that 'Pressure from outside the country, such as sanctions, might precipitate desperate acts by individuals' [i.e., familicide] (1990, p. 290). This dubious explanation reveals a typical white South African tendency to blame outside forces for undesirable realities that develop there.
12. The fourth and most recent draft of the South African constitution bans discrimination 'directly and indirectly' on grounds of 'race, gender, sex, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth' (*San Francisco Examiner*, 1996, p. A13). While this uniquely ambitious list of rights to be guaranteed by the new constitution is commendable, the fact remains that racism, sexism and homophobia are among the forms of oppression that remain deeply entrenched in South Africa.

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## Index

Note: (T) indicates a table on the page cited.

- abuse
  - physical 40-1
  - of power 168, 169
  - sexual 42-8, 91, 97, 98-100, 131-2, 173
  - verbal 137
  - see also incestuous abuse
- abusive relationships
  - father-child 16-17, 61-2, 121-2, 124-6
  - husband-wife 16, 27-8, 40, 72-4, 123, 134-5
  - mother-child 117, 120-1
- academic performance see schools
- addiction 56, 75, 136-7
- adoption 47-8, 69, 134, 174
- affection, lacking 91, 117, 156-7
- African(s)
  - children 153
  - colonisation 11-12
  - definition xiii
  - ethnic groups xiii, 8, 12, 161
  - women 153, 162
  - see also black(s); South Africa
- African National Congress xiii
- African Resistance Movement 1
- Afrikaner(s)
  - authoritarianism 58-9, 151-4
  - comparison between English-speaking South African incest survivors and 156-7, 170-2(Ts)
  - definition xiii, 8, 173
  - demographic statistics 7-8
  - as God's chosen people 151-2, 155
  - incest 4-5, 148-50
  - militarisation 162-3
  - nationalism 8
  - racism 160-8
  - religion 37-8, 133, 135, 150, 153, 154
  - self-interest 160-5
  - sexism 160-8
- Afrikaner daughters
  - duty to obey their fathers 155
- Afrikaner families
  - compared with English-speaking South African families 7, 58-9, 117
  - hierarchy 155
  - sexual slavery 89
- Afrikaner men
  - and brutality 3, 154-60
  - compared with English-speaking South African men 7, 35, 58, 156-60
  - family domination 16, 29, 40, 58-9, 158-9, 163-4
  - father's rights 89, 118-19, 127, 131, 147-8, 158
  - father's word as law 38, 58-9, 81, 148-9, 155, 158, 159
  - greater authoritarianism than English-speaking South Africans 7, 34-5, 38, 58-9, 117, 119, 154-60
  - greater sense of ownership of their wives than English-speaking South Africans 7, 119, 158
  - motivated to keep Afrikaner women subservient 16
- patriarchs 148-9, 151-2, 168
- patriarchy 3-4, 7, 15-16, 20, 34-5, 38, 58-9, 117, 148-52, 154-5
- racism/sexism 165-8
- sexual relationships 25
- violence 3, 6-7, 9, 16-17, 20-1, 25, 117, 120-6
- see also entitlement, sense of
- Afrikaner women
  - duty to be willing to sacrifice their sons and husbands 155



- Afrikaner men – *continued*  
 duty to treat husbands with  
   reverence 155  
 earnings 38, 40, 42, 61, 159  
 family role 16, 31, 32, 40, 43, 45,  
   89, 158–9  
 kept from competing with Afrikaner  
   men 158–9, 161, 163–4  
 violent resistance by 7, 13, 20, 21,  
   34, 43, 45, 121, 123–5, 143–5  
*see also* daughters; mothers  
 aftermath of incestuous abuse 22–9,  
   48–56, 69–77, 100–10, 132–41,  
   163–4  
 age of incest survivors at onset 5, 17,  
   40, 42, 64, 92, 126, 164, 171(T)  
 AIDS 102, 115  
 Allen, Donna 174  
 Amnesty International 86–7  
 anal intercourse *see* sodomy  
 Anglicanism 90, 155, 170  
 Angola 162  
 anti-apartheid activists 1–2, 176  
 anti-depressants 50, 56, 74, 108  
 apartheid xiii, 1–2, 12, 152–3, 163–4,  
   166  
 Apostolic 170  
   Faith Mission 199  
   New Apostolic Church 14  
 Armstrong, Louise 147  
 assassination plots 5, 99–100,  
   110–11, 175  
 Auerbach, Margaret 146  
 authoritarianism 34–5, 38, 58–9,  
   151–64  
 baby: burned 120, 156  
 Bagley, Christopher 112  
 Baptist 170  
 battered women 3  
   by husbands 16, 27–8, 40, 72–4,  
     86, 123, 134–5, 142, 167  
   shelters for 146  
   syndrome 146  
   as torture victims 86, 87  
 battering of women 3, 27–8, 38  
 beat(ing)  
   by Afrikaner men, of women 25  
   attempt to provoke 53  
   of blacks 154, 163  
   blamed mother for 22, 68  
   by brother 47  
   callous with regard to 20  
   as cause of injury 120, 125  
   as cause of running away from home  
     62  
   dismissed as acceptable 20  
   by (step)father 7, 16–17, 19–20,  
     21, 24, 32–3, 47, 61, 64, 68,  
     122, 124–6, 130  
   fear of 122  
   by husband 27–8, 32, 40, 41, 86,  
     122, 123, 167  
   by incest survivor 19–20, 47, 120  
   incestuous abuse as risk factor for  
     34  
   by lover 25, 34  
   minister's reaction to report of 20,  
     33  
   by mother 53, 54, 61–2, 96, 120–1  
   mother tolerates 19–20, 32–3, 126,  
     143  
   mother tried to stop 16–17, 33,  
     125  
   for no reason 41, 61  
   police reaction to reports of 33,  
     167  
   during pregnancy 25, 27–8  
   reasons for 41, 64  
   retaliation to 19–20, 21, 121,  
     124–5, 143  
   with sjambok xiv, 19, 20, 40, 43,  
     61, 163  
 Beaufort West 123  
 Bender, Laurette 111  
 Bentovim, Arnon 31  
 Bernstein, Hilda 152, 153  
 betrayal 79, 80–1  
 bitchiness 100  
 black(s) 173  
   Africa 10  
   Africans 11, 151–4  
   brutality and violence against 1, 3,  
     20, 99, 151–4, 161, 162, 163;  
     *kafferpak* 154  
   definition xiii  
   exploitation of 1, 7, 152–3, 161  
   hostility to police 135

- incest survivors 4, 173  
 oppressed 2, 9, 11, 176  
 'peril' 11  
 South Africans 11, 151  
 whose mother tongue is Afrikaans  
   8  
*see also* apartheid  
 black women  
   Afrikaner men's sense of entitlement  
     to dominate and exploit 7  
   atrocities on 7, 99, 162  
   exploitation of 152–3, 161  
 blackmail 40  
*see also* kill(ing), threats to  
 blackouts 44, 138  
 blaming  
   mother 22, 31–2, 64, 95–8, 104,  
     126, 130  
   self 55, 82, 88  
   victim 51–2, 111  
 Blau, Abram 111  
 body image 55, 57  
 Boer War 11, 121  
 Boers xiii, 38, 121, 134, 148–9  
*see also* Afrikaner(s)  
 Boesak, Alan 100  
   boys  
     militarisation 162–3  
     sex abuse by 47, 173  
*see also* brothers  
 bribery 44, 64–5, 94, 101–2, 113  
 Briere, John 34  
 Britain/England 1, 11, 13, 14  
 British/English 1, 8, 35, 158  
   ancestry 7, 8, 11  
   colonialism 11  
   immigrants 1, 11  
   settlers 10–11, 155  
 brothers 129, 130, 138  
   abused 16, 87, 89, 122, 124  
   half- 39, 69  
   incestuous abuse of sisters 47, 62,  
     66–7, 68, 69, 78, 80, 82, 87,  
     171(T)  
   violent behaviour to sisters 47, 67,  
     87, 89, 124; murder attempt  
     62  
   preferred to girls/better treated 16,  
     68, 83, 120, 122  
   protect sisters 19, 122, 124  
   protected by sisters 124, 142, 143  
   step- 9, 149, 171(T)  
 Browne, Angela 79–82, 113  
 brutality 3  
   domestic 154–60  
   racial 1, 20, 99, 151–4, 161, 162,  
     163  
*see also* battering of women;  
   beat(ing); violence  
 bulimia 75–6  
 Campling, Jo ix  
 Cape Town 1, 4, 11, 13, 14, 38, 49,  
   60, 63, 90, 127  
 Bothasig 22  
 Goodwood 118, 119  
 Groote Schuur Hospital 50, 71  
 Parow 36  
 Rape Crisis Centre 149  
 Valkenberg Hospital 71, 100, 108,  
   175  
 Victoria Hospital 71, 73  
 Caputi, Jane 116  
 Carstens, Kenneth ix  
 Carter, Bridget 157  
 caste system 10  
*see also* apartheid  
 Catholic church 100, 155  
 champions, women resisters 146–7  
 children  
   African, detained by police 153  
   dependence 87, 161, 168–9  
   of incest survivors 26, 28, 31,  
     47–8, 51, 109–10, 132, 137,  
     140, 170(T)  
   powerlessness 64–5, 79, 80, 169  
   who became prostitutes 112–13  
   responsibility for rearing 38, 40,  
     84–5, 159  
*see also* daughters  
 Christian helpline 72–3  
 Christianity 119, 137, 139, 152, 155  
 church *see* religion  
 Civil Cooperation Bureau 99–100, 175  
 Clanwilliam 119  
 Clarke, Dee 145  
 class, social 14, 37, 91, 157, 170(T)  
*see also* poverty

- classism 10  
 Cock, Jacklyn 155, 162  
 Cohen, J. M. and M. J. 168  
 Coleman, Audrey 153  
 collusion  
   doctor 21  
   family/institutional 33  
   minister 20, 33  
   mothers 16, 19–20, 32–3, 143  
   social workers 128  
 coloured(s) xiii, 8, 135, 178  
 conscription 162–3  
 cousins 47  
   step- 45, 171(T)  
 Craft, Nikki 145  
 criminology 146–7  
 Cronje, G. 154, 155  
 cystitis 97  
 damage, effects of 163–4  
   human beings easier to oppress 163  
   incestuous abuse 90, 163–4  
   mothering ability 110, 164  
   sexism 163–4  
   as wife 110  
 'damaged goods' 81  
 Danaher, Kevin 152  
 daughters  
   eldest or only 84, 85, 142  
   fathers' claimed entitlement to 43, 46, 88–9, 119, 127, 147–8, 158–9, 162  
   household duties 16, 24  
   as mother-surrogate 38, 40, 84–5, 142–3, 159, 160  
   of survivors of abuse 98, 109–10, 132, 137  
   as wife-substitute 84–5, 127, 142, 148  
 De Klerk, Marike 159  
 De Villiers, Marq 151  
 De Villiers, Wessels 132  
 death(s) 70, 95, 122  
   *see also* suicide attempts  
 dehumanising 4, 162–3  
   psychic murder 110  
   Democratic Party 11  
 denial 135–6  
 dependence, economic 87, 161, 168–9  
 depression 23, 28, 53, 54–6, 70–1, 73, 108, 136  
 deprivation of physical affection 91, 117, 156–7  
 despotism, paternal 1, 7, 117  
 Detainees' Parents' Support Committee 153  
 dirtiness, feeling of 30, 107, 133  
 disabled: in wheelchairs 37, 40, 41, 42, 45, 48, 57  
 disability in incestuous abuse 37, 57–8  
 disclosure and reports of abuse 18–19, 20, 46, 48, 66, 68, 95–8, 128–31, 168  
   on TV 30–1  
 discrimination 176  
   *see also* apartheid; racism; sexism  
 dissociation 18, 46, 55–6, 114, 175  
 divorce 29, 37, 44, 48, 63, 64, 73, 126, 141–2, 170(T)  
 doctors 21, 24, 44, 72, 100, 108  
   duty to report abuse 21  
 domestic workers (maids) 62, 148, 161, 176  
 drunkenness 18, 25, 26, 28, 63, 119, 122  
 Du Toit, S. I. 165–7, 176  
 Durban 90, 92, 93, 95, 101  
 Dutch  
   colonialism 11  
   settlers xiii, 8, 166, 173  
   *see also* Afrikaner(s)  
 Dutch East India Company 11  
 Dutch Reformed Church 119, 133, 135, 150, 153, 154  
 Dworkin, Andrea 146  
 East London 10  
 eating disorders 75–6, 163  
 ejaculation 102  
 emotional blackouts 44, 138  
 English-speaking South Africans  
   authoritarianism 156–7  
   definition xiii, 8, 173  
   incest 5  
   patriarchy 58–9, 117

- racism 12  
 religion 152, 155  
 violence 117  
   *see also* Newman, Lara  
 entitlement, sense of  
   domestic 16, 24, 155, 159  
   political 154–5  
   sexual 43, 46, 88–9, 119, 147–8, 158–9, 161–2  
 epilepsy xiii, 44, 49–50, 138, 174  
 Erasmus, J. A. K. 176  
 ethnicity 4, 11, 13, 38, 91, 117  
   incest survivors 170–2(Ts)  
   incestuous abuse 4–5, 91  
   *see also* Afrikaner(s)  
 European: as white xiii, 8  
   *see also* British; Dutch; German; settlers  
 excessive desire to please 164  
 exploitation  
   in families 159  
   racism 1, 7, 152–3, 161–2  
   sexual 3, 116, 148, 161; through prostitution 116–17; by therapists 91, 98–100  
 extrafamilial child sexual abuse 45–6, 79, 131–2  
 Fallar, Kathleen ix, 85, 169  
 familicide 165–8, 176  
 families  
   impact of incest 69–70, 104  
   incest-prone 85–6  
   ordinal position of victims 82, 83, 84–5, 124–5, 142–3  
   patriarchal/paternalistic 155–6  
   torture 88–9  
   *see also* Afrikaner families  
 family murder 165–7, 176  
 Farley, Melissa 115, 116  
 fathers 7, 13, 63–4, 81  
   abuse children 16–17, 61–2, 121–2, 124–6  
   blamed for desertion 61  
   daughters' duty to obey 155  
   rights 89, 118–19, 127, 131, 147–8, 158  
   step- 6, 7, 13, 33–4, 42–4, 48, 63, 64–6, 138–9, 171(T)  
   violence 16–17, 61–2, 121–2, 124–6  
   word as law 38, 81, 148–9, 158, 159  
   *see also* entitlement; paternalism; patriarchy  
 feeling, suppressed 56, 105–6, 108  
 femicide 146  
 feminism 2, 173  
 fighting spirit 119, 120, 123–5, 143–5  
 films, women in 103, 146  
 Finkelhor, David 79–82, 113, 173  
 flashbacks 76, 107  
 fondling and touching 9, 17–18, 64, 92, 93, 106, 172(T)  
   breasts 42–3, 45, 94, 95  
   genitals 9, 17, 42–3, 93, 95  
 foreplay 81, 94, 174  
 forgiveness 136, 139, 140–1  
 Foster, Elsa 7, 32, 34, 36–8, 149, 155, 156, 157, 158  
   abuse, rest of family 47–8  
   abused 42–6  
   aftermath 48–56  
   analysis 57–9, 83–5  
   authoritarianism 155  
   family background 38–42  
   healing 56–7  
   resistance 13, 43, 45, 144  
   stepfather HOFFIE 42–4, 48  
   *see also* Malan, Marie  
 foster families 169  
 Freud, Sigmund 111  
 gender equality 116  
   *see also* feminism; sexism  
 gender terrorism 146  
 German settlers xiii, 4, 8, 173  
 Gibson, Dr 74  
 Giliomee, Hermann 151  
 Giobbe, Evelina 114  
 girls  
   sex abuse by 47–8, 109, 173  
   *see also* daughters  
 Goodwin, June 85, 86, 174  
 grandfather, abusive 89, 90–5, 96–9, 101, 104, 105–15, 117  
 Graser, Roland 165, 167, 176

- Groenewald, Elsabé 7, 13, 84, 85,  
118–20, 156, 157, 158  
aftermath 132–40  
analysis 142–50  
family background 120–6  
healing 140–1  
incest and violence 126–31  
marriage 134–5, 141–2  
resistance 121, 123–5, 143–5  
sexual abuse 131–2  
sexual abuse, rest of family 131  
guardianship, racial 166  
guilt: mother's 46, 52  
of perpetrator 139  
after sex 25  
of victim 53, 55, 81, 82, 93, 103,  
107, 112–13, 133, 136, 137;  
*see also* self-blame  
guns  
ownership 163  
shot 125  
threats with 40, 43, 44, 61, 68, 69,  
115, 139  
gynaecologist: attitude to women 72  
half-brother 39, 69  
half-sister 39, 47–8  
Hanmer, Jalna ix  
Hartenbos 131  
hatred 141  
of mother 57  
parental 120, 126  
of women (misogyny) 116, 163,  
176  
headaches 44, 56  
Herman, Judith ix, 1, 31, 85, 111–12,  
114, 142–3, 147, 158, 164, 169  
Hermon, Cape Province 119, 125  
Hite, Shere 174  
homophobia 10, 168, 176  
horror stories 78  
Hotaling, Norma 115, 116  
Huguenot settlers xiii, 8, 173  
Human Sciences Research Council,  
S. A. ix, 173  
hypotheses 3–4  
hysterectomy 61, 138  
identity 102, 109, 136  
Afrikaner 8  
immigrants 1, 8, 11, 173  
marriage 4  
impotence 58  
inability to concentrate 23, 164  
inability to feel 56, 105–6, 108  
incest: legal definition 9–10  
*see also* incest survivors; incestuous  
abuse; victims of incest  
incest survivors 3–6  
career problems 50, 60, 69, 77, 80,  
110, 164  
differences in coping 38, 83–5  
ethnicity 170–2  
family relationships 22–4, 69–70,  
104  
fighting spirit 119, 120, 123–5,  
143–5  
healing struggles 30, 56–7, 77–8,  
110, 140–1  
legal system 10  
marriage 25–9, 50–2, 104–6,  
114–15, 129, 134–5, 141–2  
ordinal position in family 82, 83,  
84–5, 124–5, 142–3  
own children 26, 28, 31, 47–8, 51,  
109–10, 132, 137, 140, 170(T)  
protecting siblings 127–8, 130,  
142–3  
real names used 5–6, 7  
religion 14, 37–8, 73, 74, 77, 119,  
133, 135, 141  
revictimized 78–83, 169, 174  
school work 23, 76–7, 164  
sexuality 24–5, 29, 34, 49–50,  
71–4  
sexually repressive upbringing 91,  
96  
social class 14, 37, 91, 157, 170(T)  
stereotypes challenged 34  
therapy 30, 50, 55, 56–7, 77–8  
*see also* victims of incest  
incestuous abuse 1, 3, 4, 8–9,  
170–2  
acceptance as norm 44, 65  
aftermath 22–9, 48–56, 69–77,  
100–10, 132–41  
definition 9–10  
disclosure and reports 18–19, 20,  
46, 48, 66, 68, 95–8, 128–31,  
168; on TV 30–1

- duration 5, 171(T)  
ethnicity 4–5, 91  
frequency 5, 171(T)  
family proneness 85–6  
instances 17–22, 42–6, 64, 92–8,  
126–31  
onset 5, 17, 40, 42, 64, 92, 126,  
164, 171(T)  
power from 55, 141  
and prostitution 90, 101–4,  
112–15  
psychological damage 164  
same-sex 9  
secrecy 65, 95–8  
statistics 3, 4, 170–2 (Ts)  
*see also* mothers; perpetrators;  
violence  
Indian xiii  
domestic workers 62, 148, 161,  
176  
girl on pornographic video 45  
infantilizing 108  
innocence, lost 46, 47, 101–4  
institutional collusion 33  
interviews 4–6, 35, 60–1, 91  
audiotape of 4, 5  
duration 6  
location of 5, 6, 60, 91  
read and corrected by incest  
survivors 6, 30  
transcribed 6  
isolation, feelings of 81–2  
Israeli 4  
James, Jennifer 112–13  
jealousy 47, 53, 54, 66, 69–70,  
138–9, 143  
job problems 50, 60, 69, 77, 80, 110,  
164  
Johannesburg 90, 146  
*kafferpak* (savage bearing of black  
people by whites) 154  
Karoo 119, 121, 122, 128  
Kenilworth Clinic 71, 73, 108  
Khoi people 11  
kill(ing) (murder) 63, 145, 146–7,  
163  
attempt by brother 62  
desire to 34  
dreams of 73  
familicide 165–8, 176  
femicide 146  
misogynist 116, 163, 176  
risk of being killed 41, 168  
serial 115, 116  
threats to kill 17, 18, 28, 40, 41,  
43, 44, 61, 65, 68, 69, 87–8,  
123, 156, 167  
videos of 65, 80  
kissing 93, 94, 157  
knives 6, 28, 115, 123  
stabbing 7, 13, 21  
Kruger, Dr Chris 98–100, 107, 110,  
112, 175  
labour, sexual division 158–9  
*Last Exit to Brooklyn* (film) 103  
law(s)  
children's entrapment by 87,  
168  
re: jobs 161  
re: prostitution 116  
re: sexual acts 9, 10  
*see also* legal system  
Leeu-Gamkalike 119  
legal system  
prosecution 10, 46  
South African 9–10, 46  
*see also* law(s)  
Lentegeur Hospital 71, 74  
Lépine, Marc 146  
lesbians 134  
incest survivor 149  
number in sample 170(T)  
tendencies 108  
liberation movement in South Africa  
1–2, 147  
Lifeline 72  
Lighthouse Fellowship 119  
Little, JoAnn 146  
Londt, Marcel ix  
love  
cynicism about men's declarations  
of 68  
deprivation of parental 15, 40, 42,  
52, 117, 120  
desire for 53, 82  
fatherly 42, 64  
of God 142

- love – *continued*  
 inability to feel 105  
 inability to show 52  
 less demonstrated by English-speaking South Africans 156–7  
 for mother 52  
 norms regarding love in families 156–7  
 perpetrator's claims to 64, 92, 93, 95, 96, 111, 117  
 separated from sex 51, 104, 105–6  
 unconditional 49, 84, 104  
 between women 108
- maids *see* domestic workers
- Malan, Marie 7, 32, 34, 60–1, 144, 156, 157, 158  
 aftermath 69–77, 164  
 analysis 78–85  
 brother Willie 66–8, 89  
 family background 61–4, 85–6  
 father 63–4  
 feeling special 63–4, 65, 68, 70, 82–3  
 healing 77–8  
 sexual abusers 66–9  
 sexual slavery 89  
 stepfather HOFFIE 64–6  
 stepfather Spike 63  
 torture 86–9  
*see also* Foster, Elsa
- Malan, Rian 153–4
- male domination  
 father–child 16, 29, 40, 58–9, 158–9, 163–4  
 husband–wife 21, 26, 40  
 politics of struggle 2–3
- Mandela, Nelson 1, 11, 100
- manipulation, by victim 94
- marriage  
 incest survivors 25–9, 50–2, 104–6, 114–15, 129, 134–5, 141–2, 170(T)  
 mixed 4, 173  
 Mormon 73  
 rape in 32, 79, 80, 81, 86, 174  
 violence 72–4, 134–5, 141–2  
 at young age 164
- Masson, Jeffrey 111
- masturbation 17, 99, 104
- memory loss 23, 48
- men  
 crying 74, 106  
 physical power 145  
 sexual rights perceived 79–80  
*see also* Afrikaner men; male domination; paternalism; patriarchal power; patriarchalism; patriarchs; patriarchy
- menstruation 40, 43–4, 75  
 onset 17–18
- mental breakdown 108
- mental illness 85
- Methodist 155, 170
- Meyerding, Jane 112–13
- Mill, John Stuart 169
- minister's response to incest report 20, 33  
 pastor, supportive 74
- miscarriages 25, 61
- misogynist murder 116, 163, 176
- mixed marriage 4, 173
- MNET TV programme 30–1, 174
- Mormons 37, 72, 73, 74
- Morris, Allison 146
- Mosheshwe, Dennis 153–4
- mothers  
 blamed 22, 31–2, 64, 95–8, 104, 126, 130  
 collusion 16, 19–20, 32–3, 143  
 feelings about 52, 69, 92, 121  
 guilt 46  
 incapacity 85–6, 120, 142–3  
 jealousy 138–9  
 'little' 84, 142–3  
 physical abuse of children 61–2, 120–1  
 powerlessness 16, 19–20, 32–3, 41–2  
 surrogate 38, 40, 84–5, 142–3, 159, 160  
 victims of sexual abuse as 31, 47, 109–10, 131, 132–3, 135
- Mozambique 162
- Mrazek, Patricia 31

- multi-generational incestuous abuse 60, 85, 86
- murder *see* kill(ing)
- murder, psychic 110
- nakedness 40, 43–4, 45–6, 74, 79, 88, 91
- Namibia xiv, 48, 63, 99
- Natal 119
- National(ist) Party xiv, 11, 152
- Nelson-Tansley, Eastlynnne 58, 156–7
- New Apostolic Church 14
- Newcastle, Natal 30–1
- Newman, Lara 5, 7, 90–1, 157  
 aftermath 10–10  
 analysis 110–17  
 family background 91–2  
 healing 110  
 incestuous abuse 92–8  
 sexual abuse by therapist 98–100
- NG Kerk *see* Dutch Reformed Church
- nightmares 28, 29, 31, 54–5, 76, 89
- obesity 55, 57, 75–6, 82
- oppression 2, 9, 11, 176  
*see also* exploitation; racism; violence
- oral sex 43, 64, 71, 79, 93
- ordinal position in family 82, 83, 124–5, 142–3
- orgasms 25, 102, 104, 106
- overweight 55, 57, 75–6, 82
- ownership 3, 4, 7, 158, 168  
*see also* property
- Paarl 119
- Pagelow, Mildred 34
- paternalism, despotic 1, 7, 117
- patriarchal power  
 differences between Afrikaners and English-speaking South Africans 7, 58–9, 117, 155–6  
 and religion 154–5
- patriarchalism  
 connection with authoritarianism 3, 34–5, 58–9, 155–6
- patriarchs 148–9, 151–2, 168
- patriarchy  
 Afrikaner family 3, 4, 7, 15–16, 20, 34–5, 38, 58–9, 117, 148–52, 154–5  
 English-speaking South Africans 58–9, 117  
 internalised 32  
 in legal system 10  
 ownership 3, 4, 7, 158, 168  
*see* entitlement, sense of property
- perpetrators of sexual/incestuous abuse 3, 86  
 brothers 47, 62, 66–8, 69, 78, 80, 82, 87, 89, 124  
 cousins 45, 47  
 disabilities 37, 57–8  
 fathers 16–17, 19, 61–2, 121–2, 124–6  
 father's friends 45–6, 131–2  
 grandfather 89, 90–5, 96–9, 101, 104, 105–15, 117  
 half-sister 47–8  
 lack of guilt 93, 131, 148  
 legal bias 10, 46  
 numbers 170(T)  
 physical factors 15  
 relationship to victim 5, 6, 92–8  
 sexual abuse 45–6, 173  
 sisters 47–8, 109  
 stepcousin 45  
 stepfathers 4, 6, 7, 13, 33–4, 42–4, 48, 57–8, 61–3, 64–5, 66, 77, 87, 138–9, 147  
 uncles 10, 68, 82
- personal accounts: impact 3
- personality: and survival 84
- photographs, taking 17
- physical affection, lacking 91, 117, 156–7
- pimps 114, 115, 116, 117
- Pines, Ayala 12
- police 1, 22, 65, 73, 130, 131, 148, 167  
 Africans, treatment of 153  
 allow withdrawal of report 20, 33  
 crowd control 163  
 protection 42  
 racial composition 162  
 reaction to reports of abuse 20, 33

- police— *continued*  
 security branch 100, 153  
 political prisoners 2, 169
- politics  
 parties xiii, xiv, 11  
 racial 12, 152, 164–5  
 racist ix, 2, 160–4  
 reactionary Afrikaner 154–5  
 sexist ix, 2–3, 160–4  
 sexual 12, 165–8  
 South African xiv, 11–12, 152
- population, in South Africa xiii, 7–8  
 Africans (blacks) xiii, 8  
 Afrikaner(s) xiii, 7  
 English-speaking South Africans xiii, 8  
 whites 7
- pornography  
 made of prostitutes 116  
 made to watch 45, 65, 80, 88  
 as a seasoning technique 114  
 sex abuse related to 79  
 used to coerce prostitutes into violent sex 116  
 used to train 101, 114
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder 115
- poverty 9, 26, 115, 116, 119, 120, 153, 163
- power  
 abuse of 168, 169  
 from sex 102–4, 106, 110, 113–14
- power balance: culture 145–7, 161
- powerlessness 64–5, 79, 80, 169
- pregnancy  
 out of wedlock 25, 100, 133  
 sex during 26  
 violence suffered during 25, 27–8
- Presbyterian 155
- prevalence  
 definition 9  
 of incestuous abuse 3, 4, 8–9
- Prince Albert 119
- prisoners, political 2, 169
- privacy 7  
 family 156, 168  
 for interviews 5  
 lack of 17
- Progressive Party 11
- promiscuity 24–5, 34, 113–14
- property  
 children as 3, 147, 158, 168  
 wives as 159, 168
- prosecution, legal 10, 46
- prostitutes/prostitution  
 and incestuous abuse 90, 101–4, 112–15  
 living/working conditions 115–17  
 violence 115–16
- pseudonyms, policy regarding 5–6, 7, 144, 170, 173
- psychiatrists 73, 74, 108, 111
- psychic murder 110
- psychological crises 164
- psychologists 111, 112
- psychosomatic problems 138
- public/private sphere 3, 9, 12, 151, 165, 168
- punishment, seeking 53
- racial prejudice 26  
*see also* apartheid; racism
- racism 2, 4, 8, 10, 160–5  
*see also* apartheid
- Radford, Jill 116, 167
- Ramphela, Mamphela 153
- rape  
 anal 9, 92, 115  
 of black women 99, 161, 162  
 desire to rape own child 109  
 to destroy 47, 87  
 'didn't recognise as' 18  
 feeling entitled to regularly 80  
 gang- 22  
 inability to resist 80  
 in intimate relationships 79–80  
 legal definition 9  
 legal system, treatment of 10  
 likelihood of being victim of 34  
 in marriage 32, 79–80, 86, 174  
 in nightmares 54, 76  
 by non-relatives 45–6, 79, 131–2  
 in pornography 45, 65, 80  
 of prostitutes 115  
 rate 9  
 repeated 78, 80, 81, 82, 83  
 resisted 7, 43, 45, 46, 146, 158  
 shame about 81, 82, 112–13  
 threats 57, 63, 82

- by white boss and his sons 161  
 of wife 32, 34, 79, 80, 81, 86, 174
- Rape Crisis centres 78, 146, 149
- rapists, treatment of 145, 146  
 in legal system 10
- Raymond, Janice 146
- rebellion 53, 54
- Red Cross Hospital 47
- relationship problems 22–4, 24–5, 29, 34, 41, 49–50, 69–70, 71–4, 75, 79, 104, 106, 110, 133–4, 163
- religion 161  
 Anglican 90, 155, 170  
 Apostolic 170; Faith Mission 119; New Apostolic Church 14  
 Baptist 170  
 Catholic 100, 155  
 Christianity 119, 137, 139, 152, 155  
 defection from 77  
 Dutch Reformed Church 133, 135, 150, 153, 154  
 English-speaking South Africans 152, 155  
 fanaticism 152  
 incest survivors' 14, 37–8, 73, 74, 77, 119, 133, 135, 141, 170(T)  
 Methodist 170  
 minister's response to incest report 20, 33  
 Mormonism 37–8, 72, 73, 74  
 none 14, 170  
 and patriarchal power 154–5  
 Presbyterian 155
- reports and disclosure of abuse  
 18–19, 20, 46, 48, 66, 68, 69, 80, 95–8, 128–31, 168
- repression 135–6
- research 2, 173  
 methods 4–6  
 needed 3  
 objectives 2–4
- resistance, violent  
 domestic 7, 13, 20, 21, 34, 43, 45, 143–5  
 political 1–2, 145–7
- responsibility  
 for childcare 38, 40, 83–5, 159, 164  
 no sense of 29, 107  
 over-responsibility theory 165–6, 167–8
- retarded 85, 118, 120, 142
- revictimisation 78–83, 169, 174
- revolution 1–2
- Roberts, Barbara 162
- Roos, Laurette ix
- Rush, Florence 111
- Russell, Diana E. H.  
 career xii, 1–2  
 research and interviews 3, 4–6, 30, 35, 60, 91  
 works ii, 2, 3, 9, 12, 33–4, 52, 79, 87, 111, 112, 116, 147, 153, 161–2, 164, 167, 173
- Russell, Janice 111
- sadists 83, 88, 89, 99, 100, 110
- torturers 87–8
- Safeline 30, 110
- sample, research 4–5, 57, 112, 170(T)  
 prostitutes 115  
*see also* interviews
- San Francisco 79, 112, 115, 147
- schools 16, 41, 71, 100, 108, 170(T)  
 academic performance 16, 23, 33, 36, 41, 76–7, 164
- boarding 42, 53, 65, 120
- collusive 33
- industrial 128
- standards xiv
- Schultz, Kathy 149–50
- secrecy 1, 4, 18–19, 52, 169
- security branch 100, 153
- Seegers, Annette 155
- self-blame 74, 77, 82, 88, 107  
*see also* guilt
- self-defence *see* resistance, violent
- self-destruction 13, 38, 82, 107–8, 113  
*see also* suicide attempts
- self-esteem 30, 113
- self-hatred 107, 115
- self-image 23, 74–5, 81, 113
- self-interest, Afrikaners' 160–5

- serial killers 115, 116  
 settlers 10-11, 154, 155, 166, 173  
 sex  
   after childbirth 26-7  
   aversion and disgust 26, 34, 51, 72, 79-80  
   belief in entitlement to have 43, 46, 88-9, 119, 147-8, 158-9, 161-2  
   bribery 44, 64-5, 94, 101-2  
   commodified 79  
   deprivation, husband's 15, 22  
   excessive demands for 15  
   exploitation 3, 91, 98-100, 116-17  
   exploitive, definition 9-10  
   fights about 15-16  
   filthy 50, 133  
   forced 72, 74; *see also* rape  
   frustration 15, 26  
   guilt about 25, 81, 82, 113  
   impotence 58  
   inability to cope with marital 72-4, 79  
   lost interest in 15, 51, 123  
   and love 51, 104, 105-6  
   'maniac' 14  
   nonexploitative 10  
   not talked about 50, 96  
   oral 64, 71, 79, 93  
   and power 102-4, 106, 110, 113-14  
   in pregnancy 26  
   pressure to have 15-16  
   problems 26, 34, 51  
   therapists 91, 98-100, 110-12  
   therapy 50, 73-4  
   as wifely duty 31, 51, 72, 79-80  
 sex-change desires 74, 76  
 sex therapy 50, 73-4  
 sexism 2-3, 10, 159, 163-4, 165, 167-8  
 sexist values 168  
 sexual abuse acts  
   anal intercourse (sodomy) 9, 64, 92, 97, 113  
   fellatio 79, 93  
   fondling and touching 9, 17-18, 64, 92, 93, 106, 172(T); breasts 42-3, 45, 94, 95; genitals 9, 17, 42-3, 93, 95  
   intercourse (penetration) 9, 18, 43, 64, 72, 92, 93, 126, 172(T)  
   kissing 93, 94, 157  
   masturbation 17, 99  
   oral sex 43, 64, 71, 79, 93  
   peeping 60, 69  
   *see also* incestuous abuse; rape  
 sexual harassment 50, 60, 69  
 sexual slavery 89, 158  
 sexualisation, traumatic 79  
 sexuality 49-50, 51, 52, 71-4, 133-5  
 sexually transmitted diseases 27, 47, 102, 115  
 shame 81, 82, 112-13, 130  
 Shell, Robert 155-6  
 shooting 125  
   *see also* guns  
 siblings *see* brothers; sisters  
 Silbert, S. Mimi 112  
 sisters  
   abuse by 109  
   half- 47-8  
   incestuous abuse of 47, 62, 66-7, 68, 69, 78, 80, 82, 87, 171(T)  
   jealousy between 53, 54, 69-70  
   protection of 19, 44, 122, 124, 127-8, 142, 143  
   violent behaviour to 47, 67, 87, 89, 124; murder attempt 62  
 sjamboks xiv, 19, 20, 40, 43, 61, 163  
 slavery 11, 155-6  
   sexual 89, 158  
 Snyman, C.R. 9  
 social class 14, 37, 157, 170(T)  
   *see also* poverty  
 social workers 4, 80, 128, 130, 135, 140  
   welfare department 41-2, 69  
 sodomy 64, 92, 97, 106-7  
   anal rape 9, 92, 115  
 South Africa  
   brutality against blacks xiii, 1, 20, 99, 151-4, 161, 162, 163  
   Civil Cooperation Bureau 99-100  
   discrimination banned 176  
   incest, defined 9-10  
   incestuous abuse 8-9

- legal system 10, 46  
 party politics 11-12  
 prevalence of incestuous abuse 3, 4, 8-9  
 rape rate 9  
 ruling caste 7-8  
 sexism 2-3  
 white supremacy, origins 10-12  
*see also* English-speaking South Africans  
 South African Dried Fruit Corporation 126, 128  
 South African Railways 118  
 Stanger, Natal 119, 122  
 starving 41, 43, 44, 62, 76, 87-8  
 stealing 62, 76, 82  
 Steinem, Gloria 151, 167  
 steprelatives 9  
   stepbrothers 9, 149, 171(T)  
   stepchild 9  
   stepcousin 45, 171(T)  
   stepfathers 4, 6, 7, 13, 33-4, 42-4, 48, 57-8, 61-3, 64-5, 66, 67, 77, 138-9, 147  
   stepgranddaughter 9  
   stepgrandfather 9  
   stepniece 9  
   stepparent 9  
   stepsister 9  
   stepuncle 9  
 stereotypes, challenged 34  
 stigmatisation 79, 81-2  
 Strauss, Murray 157  
 study, research  
   limitations 3  
   of prostitutes 115  
   purpose 3  
   sample 4-5, 57, 112, 170(T)  
   why focused on Afrikaner survivors 3-4, 4-5  
   why limited to white survivors 3-4  
 submissive behaviour 13, 82, 83  
 suffrage 12  
 'sugar daddy' 68  
 suicide attempts 23-4, 46, 53, 63, 65, 70-1, 73, 136-7  
 Swanepoel, Miss 123, 127  
 teachers 23, 41  
 Tele-Friend 72-3  
 Tenderton Home 69  
 terrorism 87-8  
 therapists 73  
   incest and abuse 110-12  
   sexual exploitation by 91, 98-100, 111-12  
 therapy 30, 50, 55, 56-7, 77-8  
   family 56-7, 63  
   incest survivors 30, 55, 77-8, 140  
   sex 50, 73-4  
 Thompson, Charlene ix  
 torture 5, 86-9, 160-1  
   of African women 99, 162  
   of black people 153-4, 161, 163  
   definition 86  
   Elsa felt she deserved the 88  
   by Hoffie of his children 86-9  
   Hoffie's reign of terror 88  
   by husband 87  
   impact on survivors 86-8  
   mental 87  
   physical 86-7  
   prostitutes 116  
   rarely applied to intrafamilial behaviour 88  
   victims 86, 87, 88  
 torturers 87-8  
   have power of life and death over victim 88  
   views internalised by victims 88  
 Transvaal 14, 37, 126  
 trauma 79-81, 82, 115, 144, 145  
   Post Traumatic Stress Disorder 115  
 traumatic sexualisation 79  
 trust ix, 81  
   lack of 47, 49, 56, 81  
 Tutu, Archbishop Desmond 100  
 uncles 10, 68, 82, 149, 171(T)  
 United Party 11  
 United States xii, 1, 9, 13, 145, 157, 158, 164  
   San Francisco 79, 112, 115, 147  
 vaginal infections 97, 126  
 value systems, torture 86-7  
 Van der Stel, W. A. 120

- Van Froneman, G. F. 152  
 Van Riebeck, Jan 11  
 Venda xiii  
 Venter, J. D. 154, 155  
 Verwoerd, Hendrik 11, 166  
 victim-blaming 51-2, 111  
 victimisation, multiple 60, 78-83  
   *see also* revictimisation  
 victims of incest  
   as abuser 109-10  
   manipulative 94  
   as mothers 31, 47, 109-10, 131, 132-3, 135  
   perceived as seductive 111  
   perceived as wanting sexual relationship with perpetrator 111  
   powerlessness 64-5, 79  
   punitive treatment of 168, 169  
   sex of 173  
   social policies that ignore, discount or punish 168  
   submissive behaviour by 82, 83  
   trauma-related factors common to 79-81, 82  
   vulnerability to male therapists 111-12  
 Victoria-West 119  
 violence  
   Afrikaner families 3, 6-7, 9, 16-17, 20-1, 25, 117, 120-6, 157, 160  
   against black people xiii, 1, 20, 99, 151-4, 161, 162, 163  
   black women 7, 99, 162  
   child-father 6-7, 17, 20-1  
   criminal 10, 146  
   English-speaking South African families 117, 157  
   father-child 16-17, 19-20, 20-1, 24, 32-3, 42, 47, 61-2, 64, 121-2, 124-6  
   husband-wife 16, 27-8, 40, 72-4, 123, 134-5  
   in the home 3, 16-17, 117, 120  
   mother-child 117, 120-1  
   parental physical 16-17  
   partners 25  
   political 2, 10, 147  
   in pornography 45, 65, 80  
   power from 41-2  
   against pregnant women 25, 27-8  
   in prostitution 115-16  
   public/private 2-3, 9  
   severity used by perpetrator 172(T)  
   sexual 168  
   siblings 62  
   slapped 42  
   stabbing 7, 13, 21  
   whipped xiv, 19, 20, 40, 43, 61, 163  
   white racist 2, 9, 161  
   against women 145-6  
   by women 34, 145-7  
   *see also* battering; beat(ing); torture  
   vomiting 64, 72, 75  
   vulnerability, victims' 111-12  
 Walker, Cheryl 154, 155  
 weapons  
   colonising use 161  
   guns 40, 43, 44, 61, 68, 69, 115, 163  
   knives 6, 13, 28, 115, 123  
   ownership 163  
   sjoboks xiv, 19, 20, 40, 43, 61, 163  
   threatened with 40, 43, 44, 61, 68, 69, 115, 163  
   used 5, 7, 172(T), 174  
 Webber, Nida 6, 7, 13-15, 84, 85, 117, 143, 155, 156, 164, 169  
   analysis 31-5  
   authoritarianism 155  
   disclosure 30-1  
   family background 15-17  
   healing 30  
   incestuous abuse 17-22  
   relationships, aftermath 22-31  
   resistance 20, 21, 34, 144, 145  
   sexuality 24-5, 29, 34  
 Webster, David 99, 175  
 Welkom, Orange Free State 37, 45, 46, 48, 49, 61, 62, 68  
 Wellington 119, 126, 127  
 wheelchairs 37, 40, 41, 42, 45, 48, 57

- white  
   Afrikaners 7-8  
   areas 153  
   colonised by 10-11, 166-7  
   descendants 8  
   economy 153  
   elite 4  
   ethnic groups 58, 155, 157, 165  
   homes 3, 12, 156  
   immigrants 8  
   incest survivors 2, 3-4  
   interests 161  
   leaders 12  
   males 1, 10, 163, 169  
   mentality 4, 12, 152  
   minority 11; -owned farms 161  
   poor 26  
   power 11, 12, 151  
   privilege 11, 12, 151, 152, 162  
   racist violence 2, 9, 161  
   rule, end of 167  
   settler societies 154-7  
   settlers 10-11, 166  
   simplistic portrayal of 151  
 Sothos xiii  
 South Africans 1, 4, 8, 12, 151-4, 166-7, 169, 176  
 supremacy 10-12, 152-3  
 utopia 10, 11  
   *see also* Afrikaners; English-speaking South Africans  
 whore-calling 63, 67, 82, 175  
 whores 102  
   *see also* prostitutes/prostitution  
 wife-beating 27-8, 32, 40-1, 86, 123, 167  
 Wilczynski, Ania 146  
 Wilson, Francis 153  
 women  
   in anti-apartheid struggle 1-2  
   killing by 145-6  
   love between 108  
   oppressed 2  
   as resisters 145-7  
   revolutionary 1-2  
   roles in Afrikaner family 16, 38, 40, 43, 45, 89, 158-9  
   sex abuse by 173  
   violence by 145-6  
   white 7, 175  
   *see also* Afrikaner women; black women; mothers  
 worthlessness, feelings of 54, 88, 163  
 Young, Loretta 112  
 Zulus xiii



The intent in this book is to tear away the veil of secrecy that surrounds incestuous abuse in white South Africa by presenting five in-depth personal accounts of this heinous form of sexual exploitation as told by the survivors. Each of these accounts includes an analysis of important incest-related issues raised by the survivor's story. Another objective is to explore the connections between the often cruel sexual exploitation of girls by their white male relatives and the brutal exploitation of black people by white men in South Africa.

The stories in this book will open the doors of white homes in which incest has occurred – doors that have been closed until now – to expose some of the best-kept secrets of these white South Africans. In doing so, Dr Russell hopes to add a new dimension to our understanding of the white South African mentality.

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