

Considering the Sexual Harassment as an Equivalent Incestuous

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"Power is the great aphrodisiac"
Henry Kissinger
(*The Nobel Peace Prize*)

1. Introduction

Relationships formed in a professional setting may involve conflicts of interest arising from social functions determined by institutions, such as family, church, codes of ethics and labor laws. In these relationships, we can see emotions, characteristic of human beings, but which are limited by factors imposed by cultural identity. As every society develops its own culture, individuals acquire their values in relation to the social context in which they live. This cultural identity influences the creation of norms of conducts and the values linked to it.

An encounter with another person will always cause some sort of emotional disturbance, due to the adaptation to the presence of the other. This disturbance predominantly originates from our understanding of social structures and respect for the freedom of others, and can be perceived in different forms.

One of the forms of adaptation to the presence of the other emotional disturbance is sexual harassment, which is either an intimidation, bullying or coercion of a sexual nature, or an unwelcome or inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange of sexual favors (Paludi, 1991).

It includes a wide range of behaviors, from seemingly mild transgressions and annoyances, to actual sexual abuse or assault (Dziech, 1990).

It may also occur in a variety of different settings. For example, in education, many scholars point out that sexual harassment remains a "forgotten secret," with educators and administrators refusing to admit that the problem exists in their schools, or accepting their legal and ethical responsibilities to deal with it (Ibid).

Sexual abuse commonly occurs in workplaces, and can have several different forms, such as unwanted jokes, gestures, offensive words about clothing, unwelcome comments and wordplay, repeated requests for dates that are turned down, or unwanted flirting. It can be

anything of sexual nature, from verbal to physical behavior (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

Polymorphous incest, according to Cohen (1992), "involves sexual relationships between people that take advantage of their positions or jobs to have sexual satisfaction with someone who has a subaltern position, and is considered an equivalent of incest". Professional relationships are vertically asymmetric, and may be equivalent to the parent-child relationship, that is, they have hierarchy of power and specific laws.

There is a relationship of power between bosses and their subordinates, between psychoanalysts and their patients, professors and students. This relationship of power is the central point of this discussion, because it has an element of social control in it (Foucault, 1993).

According to Foucault, sexuality and politics are the two most important taboos in society, with discourses filled with the search for desire and power, the struggle for control and the prohibitions related to them. (Foucault, 1993)

Our proposal is to demonstrate that sexual harassment in a professional environment is a type of incest and cannot be simply classified as sexual assault. In these cases, besides the abuse of power, violence towards the victim is frequent, and because of these factors, sexual harassment is called "polymorphous incest".

We will use Freud's psychoanalytical theory to explain the basis of sexual development, how sexuality develops normally, and what causes certain deviations in a way that a human being will show socially unacceptable sexual.

2. Definition of sexual harassment

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood". Sexual harassment is an offence to human rights.

Sexual harassment is a problem that afflicts the entire world. In the 1990s, the number of cases in United States increased, the profile of victims changed, and more laws were created in order to set new precedents.

People from different backgrounds, cultures and social positions have found themselves involved in sexual harassment cases, from presidents to church leaders.

Sexual harassment in the workplace is attracting increasing attention, nowadays, many countries have established laws forbidding this conduct in the workplace. This kind of offence is not only a problem of the Western world: the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights (ECWR) describes the problem as a social cancer. A survey made by this organization showed that sexual harassment was experienced by 98% foreign women visitors, and by 83% Egyptian women.

The research team on sexual harassment at workplace of Women Watch-China showed that 23.9% of the interviewees reported having witnessed or heard about sexual harassment of other employees in the same company, 19.8% of the interviewees admitted having been

sexually harassed, and 5.3% of interviewees admitted having sexually harassed others (Women Watch-China, 2010). This research team suggested helping companies to establish a mechanism to prevent sexual harassment at work, besides discussing and improving laws and regulations on the issue.

Sexual harassment is characterized by different actions, which may be comments of sexual nature such as jokes, insinuations or wordplay, or even verbal and physical abuse to obtain sexual favors. We have to emphasize here that sexual harassment is related with undesirable conducts that are not pleasurable for the receptor, that is, they are imposed, and uncorresponded. That is when we can see the difference with conducts in corresponded affective relationships.

However, sexual harassment has a component of the neurotic behavior in hysteria, observed by Freud when dealing with hysteria in three essays on sexuality. In hysteria, there is a contradiction: excessive sexual need on one side, and excessive sexual repression on the other. The person affected by this disorder likes to be harassed, and many times demonstrates interest in the proposal. However, he or she cannot act on it, and unconsciously uses this ambivalence, with a secondary benefit, playing the role of the victim.

Sexual harassment is one of the offenses to sexual freedom, and the perpetrator may be any person, men, women, and even the victim. However, what we would like to emphasize here is the contribution of the victim to the offense. As in the case of any crime, sexual harassment is also analyzed in criminology, the science that studies crime, criminality and their causes: the victim, social control of the criminal act, personality of the criminal and the way to insert him/her back into society.

Shecaria (2011) emphasizes that "victim studies are very important, because they enable the examination of the role of the victim as a trigger of the crime. Besides, they enable the study on judicial, moral, psychological and therapeutic assistance, especially in cases of violence or severe threat to the person, crimes that leave marks or traumas, making it possible to determine adequate measures, and enabling the indemnification of the victims by state programs, as occurs in several countries..."

Elias Neuman (1984), an Argentinean criminologist, emphasized that the victim may be the triggering factor in the etiology of crime and, in certain cases and circumstances, may assume a posture that contributes to the offense. In some cases, the notion of the victim's innocence should be set aside.

The worldwide trend is to relate sexual harassment to the work environment. In some countries, sexual harassment at work is considered a crime, whereas in other countries in the Middle East, there are no regulations on the subject.

The workplace is where several people have their jobs and, generally, have an intimate relationship for long periods. This environment creates an opportunity for people to get close to each other. This intense relationship between work colleagues may give rise to intimate relationships that may even lead to marriage, and it is an absolutely normal fact of life that people meet each other, feel attracted and decide to consolidate affective relationships.

However, there are situations in which affection is not corresponded. In these cases, sexual coercion may be practiced by people in superior hierarchic position, constituting sexual harassment. The behavior of the harasser may be beyond reasonable standards, and may involve exchanging sexual favors for permanence on the job; inadequate invitations involving promotions, and other situations.

Studies carried out in Brazil (Cohen et al.), and in other parts of the world (China and Egypt) demonstrated that women are more harassed than men. However, we should consider that, even if less frequent, men are also harassed. There is, though, a dark figure, because men do not report the crime because of fear of prejudice. Fazary (2004) states that "The 'dark figure' of crime is not some sinister character but a theory that postulates that we do not know how much crime is out there, and that with current methods of studying of crime we have no way of knowing the truth".

Failure to report an offense is very common, especially in cases of sexual abuse. There is a certain embarrassment on the part of victims to make the event public. In 1994, the matter was dealt with by the American film industry in the film "Disclosure", directed by Barry Levinson, a film on sexual harassment in which the man who is harassed by his new female boss.

The United States were the first country to make sexual harassment a crime, on the second half of the 1970s. From this moment on, other countries considered sexual harassment a crime. Among them, Spain, Portugal, France and Italy. In Brazil, it was introduced as a sex offense in the penal code only in 2001.

Although Brazilian regulations have made sexual harassment in the workplace a crime, we emphasize that the problem is much wider, as we will show in this discussion. Although there is a law that criminalizes sexual harassment, seldom do harassed people seek legal compensation for the problem. In most of the cases, the final legal decisions do not favor those who appeal.

According to Pamplona Filho (2001), sexual harassment is any unwanted conduct of sexual nature which, although turned down, is continuously repeated, restricting the sexual freedom of the victim. This conduct is a violation of the free use of one's own body, and is deeply embarrassing. When occurs at the workplace, consequences are even more devastating.

However, this author, when dealing with the free use of the body, shows us that sexual harassment may occur in other places and other social relationships, such as the academic world (professors, students, education workers); in hospitals (among doctors, aides and patients); in the religious world (among clergy and churchgoers).

These relationships, and even those between a boss and an employee, have an ethical-institutional structuring function that is called polymorphous incest or equivalent of incest. Institutions and relationships established between peers are moralistic and paternalistic, a reflection of the parent-child relationship (incest itself) and of its endogamy prohibition (Cohen, 1999).

In this context, Brazilian laws also consider it a crime, because it is another type of sex offense, such as rape. Penalties are greater when the offense is practiced by someone who

has authority over the victim, such as a step father or mother, uncle or aunt, sibling, spouse, tutor, guardian, preceptor or boss.

3. Institutions: Ethical and moral aspects

It is important to demonstrate that laws are created based on a set of social factors. The most important of these factors are the institutions. Bleger (2001) defines institution as a set of norms that generate social values. Their essential function is to create rules for groups of individuals. The function of the Institution is to create values that transcend and characterized the individual. The institution comes before the professional relationship.

Social institutions are some of the ways that society uses to achieve satisfaction. In order to do that, regulatory tools are created and imposed to those who they aim at regulating. In Brazil and other countries, there are class entities that create norms of conduct for their members. Social acceptance of a given ideology, such as health, justice, or disease, is carried out by these entities. Institutes are moral representatives of the Institution. They are professional boards, courts, family, and others.

Conduct norms are filled with values that are linked to the interests of the institutions. What is expected from one professional is not always applicable to the other: expectations on the conduct of a teacher are different from those of a doctor, and so on. Institutions function as defense mechanisms against the most primitive anguishes of humans, strengthen the ego of their members, and make it possible for them to carry out their jobs (Jaques, 1969).

According to Cromberg's understanding "... when thinking that humans should be analyzed by their conscious acts and by social codes, I do not consider these codes all-embracing, once sexual and aggressive pulsions resist being domesticated by social codes, and make the psychological reality of humans highly complex. Besides, there is more to reality than that. There are intersubjective relationships that are not moderated only by social codes or necessity. These relationships produce imaginary effects that are privileged members of our psychological reality" (Cromberg, 2004).

Society establishes social codes based on cultural parameters, and does not accept sexual abuse. It will punish the aggressor once he/she is considered guilty. Different from the legal system, the activity of psychoanalysis is not limited to the identification of the aggressor, and to holding him/her accountable for what he/she did. It does not place the victim in a passive position, either. Human nature is more complex and mysterious than we can imagine.

Cromberg (2004), when talking about aggressive pulsions, does not refer to innate human nature, but to natural inclination towards aggressiveness.

When conduct norms are created, there are moral and ethical issues, with which we deal differently. Moral encompasses three characteristics: the values determined by it, which are not questioned; the fact that these values are imposed to everybody, and the punishment, when rules are disobeyed (Cohen and Segre, 2008). The expression of the values of society is given by the laws. Laws are not warranties of human behavior, once respecting the law depends on ethics, which are experienced differently by each member of society. Some accept the limits better than others. Institutions, with their conduct norms, abhor the

attitude of those who practice sexual harassment. However, the existence of the law is no warranty that sexual harassment will not be part of crime statistics. Laws, without ethics, are useless.

The pillar that supports ethics is the perception of conflicts of psychological life. It is expected that individuals have resources to deal with his/her emotions in relation to reason, and that he/she may solve these conflicts coherently and with autonomy (ibidem). Cohen and Segre (2008) show the huge difference between moral and ethics: while moral has to be imposed, ethics should be grasped by the individual, it has to come from the inside.

According to Guirado (2010), intra and interinstitutional power relationships involve both agent-agent and agent-client relations. The power struggle shows, on one side, the one who sets the conduct norms, and on the other, the one who has to abide by it. However, the one who sets the norm also has to abide by it, he or she is not superior to the norm. Relationships established among peers, in other social scenarios different from hierarchical relationships at the workplace, may also be sexual harassment because when there is a breach of trust and the abuse of power.

Sexual conduct is not determined by a universal standard. Something that is acceptable for some is not for others. In some societies, exposing the body is acceptable and natural, while other societies demand the use of garments that cover the body as much as possible. Sexual-related behaviors may change from time to time, as individuals live and feel things differently depending on their time and culture. Social practices are determined by society, and culture strongly influences the way people relate to each other.

Humans live their sexuality very differently from the other living beings. First, because sex is not limited to reproduction, and second, because there are some peculiarities, such as desire, passion, fantasies, sensations and guilt. However, we should not banalize sexuality and reject the possibility of reproduction, one of the objectives of couples at reproductive age. Those couples that having difficulties in conceiving may use the services offered by a countless number of assisted reproduction clinics.

4. Sexuality and abuse of power

The structure and organization of human sexuality, specially in terms of sex differentiation and their position in relation to castration anxiety, is caused by the Oedipus complex, which also enables experimenting the ambivalence of desire.

Laplanche and Pontalis (1974) define the Oedipus complex as “an organized set of loving and hostile desires that the child feels toward the parents”. In its so-called positive form, the complex is presented as in the history of Oedipus the king, who wishes for the death the rival, the character of the same sex, and has sexual desire for the character of the opposite sex. In the negative form, it is the opposite: love for the parent of the same sex, and jealous hatred for the parent of the opposite sex. In real situations, these two forms are found in different levels in complete form of Oedipus complex.

According to Freud(2001), the peak of Oedipus complex occurs between three and five years of age, during the phallic stage; its decline marks the latency stage. It is revived in puberty, and overcome, with greater or lesser success, in a special type of object-choice. Oedipus

complex has a fundamental role in structuring the personality and in directing human desire Oedipal feelings come and go throughout life. As castration does not take place, there is nothing to prevent both the desire and the action. In this case, the problem is that the person will be held socially or criminally accountable for his/her.

Cohen et al. analyzed sexuality from a bioethical viewpoint, and observed that it is impossible to ignore the evolution of sexual context and ethics throughout history (Cohen et al., 2009).

When analyzing the historical aspects of human sexuality, Foucault brings an important contribution: the human being, in all its dimensions - social, politic, mental, ideological, cultural - is the central factor. For him, "the great game in history will be won by those who take hold of the rules, who take power from the ones who use power; it will be won by those who, in disguise, pervert the rules; who use the rules upside down and inside out; who put the rules against those who had imposed them" (Foucault, 1990).

This fragment shows us who is behind the power relationships, that is, who has control and creates the rules that domesticate the bodies and mainly, who use these rules for personal interests. This way, we go back to the idea of institutions as the keepers of power, the ones who determine rules and punishments for breaking these rules.

Power relationships have, on one side, someone who is dominant, and on the other side, someone who is dominated. This kind of essence was used by the Church to impose its values. According to Foucault (1990), in the 18th century, society lived under powerful sexual repression; sex was reduced to mere reproduction, and the couple became the social model. Everything that is different from this standard became amoral and was banned, denied and silenced (Ibidem).

In the same piece, Foucault (1990) says: "until the end of the 18th century, three great explicit codes - besides the regulations related to costumes and opinions - ruled sexual practices: canonical rights, Christian pastoral power and civil law." These codes were centered in matrimonial relationships and determined what was licit and illicit in conjugal duties. Sex of a married couple was oppressive, full of rules and recommendations. In confession, married couples had to tell the priests all details of their sexual intercourses. In the 18th century, a system of surveillance mechanisms was in place. These mechanisms were coercive and corrective, and had the power to repress and silence the bodies, and suppress latent desires. The Church aimed at domesticating sex and bodies, and invested in restrictions to words and everything that was connected to sexual issues, in a way that anything that dealt with the theme was denied and considered degenerated.

Foucault (1990) proposed the study of what was in the margins of society: child sexuality, madness, criminals, those who love the other sex, maniacs, that is, a set of illicit issues that were on the edges of the social system. Power relationships discussed by him aimed at showing the elements that were on the borders of central issues, that is, to show how the discourse of power is gagged by culture, how stereotypes are build and how they are outside the social order. At this moment, it is possible to see the real interest of those who have a reductionist discourse on conducts considered wrong.

Freud, on his turn, developed a theory to explain the development of sexuality from the generation of the psychological subject. The organization of sexuality allows the subject to

choose the object, with fixation in stages of development that bring him/ her greater pleasure. This can occur naturally or become a perverted fixation on an object. To Freud, humans are born as a polymorphous, perverse beings, and culture represses some perverse aspects. Transformation of perverse desires is part of the development of sexuality, and psychosocial development will repress pulsions. Thus, different from other animals, human sexuality will become independent of the reproductive function.

The theory of sexual selection was proposed by the British naturalist Charles Darwin, in 1871, in his book "**The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex**". In his theory, he called "sexual selection" the process of choosing morphological and behavioral characteristics that may lead to successful mating, a process responsible for the evolution of characteristics that determine reproductive advantages. Instinct is related to biological sex. The sexual function of humans is innate and responsible for the preservation of the species. It is biological sex, proposed by Darwin, the reproductive function of all animals.

On the other hand, the development of sexuality is a long and complex process that begins at birth, and matures at puberty, the phase when reproduction and pleasure are associated. Freud demonstrated, in his studies on sexuality, that during psychosexual development, there is a change in object that provides sexual gratification. This finding made Freud develop his theory on the stages of sexual development. However, Freud emphasized that even a newborn have a germ of sexual motions. But sex life of a child is expressed in an observable way only after three or four years of age (Freud, 2001).

Freud called "pregenital" the stages of sexual development that come before puberty. The oral stage is the first one; sexual activity is not separated from nutrition. The second pregenital phase is the anal-sadistic organization. In this stage, activity is produced by pulsion for domination using body muscles. At this moment, the individual already shows sexual polarity, and a partial object. However, organization and subordination to reproductive function are still lacking. After that, sexual organization will only be defined in puberty, and the outcome is normal adult sex life, with a solid organization towards an external sex object (Freud, 1905). The third phase, which Freud called genital stage, is characterized by a greater or lesser organization of libido under the preponderance of the erogenous zone and object relationship (Laplanche and Pontalis,).

According to psychoanalysis theory and practice, in the development of human sexuality, the individual is born as a polymorphous perverse being dominated by sexual pulsions and death. He/she has to go through several stages, as demonstrated above, for his/her development, which will organize the Oedipus complex, his/her first experience aiming at humanizing the individual (Cohen, 1999).

Based on this theoretical referential of psychoanalysis, we understand that human psychological structure is supported by a tripod: genetic (complementary series), social (Oedipus complex) and individual factors (mental structure: id, ego and superego). The World Health Organization shows that health is biopsychosocial wellbeing, an integration of biological, psychological and social aspects (Cohen, 1999).

Therefore, human sexuality is nothing more than the product of symbolic constructions of one subject with the other, permeated by moral and social laws (religious law, Civil and Penal Codes, Conduct Codes). Conduct codes are important for the organization of

society. However, they are worth nothing if the individual is not able to interpret them and act accordingly, as we can see if we analyze the situation of priests that harass churchgoers.

Choosing celibacy is an autonomous decision. It is understood that the choice was not forced upon the individual. Once on this path, the dogmas are presented to this individual together with the code of principles he/she has to follow, at the risk of punishment. Autonomy may only be created based on a respectful relationship. It comes from the perception of conflict between coherent decision-making and the ethical principles inherent to each human being.

There are reports from different parts of the world about churchgoers that were sexually harassed by priests. One example involves Cardinal Bernard Law, the archbishop of Boston, who turned a blind eye to the knowledge of sexual abuse committed by priests from parishes under his supervision. Not all individuals in a society are able to be ethical. In the case mentioned above, we have a Cardinal that knew the problem and turned a blind eye to it; and we have the priest who was carried away by his pulsions and moved away from the ethical principals of his function, using the trust bond established by the institution to which he belongs.

When a priest abuses churchgoers, he breaks up with the moral code and becomes socially incompetent for his function. When using autonomy to choose the religious path, the Church, as an Institution, recognized the aptitude of the person and authorized him/her to follow his wills, according to a legitimate code. This priest was fully instructed and made oaths. When he chose the break up with these commitments, he has to be held accountable for his actions by canonical, civil and penal laws. He will be punished, if the reports are accepted and the process continues. However, the difficulty in judging peers was observed not only in the Church, but in other Institutions.

Situations related to covering illicit acts are found in other social relationships; for example, when soldiers rape war prisoners with the consent of their superiors. This is also common in tribal wars in Africa, as in the case of Angolans raping immigrants who work in the mines of Luanda (source: doctors without borders). These are typical examples that involve individual ethics in relation to human rights. An army has a mission of recovering an invaded territory, as it was the case in Angola or American soldiers in Iraq. These soldiers committed crimes that harm human dignity, something that involves ethics and moral.

More than once, we heard of powerful people involved in sexual scandals, such as Bill Clinton, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Berlusconi, and more recently, Dominique Strauss-Kahn. What these people have in common, besides their public positions, is the power that their position gives them. They all seem to be above the law, and consider that they can do anything, without being punished. It is a narcissistic experience, common to any child, and is characterized by the total lack of respect and acceptance of the other. A regression to pre-Oedipian stages, specially because the ego and the id were not differentiated. The way out of narcissism is the possibility of socialization. Narcissistic subjects live in a reality that is not able to support the demands of the others, that is, they are subjects who talk about themselves to themselves, and are fragile in building relationships and projects. They are destructive and do not add values. To Joel Birman (

2005), postmodern society may be considered a culture of narcissism. Narcissism was approached by Freud several times. His referential starts in listening to the suffering of the patient, walks the path of pathology and reaches the definition of narcissism as a stage of libido development, a stage when looking at oneself is considered the object of love.

Many years have passed between Bill Clinton and Dominique Strauss-Kahn. It seems that, nowadays, society does not tolerate sexual abuse. In the case of Mr. Clinton, in 1998, he had the right to defend himself and kept his public position until the end of the case. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, on the other hand, was sent to prison and resigned from his public position.

A study carried out by Cohen et al. analyzed patients who reported doctor sexual abuses to the Sao Paulo Board of Medicine (CREMESP - Conselho Regional de Medicina do Estado de São Paulo). There were 150 reports of doctor sexual abuse in five years. From these, 63.96% were dismissed for lack of proofs, which is concerning, and only 22.67% of the cases were submitted to ethics and disciplinary processes. The age of the doctors involved ranged, in 87% of the cases, from 36 to 75 years old, the same age range of the harassers mentioned above (CREMESP, 2009).

We have to emphasize that sexual harassment is not an exclusive masculine offense, in which only men abuse women. Besides the cases cited above, there are reports of female teachers who sexually abused their students, such as Christine Scarlett, who was condemned to 5 years in prison for having sexual intercourse with a 17-year-old student. She became pregnant and was accused of sexual aggression and dissemination of obscenity to youth. Allena Willians, a medium school teacher, was indicted for having sexual intercourse with five boys between 13 to 15 years old. Other cases such as these appear in the news from time to time.

In spite of all these considerations drawn on harassers, the real focus of our interest is the game of power and the fantasy of imagining being in the control of the situation. What is this control that goes through the false perception of “considering” the other so submissive, he/she would never make things public? The other is treated as an object, not as a subject who has wills and wishes and may accept the proposal or turn it down, and may set a limit to the relationship. That is when the problem arises: the all-powerful person sees himself/herself facing a scandal, and will have to be responsible for his/her acts and respond legally to them. In these cases, the harasser pulsions are transferred to the other, making the victim responsible for the offense, and be free of guilt. Psychological functioning is compromised: this person was commanded by pleasure, and his/her fantasy had to be lived, no matter the consequences.

According to Laplanche and Pontalis (1984), and based on Freud, two basic principles regulate mental functioning: the pleasure principle and the reality principle. The pleasure principle is related to psychological activity that has the objective of avoiding suffering and seeking pleasure.

The reality principle is paired with the pleasure principle, changing it. As reality is imposed as a regulating principle, the search for pleasure does not take the shortest path, but takes

turns and is postponed, as a consequence of the conditions imposed by the exterior world. This principle characterizes the preconscious-conscious system; psychoanalysis sets an intervention with this principle, as a type of pulsional energy working for the ego (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1984)).

Freud (2001) considered that pulsions may be understood, initially, only as psychological representations of an endosomatic, continuous source of stimulation, differentiating them from isolated, exciting stimulations that come from the outside (Freud, 1905). Therefore, Pulsion is one of the concepts that helps us to delimit animic and physical reality. Pulsion distinguishes these two realities, and gives them specific properties, which is the relationship between somatic sources and their targets. Tension is relieved by the pulsion, in a way that the impulse to act to satisfy this pulsion is intrinsically connected to the psychic history of the individual.

5. Sexual harassment as an equivalent of incest

Sexual harassment is characterized by the use of the pleasure principle by means of the endosomatic power given by the professional function, without respecting the reality principle that the other imposes to the harasser. Sexual harassment committed by doctors is considered an abusive, unethical, and incestuous act, due to the asymmetric nature of the doctor-patient relationship. (Cohen et al. 2009). All situations presented in this discussion, such as teacher-student and priest-churchgoer relationships, and those with hierarchic superiors, fit in what is called polymorphous incest or equivalent of incest.

In order to understand polymorphous incest or the equivalent of incest, it is important to observe some particular aspects related to human relationships. Depending on the place that one occupies in a given context, peer relationship is different. To Cohen, these relationships may be symmetric or asymmetric.

Asymmetric relationships among relatives and members of a family determine the following functions: the father as the one who sets the laws; the mother as the holder of emotions; the children as the ones who will learn to deal with reality. The objective of the family, in a given cultural context, is preservation. Professional relationships also fit in this asymmetric classification. Vertically, they are equivalent to the parent-child relationship, because they build this hierarchic scenario, with power and specific laws (Cohen, 1999).

Social and erotic relationships are symmetric. Social relationships are those between friends and have as objectives protection of the individuals and preservation of the social group; the values of the individuals in the group are similar. Erotic relationships make people close when seeking sexual pleasure, and may also have the objective of preservation of the species (Cohen, 1999).

We demonstrated that the search for sex relationships with peers with whom there is trust bond or preexistence of a professional relationship end up on Oedipal fantasies. Not even the superego or social moral will function as repressors, in a way that desire goes beyond limits.

This is the problem. The law exists, it is the moral factor. However, respecting it or not depends on individual ethics, because moral is imposed, and ethics have to be lived and understood. Ethics are based on the perception of the conflicts of psychological life (emotion vs. reason), and in the condition – that can be acquired – that we take coherent positions when facing these conflicts.

Not everybody lives and solves conflicts in an ethical manner, because psychological structure is not always adjusted for good mental functioning. Under the psychoanalytical point of view, the Ego should deal with internal and external conflicts. The ego has the function of better understanding ethics, because it is the part of the psychological apparatus that deals with pulsions that come from the Id, and orders that come from the Superego. (Cohen and Segre, 2008)

People who sexually harass other have a huge difficulty in adapting to the reality principle. Their emotions do not respect reason, because they are not able to take coherent positions when facing the limits and social functions imposed to them. The equivalent of incest, that is, power over the others given by social power, is repeated in sexual harassment when a boss starts to feel like a father, who has power over all the other members of the family and consequently, may abuse them.

6. Conclusion

Sexual harassment is not a contemporaneous phenomenon, exclusive of a given society. It does not depend of social and moral order, or even gender-related issues. It is generally seen as a type of sex crime, and not as an incestuous relationship.

However, cultural understanding of the way we deal with the attitudes involving sexual harassment can be changed.

We emphasize that our understanding of sexual harassment encompasses all relationships that involve power. This power is linked to a function given by an institution, and the person that accepted to be harassed was under pressure. Therefore, his/ her acceptance cannot be considered valid.

Sex relationships may be considered a special type of social relationship, one that is marked by respect to the other, and not on acting on incestuous impulses or perverse, polymorphous fantasies (child sexuality). Society imposes rules related to these issues.

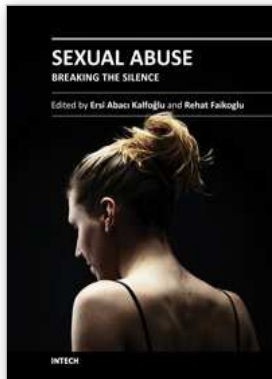
Sexual perversion consequent to the abuse of power (sexual relationships between doctors and patients, teachers and students, bosses and employees, priests and churchgoers) should be considered an equivalent of incest, which we call polymorphous incest. It is clearly sexual abuse, because consent is not valid, because the harasser is only acting on Oedipal or pre-Oedipal fantasies. It is a socially illicit act, because it perverts professional function. It is abuse of power in an asymmetric relationship. It is a violent act, from an institutional viewpoint, because the individual takes advantage of preexisting professional trust to transform the professional relationship in another type of relationship. It apparently is an erotic sign (EROS) but, in fact, it is a sign of discharge of anguish (TANATOS).

Class entities, represented by social institutions, should reflect upon polymorphous incest and its individual and social consequences, in order to approach the problem in an unprejudiced way.

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Sexual Abuse - Breaking the Silence

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Sexual assault can be considered as expression of aggression through sex. This, in turn, can have serious negative effects on a survivor's social and occupational functioning. This book has been organized towards that specific approach, by compiling the scientific work of very well-known scientists from all over the world. The psychological victimization of sexual assault, the physiological aspect of sexual abuse and the different attitudes in coping with sexual assault based on different cultural backgrounds are analyzed. Having in mind that one solution may not necessarily be suitable for all cases, we hope that this book will open a debate on sexual assault for future practice and policy and that it will be a step forward to 'break the silence'.

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