

## The Secret of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse: Who Keeps It and How?

Dafna Tener

To cite this article: Dafna Tener (2017): The Secret of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse: Who Keeps It and How?, Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, DOI: [10.1080/10538712.2017.1390715](https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2017.1390715)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2017.1390715>



Published online: 10 Nov 2017.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 3



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



## The Secret of Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse: Who Keeps It and How?

Dafna Tener

The Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem

### ABSTRACT



This article analyzes how women survivors of intrafamilial child sexual abuse perceive the family members who took part in keeping it secret and their tactics for doing so. Analysis of 20 in-depth interviews with Jewish Israeli women revealed unique ways of guarding the secret. These were attributed to the perpetrator, the mother and the family. Secret-keeping tactics included presenting a normative public identity or an unstable psychological identity, presenting multiple personas, reframing the abuse, concealing any trace of the secret after it was disclosed, as if the abuse had never happened, and making a monument of the abuser. These tactics are discussed in the context of silencing, the interpersonal relations orientation model, and the wider concepts of secrecy in society. Implications for professional practice and for society are considered, and new attitudes toward intrafamilial child sexual abuse secrecy are suggested.

### KEYWORDS

Child sexual abuse; adult survivors; disclosure; family relationships; qualitative research

Theoretical discussions on disclosure all emphasize the complexity of the process of telling others about sexual abuse (Alaggia, 2010; Draucker & Martsof, 2008; Kenny & Wurtele, 2012; McElvaney, Greene, & Hogan, 2012). Many sexually abused children do not disclose their abuse, or they delay in disclosing it for many years (Jensen, Gulbrandsen, Mossige, Reichelt, & Tjersland, 2005; Oates, 2007; Schönbucher, Maier, Mohler-Kuo, Schnyder, & Landolt, 2012), especially when it is within the family (Kogan, 2004). Despite broad recognition of their role, however, the direct and interactive effects of family mechanisms, often acting as massive barriers to disclosure, have received little scholarly attention to date (Alaggia & Kirshenbaum, 2005; Anderson, 2015; Hershkowitz, Lanes, & Lamb, 2007; Welfare, 2010).

Individuals, including the survivor, family members, and neighbors as well as the community, society, and broad cultural context are all key actors in the disclosure process (Alaggia, 2010). Concealing and disclosing sexual abuse during childhood are facilitated and inhibited by a range of personal, interpersonal, and sociocultural factors (Tener & Murphy, 2015). Our focus in this article will be on inhibitory factors. On the personal level, these include, for example, older age at

**CONTACT** Dafna Tener  [dtener@gmail.com](mailto:dtener@gmail.com)  the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Mt. Scopus Jerusalem 91905, Israel.

© 2017 Taylor & Francis

the time of abuse or feeling responsible and ashamed for its occurrence and expecting negative consequences (Easton, Saltzman, & Willis, 2014; Goodman et al., 2003; Hershkowitz et al., 2007; Paine & Hansen, 2002). Interpersonal inhibitors include (perceived) social isolation, unwillingness to burden the family or lack of trust in the family, and, most important, a violent family system that lacks open communication channels (Alaggia & Kirshenbaum, 2005; Schönbucher et al., 2012). Finally, sociocultural factors may include the survivor's feeling that society cannot bear stories of abuse that do not fit the social script, particularly those of sexually abused males or being sexually abused by a woman (Denov, 2003; Draucker & Martsof, 2008; Easton et al., 2014).

As survivors struggle with what McElvaney and colleagues (2012) call the “pressure cooker effect”—wanting to tell and at the same time not wanting others to know—they are also preoccupied with finding the right person to disclose to (Staller & Nelson-Gardell, 2005). Various studies discuss whether children or adolescents are more likely to disclose to peers, parents, or other adult figures (Hershkowitz, Horowitz, & Lamb, 2007; Kogan, 2004; Priebe & Svedin, 2008; Roesler & Wind, 1994). Survivors who feel their family is unstable do not trust that they will be supported and thus tend to avoid disclosing to family members (Crisma, Bascelli, Paci, & Romito, 2004; Schönbucher et al., 2012). Conversely, a qualitative analysis of children disclosing sexual abuse (Staller & Nelson-Gardell, 2005) found that the most important factor in that decision was the potential confidant's ability to understand and empathize with the story. If the survivors feel others are not willing to hear them, if they believe that the story would provoke disinterest or condemnation, they may delay or avoid disclosure altogether (Draucker & Martsof, 2008; Jensen et al., 2005). If, on the other hand, they feel they have someone they can trust, someone they feel deeply connected to, an opportunity for disclosure may be taken (Jensen et al., 2005; McElvaney et al., 2012).

Familial and societal reactions to a child's disclosure may range from supportive and empowering to negative and encumbering (Crisma et al., 2004; Ford, Ray, & Ellis, 1999), with limited effort to protect the child against future abuse (Anderson, 2006). Whether deliberately or inadvertently, negative responses could encourage continued abuse or prevent treatment for the survivors and their families. Often, responses are inconsistent, with the level of belief and support changing over time. This inconsistency may be a result of several factors, such as the emotional, relational, family-related, and intervention-related stressors experienced by the nonperpetrator parent/caretaker after disclosure (Bolen & Lamb, 2004). Negative or inconsistent family reactions have a greater effect on survivors' well-being than positive ones (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009). The child's expectation to experience negative consequences—especially fear of physical harm and negative emotions (Malloy, Brubacher, & Lamb, 2011)—or her or his inability to find a trustworthy confidant (McElvaney et al., 2012) are associated with delaying disclosure.

Negative familial or societal reactions cannot be addressed in isolation but must be considered in the context of the social tendency to avoid and to place taboos on behaviors, attitudes, and ways of thinking that threaten the social order. Sexual abuse and intrafamilial child sexual abuse (IFCSA) is one such tabooed behavior. Expressions such as “bite your lips together,” “private matters,” or “not in public” emphasize a kind of social understanding of what needs to remain unknown (Taussig, 1999). The keepers of social secrets must have a very good reason for maintaining secrecy; the threat immanent in things to be kept secret extends beyond the individual interest of the survivors, constituting a threat to the entire social order. Having “top secrets,” such as IFCSA, results from a society’s attempts to preserve its normative foundations, and revealing any part of the secret would be an infringement of boundaries (Bollnow, 1967). Some survivors describe disclosing their IFCSA to a therapist, only to find themselves redirected from the abuse to a discussion of other, superficial or day-to-day concerns (Draucker & Martsolf, 2008).

A search for unique characteristics of disclosing child sexual abuse within, as opposed outside, the family reveals that literature often fails to make a fundamental distinction between the two. Two main themes seem to recur across the studies. First, many studies focus on the fact children are less likely to disclose abuse perpetrated by an adult family member (Alaggia & Kirshenbaum, 2005; Hershkowitz et al., 2007; McElvaney, 2015; Schönbucher et al., 2012). Children abused by relatives are also more likely to delay disclosure as well as receive negative reactions to disclosure, more than those abused by acquaintances or strangers (e.g., Tashjian, Goldfarb, Goodman, Quas, & Edelstein, 2016; Ullman, Townsend, Filipas, & Starzynski, 2007). These studies point to several individual and familial factors preventing disclosure: loyalty to the perpetrator, fear of potential consequences for the offender, or fear from that disclosure could destroy the family (e.g. Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones, & Gordon, 2003; Reitsema & Grietens, 2016). For his or her part, the perpetrator uses several techniques to prevent disclosure such as manipulations or isolation of survivors, bribes, or threats (Craven, Brown, & Gilchrist, 2006). A negative family environment or dysfunction (such as maltreatment) are additional barriers for disclosure in IFCSA cases (e.g., Collin-Vézina, De La Sablonnière-Griffin, Palmer, & Milne, 2015; Stronach et al., 2011).

The second theme in the literature focuses on the responses of nonoffending parents to IFCSA. It appears nonoffending mothers are more likely to be supportive of their children when they did not live with the perpetrator or when he was not a father figure (Cyr, Wright, Toupin, Oxman-Martinez, McDuff, & Theriault, 2002; Lyon, Ahern, Malloy, & Quas, 2010; Malloy & Lyon, 2006). More negative reactions, such as disbelief, were observed for those victimized by relatives compared to acquaintances or strangers,

especially for those disclosing in childhood (Ullman, 2007). In general, IFCSA disclosure is often described by nonoffending family members in terms of loss and grief (e.g., Leichtentritt & Arad, 2006).

Although motives for delaying disclosure and for nondisclosure within the family system are often mentioned in the literature, only few have studied them empirically (Schönbucher et al., 2012; Smith, 2011). Most of the literature focuses on the delayed disclosure typical of IFCSA, as opposed to extrafamilial sexual abuse, but sheds little light on the dynamics of the different family figures or of the family as a whole and the unique and complex ways they could profit from such secrecy. The purpose of the present study is to expand knowledge of the various tactics used by the family system to avoid disclosure of child sexual abuse. These are examined from the insider's perspective of adult survivors of IFCSA. The research question is how did women survivors of IFCSA experience processes of concealing and disclosing the abuse during childhood, and how did they perceive the role of their family members in this process? Our objective is to provide additional insights and to expand knowledge on who keeps the IFCSA secret and, just as important, how, from the insider's perspective of the adult survivors. This perspective is examined here with a qualitative approach, given the relative dearth of theoretical and empirical knowledge about this complex phenomenon (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Method

The study was conducted in the descriptive-phenomenological tradition, which allows the researcher to understand a phenomenon through its subjective meaning as described by those experiencing it (Giorgi, 2009; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Moustakas, 1994). This is expected to produce an as accurate as possible description that can be reduced to the essence of the phenomenon; in this case, of concealing and disclosing IFCSA by women survivors.

The analysis and conceptualization of the data collected were informed by the following guidelines. First, the researcher assumed a phenomenological attitude (Husserl, 1931) by examining data from the informants' perspective. Second, in keeping with the phenomenological approach, the researchers focused on specific instances and clarified how each exemplified the phenomenon under study. Once the essence of the phenomenon was identified, it was described, with description regarded as more important than interpretation (Giorgi, 2009; Husserl, 1962).

## Sample

This is part of a larger research project on women survivors of IFCSA (Tener, 2010). Twenty women survivors abused by any family member who was at least 5 years older than them before they reached the age of 18 were recruited

through organizations treating survivors of sexual abuse and by posting notices on websites specifically aimed at this group. Only Hebrew-speaking women were recruited, because the researcher does not speak another language. Three women who had expressed interest were excluded from the study after an initial phone conversation with the researcher, who suggested that being interviewed about their abuse could damage their mental health.

The women's ages at the time of the interview ranged from 22 to 65 years. Six were in their twenties, 5 in their thirties, 4 their forties, 1 woman in her fifties, and 4 in their sixties. Ten women had been abused by their fathers, 3 by their brothers, 2 by a brother-in-law or uncle, and 1 by a cousin. Four had been abused by 2 or 3 perpetrators within the family, 2 of these by their mothers as well as by a male family member. For all women, the sexual abuse started at early childhood (some could not recall a specific age when the abuse started) and continued until early or late adolescence. All were Israeli Jews of European descent; 14 (70%) were middle class and college educated, 16 (80%) were employed, 9 (45%) were married, and 8 (40%) had 1 to 4 children, while 12 (60%) did not have any children at the time of study.

### **Procedure**

Face-to-face, semistructured interviews lasting between 1.5 and 3.5 hours were conducted by the author in the women's homes or wherever else they chose. The questions covered the IFCSA events (e.g., Tell me your story, Tell me about the sexual abuse you experienced as a child), perceptions and feelings related to concealing and disclosing the abuse (e.g., Who knew about the sexual abuse, and who did not? How did this affect the process of telling about the abuse?), and different ways of concealing the abuse (e.g., How was the abuse kept as a secret? Explain the different ways used to keep it a secret). The interviews were taped, transcribed, and analyzed using version 5 of Atlas.ti software (2016). Quotes were professionally translated into English and retranslated by a certified translator to ensure reliability.

The University of Haifa Ethics Committee approved the project. Informed consent from the participants was obtained, and special attention was paid to issues of confidentiality and dignity. Pseudonyms are used throughout, with all identifying details removed from the data. Interviewees were told in advance that in case of emotional distress during or after the interview, they were invited to contact the researcher who would refer them to appropriate resources within the community. The interviewee's therapists were known to the researcher and could be consulted if necessary. In addition, a list of phone numbers of helping resources was provided at the end of each interview. The interviewees were called a few days after the interview to ascertain their emotional state and respond to any needs.

Trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a unique measure for evaluating qualitative studies, was achieved by member check and audit trails. During the interviews themselves, participants were asked by the researcher to clarify and elaborate on their narratives as well as give examples of their perceptions. They were also approached by the researcher after data analysis was conducted and asked to respond to its aggregate findings. About half the participants expressed a wish to examine the data and comment on themes identified by the author. They were e-mailed the data, and their verbal or written comments and reflections were always included in the analysis. Eighty percent of them confirmed the author's interpretations, explicitly stating that they were consistent with their experiences. Two of the women who were abused by their siblings did not provide any specific comments concerning the patterns but generally felt that there should be differentiation between being abused by a sibling as opposed to an older adult. Accordingly, the author addressed such differences more carefully when appropriate. The audit trail consisted of detailed documentation of all stages of the research, with excerpts from the raw data attached to all interpretations.

### **Data analysis**

Each interview transcript was entered as a case into Atlas.ti 5. Data was analyzed according to the guidelines of descriptive phenomenological analysis (Giorgi, 2009). First, all interviews were thoroughly read to obtain a sense of the entire experience of each survivor. Second, the interviews were broken into units of meaning, with each identified as a shift in the description. In the third stage, units of meaning were grouped into various dimensions of the participants' lived experience. Finally, all units of meaning from all interviews were incorporated into a structure comprising several key meanings and their interrelatedness.

The final structure included various secret-keeping techniques used by four distinctive family actors, as perceived by the survivors: the survivor herself, the perpetrator, the mother, and the family as a whole. They described several main techniques for each secret keeper within the family, some unique to each actor and some common to the entire family system. For example, presenting normative identity was related to the perpetrator, the mother, and the family as a whole and described their external identity, which seemed immaculate, as opposed to the perceived stained public identity of the survivors, which in their perception made disclosure appear unreliable. Another category, which was unique to the perpetrator, described the perpetrator as presenting two distinct figures: "dad of the night" and "dad of the day."

### **Findings**

Descriptive phenomenological analysis yielded the core phenomenon of the study, which includes perceptions of the interviewed women of the various

secret keepers within the family and how their behavior, individually or collectively, deliberately or unintentionally, encouraged the survivors to avoid disclosure. Women who were sexually abused described how the family produces a complete and extensive system that operates in concert to prevent disclosure. Each member of this system (the perpetrator, the mother, and the victim herself) acts separately to keep the secret, while the family (including nuclear and extended family members—the perpetrator being one of them) also adopts various sophisticated concealment techniques enabling it to act as though the abuse never occurred or should be kept secret. In the process, the survivor's needs and voice are marginalized: the combination of all the actors operating in concert toward the same end creates a secret that is so massive and powerful that the women testify that disclosing it becomes virtually impossible. Keeping the secret involved both prevention of initial disclosure (throughout the abuse or immediately afterward) and concealing it again following disclosure, during the course of life, in both childhood and adulthood. Some ways of keeping the secret more familiar in the literature on sexual abuse in general, such as manipulation, denial, threats, or coercion, will not be discussed in order to emphasize the unique aspects of the IFCSA phenomena and the particular contribution of the present study.

### ***Techniques used by the perpetrator***

#### ***"This perfect man": Presenting a normative public identity***

Sixteen of the women interviewed described the public identity of their male perpetrators as normative, possessing a range of respectable attributes. They were described as hard working, successful men employed in public positions, honorable family men, friendly and communicative. The survivors, on the other hand, felt they possessed much lower status. They, therefore, tended to believe that disclosure would trigger societal reaction supporting the perpetrator, as society would refuse to believe that such successful and honorable men could ever abuse their daughters. This perception was demonstrated by Hadar, in her forties, abused by her father during childhood.

He is gifted and he is handsome and he is a self-made man... . He was marked as brilliant from very early in his life ... and [now] it's turned against me! Because how can I condemn this perfect man that people cheer, respect and invite to lecture all over the world? ... How can I, with my "nothingness," stand up to this success story and say, "You are wrong." Reality says: "Wait a minute, stay where you are! You can't throw your failure at him... . Are you jealous or what?"

The abuse became the essence of Hadar's life. As an adult, Hadar tried to construct a new narrative, with the abuse being the cause of her difficulties in life. However, such a narrative was doomed to fail, since, from her perspective, the perpetrator's high social status made it impossible to label him as



deviant. She felt that society forced her to stick to the old narrative of her being inherently incompetent, which she further interpreted as her deserving the abuse that could not be disclosed.

The perpetrator's social standing is further protected by the belief that disclosure could indirectly destroy the survivor's own social and psychological status. Moran, in her twenties, abused during her childhood and adolescence, described meeting one of her father's acquaintances as an adult:

Interviewer : You said people think your father is a good man.

Moran : People who work with him. His friends. I ran into the wife of a very good friend of my father. She is a social worker... . And every time we saw each other, she used to remind me that when I was little, I used to come visit her with my father ... I always wondered how people saw what I saw and what I've tried to hide ... for me, her words just meant that I hid it, because she didn't see a thing ... she mentioned only the good stuff.

Moran describes a gap between how her father was portrayed by others and how she saw him. Indeed, even a professional supposedly expert in revealing such secrets fully subscribed to her father's public identity, leaving Moran feeling ambivalent. If others in society knew about her father being a perpetrator, his reputation would be tarnished. At the same time, the perpetrator's normative identity also helped Moran herself maintain the appearance of normalcy she wanted to project to the outside world.

### ***"Sorry for him": Presenting an unstable personal identity***

Some of the women describe perpetrators they perceived as needy, childish, and needing compassion. They feared that disclosing their story would cause their emotional collapse or even death. Einav, in her twenties, tried to explain how she had felt sorry for her father: "I think he knows how to create this need for compassion ... this is what I think now ... I didn't use to think that ... I think he feels sorry for himself and he expects others to feel sorry for him too ..."

Einav's father placed his suffering at the center of the family narrative and at the same time marginalized her suffering. In an apparent role reversal, he maneuvered the situation so that she became the perpetrator inflicting suffering on him and he became the victim. Becoming empathetic toward and pitying the perpetrator-father makes it very hard for the victims to disclose the abuse or locate it visibly in the family narrative following disclosure.

### ***"Dad of the night": Presenting a dual personality***

In three unique cases, the survivors described two separate and totally disconnected personas coexisting within the same offender: a normative

caretaker and a sex offender. The offender exists only during the act of sexual abuse, while the normative caretaker exists in all other contexts. Note that the latter is presented as allegedly unaware of the offender. According to Einav,

There was this split between “dad of the night” and “dad of the day” ... I treated them as two different people ... when it didn’t happen, in daily life, he was such a good dad. Hugging, taking me to places and helping me with my homework ... I always felt there was this transition. His face would change. It was not the same face ... the look in his eyes was different. Not a dad’s look... . It was like he couldn’t see me. His voice would change.

Einav, as well as two other women interviewed, felt the need to maintain the separation between the two personas. This strategy made disclosure unlikely because, first, “dad of the night” is not necessarily perceived by the women as *only* deviant. Sometimes he is more tender and loving during the sexually abusive acts than during the daily routine. Moran described this as follows: “It always used to start when he was angry and beat me for no reason. And then, somehow it was changed. It is still hard for me to think and to say it. It is as if he became the good father.” For Moran, the sexual acts were perceived as the only tender aspects in her relationship with a sexually and physically abusive father. The “tender” sexual part is both preceded and followed by physical violence.

Note that in Moran’s and other cases, even when the sexual acts are perceived as abusive, disclosing the abuse means losing the offenders’ nonoffending persona, which is sometimes described by the women as the only positive caretaker they had during childhood. The positive, empowering parts presented by the perpetrator were sometimes described as the opposite of the image of their mother, who was perceived by some as emotionally absent or physically and emotionally offensive. The following subsection describes techniques used by mothers, whether deliberately or not, in order to avoid disclosure.

### ***Techniques used by the mother***

Except for two women who were sexually abused by their mother, the mothers were not sexually offending. Nevertheless, they were viewed by their daughters as responsible in varying degrees for their own abuse during childhood and adulthood. Note that the first two ways used by mothers to keep the secret are essentially similar to those of the perpetrators.

#### ***“Let me show you what’s real”: Presenting a normative public identity***

Similar to the perpetrators, eight of the mothers tended to present a normative public identity while constructing a negative one for their daughters by labeling them as unstable and unreliable. Joining the perpetrator, they created a family façade in which intrafamilial sexual abuse was simply

inconceivable and would be regarded by others as no more than a “fairy-tale” should an attempt be made to disclose it. Roni, in her thirties, describes her mother’s reaction to her psychotherapy during her adolescence:

“You are manipulating him, your therapist ... you don’t let me see him! He listens only to you, and you have a twisted perception and that’s why he can’t help you! You must let me come and tell him what’s real so he can help you!” And I remember I was so confused by this conversation. And I went back to the therapist and told him what she said. And he said, “Look, I’m treating you, I’m not treating her, and we’re working on what you see and what you describe.” It was the first time anybody told me anything like this ... I was already prepared to let her come.

When this mother, a psychologist herself, insisted on being present at Roni’s therapy sessions, she conveyed the message that her daughter’s feelings and thoughts were worthless. She implied that she and the therapist represented “normal society,” while the daughter was disordered. Clearly, she was afraid some of the pathological family patterns would be disclosed. The therapist, on the other hand, helped Roni realize it was *her* reality rather than an “objective” one dictated from outside that was important and validated.

### ***“I’m responsible for her life and death”: Presenting an unstable personal identity***

Eleven of the mothers were perceived by their daughters as emotionally unstable and extremely fragile. The survivors are concerned that disclosing the abuse would cause the mothers to break down, leaving the daughters in charge of the family. Keeping the secret meant keeping their mothers safe. Hadar, in her forties, presented this perception: “I said I can’t tell her. She will die. She will kill herself ... all my life she gave me the feeling I’m responsible for her life and death ... if I misbehave she will die... . It was very tangible, that she would kill herself because I did something wrong.”

Hadar learned to please her mother as a way of keeping her alive. Disclosing the sexual abuse was perceived as having a massive potential for devastating the mother, who could not even stand a routine violation of the house rules such as setting the table. This would leave the daughter responsible for the loss of her mother. Note that in six cases, however, when survivors do disclose to their mothers, the mothers do collapse emotionally and some of them choose to continue living with the perpetrator. This requires some sort of postdisclosure “naturalization” of the abuse.

### ***“It happens to the lions and the tigers”: Reframing the abuse***

Another technique used by mothers, which encourages the daughter to delay or avoid disclosure of the sexual abuse or to reconcile themselves to it after disclosure, is to present it as a playful or natural act, part of parental care, or a simple misunderstanding. Reframing the abuse encourages the survivors to

believe concealing it is a better option, since they would receive no support from their mothers. Noga, in her twenties, described her mother's reaction to her disclosure to her parents of having been sexually abused by her brother as a child:

[M]y mother's first sentence was "it happens to the lions and the tigers as well" and "it happened to me too and even worse ... with a stranger." ... She was defending herself the whole time. And eventually I took my bag and picked myself up and left, slamming the door behind me, because I realized I wouldn't get the answer or the embrace I had hoped for ... just a slap in the face.

Noga's mother reframed the abuse as a natural act between siblings, who resemble animals in nature, and as a sexual experience rather than abuse, which is associated "with a stranger"—far worse than "having sex" with a brother. This was totally unacceptable to Noga and indeed flies in the face of an extensive literature that regards abuse by a family member as one of the most severe forms of abuse (for a review, see Yancey & Hansen, 2010).

### ***Techniques used by the family***

The family as a whole—including both perpetrators and nonperpetrators as well as extended family members—uses several techniques to avoid disclosure or to continue concealing the abuse after its disclosure.

#### ***"A nice family": Presenting a normative public identity***

The interviewed women presented a continuum of nuclear family public identities, from a pathological identity (marked by society as deviant) to having high status (marked by society as highly functioning). Being defined by society as high status helps the family avoid disclosure, since society, in their perception, has a hard time believing such a deviant act could take place in such a normative family. Eight of the families where IFCSA has taken place appear extremely functional to the outside observer, including normative physical attention such as hugging and kissing. Lilach, in her thirties, sexually abused by her father and brother, describes how the family's public identity affected her perception of the abuse:

People really like our family. Many people lived at our house. It is such a welcoming house. People fall in love with my father when they see him... . And I also used to adore him and all the family's togetherness ... barbecues on weekends ... it's so confusing. Even today, I'm not exactly sure what was appropriate and what wasn't. Only recently I started going to therapy and was told stuff like "his behavior was not appropriate for your age" and "this was actually a sexual act."

As opposed to the tendency of IFCSA families to isolate themselves from the outside society, Lilach's family opened its doors. They seemed like role models—sexual abuse would seem absurd in such a family. This public identity has two

implications for our purposes: (a) it seems pointless for the survivor to disclose, since society would rather avoid dissonance by sticking to the family's appearance rather than believing the survivor, and (b) the abusive experience becomes confusing for the survivor herself: am I imagining or exaggerating? Lilach, like other survivors, needs the formal societal systems' approval, such as by a therapist, to feel sure she was indeed abused.

***“Back home this was never discussed”: Acting like the phoenix***

Just like the phoenix, the legendary bird in Greek mythology that burned to ashes and recreated itself, postdisclosure 11 of the families were described by participants as experiencing the disclosure as a crisis that threatens to destroy them but hurrying to recreate themselves and acting as though the sexual abuse had never occurred. Moran describes such a pattern:

I'm bulimic and I was hospitalized for almost a year when I was sixteen. I was almost never home with my family, so at some point it felt safe to tell someone about it. And I didn't want anyone else to know but because I was a minor they did tell [my family]. So I freaked out... . And the day they brought my father I decided not to talk about it anymore. I decided I didn't want any family therapy and that I didn't want to see my mom or my dad until I was discharged... . And I was at the hospital for quite a long time without going home on weekends... . And when I did go back home this was never discussed ... they didn't say anything. My father didn't come, he didn't call. I didn't call and I didn't see him.

Moran's family was told about the abuse by mental health professionals. Consequently, she experienced the disclosure as a negative intervention and disconnected from the family. Even though her parents separated while she was hospitalized, when she returned home, she found out that her family routine continued unaffected by the disclosure, as though it had not occurred at all. Moran's reaction was to disconnect herself from the family again, which was convenient also for the family, as this enabled it to rise from the ashes like the phoenix.

***“A toast in honor of his birthday”: Idolizing the abuser***

Several interviewees described their expectation that their families would take their side and condemn the perpetrator after the disclosure. Unfortunately, what they usually discovered was that the family kept supporting and even idolizing the perpetrator. This pattern is of course related to the positive public identity factor discussed previously with reference to the perpetrator as an individual. At the same time, the survivor is condemned for trying to destroy the perpetrator's immaculate reputation. Yael, now in her forties, disclosed her sexual abuse by her father to her mother and siblings as an adult. She describes the family atmosphere after disclosure:

Then life returned to normal... . My brother, my sister and my mom and my dad. Everyone returned to normal life. And me too. We threw a bomb. The bomb exploded, and then it was as sort of buried, buried with all the evidence, and nobody spoke about it again... . Only last Friday we were at my sister's, and we celebrated his birthday. We had a toast for the birthday, and my mom said: "This was the hardest year I ever had," and then my sister said, "Oh ... I remember harder years.

Roz, in her sixties, who had been sexually abused by her stepmother's brother, described a similar experience while showing the interviewer a family album created by her stepmother: "I think they knew about his pedophilia but were quiet about it... . When my father's wife made this album, I helped her. She already knew her brother had abused her daughters. And still, look how many pages she devoted to him."

The album is the family's shopping window. The perpetrator receives much space and all his achievements are elaborated. This album was edited years after Roz's sister had disclosed being abused by the perpetrator. Roz's expectation was that this would change the family narrative of the perpetrator, but this did not occur. Deleting the abusive conduct from the perpetrator's resume meant preventing Roz being recognized as a victim.

## Discussion

The literature on disclosure of child sexual abuse is focused on individual, familial, and societal barriers for disclosure as well as on the importance of the responses to disclosure and the potential negative consequences of others' responses to disclosure for survivors' well-being and recovery. Studies identifying unique patterns of IFCSA disclosure are limited and based on the empirical assumptions that disclosure of IFCSA is less likely to occur and more likely to be delayed and that the victim feels trapped by responsibility toward the offender, usually a caretaker, as well as for the family's integrity, fearing the disclosure will tear it apart. Yet few studies have explicitly tried to understand the deep and complex meanings of the familial barriers faced by would-be disclosers.

Based on interviews with 20 women survivors of IFCSA, this study tried to identify the core of the phenomenon of IFCSA disclosure. I found the family to be a massive barrier, acting in multiple sophisticated ways to avoid disclosure. Several tactics were used by family members to conceal the abuse or continue concealing it after it had been initially disclosed. I found that the offender, the mother, and the family act as keepers of the secret. Deliberately or not, they all use several tactics, including presenting a normative social identity and presenting a fragile psychological identity, both for the perpetrator, both serving the same purpose. Other tactics included the offender presenting himself and/or being perceived as having two personas, making it impossible for the survivor to disclose the abusive "night dad" who

was so different from the loving and caring “day dad.” In some cases, mothers acted to reframe the incident as “natural” after its disclosure. Finally, entire families united to “rise from the ashes” like the phoenix: after the abuse was disclosed, the family quickly resumed its old patterns of behavior as if nothing had happened.

The highly sophisticated tactics of keeping the IFCSA secret can be discussed here in terms of three ecological systems: the perpetrator, the family, and society. Recall that tactics more familiar in the literature (manipulations, threats, or coercion) will not be discussed.

In the *perpetrator system*, the concept of *silencing* is central. Caprioli and Crenshaw (2015) describe several factors creating a culture of silencing around child sexual abuse: (a) “preselection” of potential victims more likely to remain silent, (b) the imbalance of power inherent in the relationship, and (c) an internalized image of the perpetrator that can exercise power over the survivor long after the actual perpetrator has left or died. The tactics reported by the interviewees fit this description. Both presentation of a normative identity and presentation of an unstable identity appear specifically aimed at victims who were either (a) identified by other family members as unstable and unreliable, as opposed to the respectable perpetrator, or (b) identified as the highly sensitive, caring child who cannot bear the thought of hurting the perpetrator by revealing the abuse. Indeed, the concerns of sexually abused children appear mainly directed toward other family members, including the perpetrator (Foster & Hagedorn, 2014; McElvaney, 2008). Children avoid disclosure to protect their parents, especially their mothers (Crisma et al., 2004; Jensen et al., 2005).

For the *family system*, it seems the survivors of IFCSA are being sacrificed or excluded from the family to prevent disclosure. This may occur on three levels. The first level comprises tactics such as maintaining a normative family identity when the perpetrator, the mother, and the family as a whole are presented as carrying high status while the survivor is placed very low in the family hierarchy. An alliance is then formed between the family members, specifically excluding the victim. On another level, the victim avoids disclosure in order to maintain the relationship with the perpetrator (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003; Reitsemá & Grietens, 2016) and by extension with the family and thus remain “included.” On a third level, when the family is presented as normal, the survivors clearly see through the lie, but it is often valuable for them as well since it raises their own status as family members. In this case, disclosure would shatter the family’s normative identity as well as that of the survivor. Some of the women described this normal family appearance as a source of strength enabling them to survive the abuse. As one interviewee put it, “Other than that, we were a normal loving family.”

At the same time, when the mother and perpetrator present a fragile psychological identity, this manipulates the survivor into the impossible

position of being responsible for the possible psychological or physical death of other family members. In one extreme case where the offending father was sentenced to 20 years in jail, the survivor feared he would not survive and wrote the judges a letter pleading for a reduced sentence. The sentence was commuted, but when he was released and she realized he could reach her again, she tried to commit suicide. This case symbolizes the complexity and dangerousness of this tactic, which pits the death of the perpetrator or the mother against the death of the survivor herself. Another tactic, also subtle and involving manipulative domination of the survivor, is the perpetrator's technique of presenting himself as having two personas. This may forestall any attempt by the survivor to break free of the perpetrator's control (Doherty & Colangelo, 1984). The interviewers who described this tactic explained they could not disclose the abuser since it seemed to them that the abuse was not performed by their real father but by that other figure appearing only at night.

*The social system* is related to the concept of secrecy more generally, extending beyond IFCSA. Usually, secrecy is associated with shame, fear of rejection, and anxiety surrounding disclosure. Imber-Black (1998) offers a hierarchy of secrets, topped by *toxic secrets* (rape, molestation, or sexual orientation) and dangerous secrets that involve a threat to life. IFCSA is perhaps a combination of the two: it can be toxic in both the short- and long-term, even after the perpetrator's death, but it also contains an immediate psychologically threat, commonly referred to as "murder of the soul" (Zeligman & Solomon, 2004). The risk of death is not only perceived: child sexual abuse is a significant risk factor for suicidal and parasuicidal acts (for review see Maniglio, 2011).

There is a widespread tendency to consider self-disclosure of sexual abuse as the central goal of intervention, if not as a prerequisite for adequate support to the child to begin with (Paine & Hansen, 2002). Yet survivors' actual experiences in disclosing sexual abuse both during childhood and during adulthood involves, as we have seen, multiple gains and losses. Key among the latter is the fact that disclosure does not necessarily put an end to abuse and that many children fail to receive the support they need to cope with the abuse even after disclosure (e.g., Hershkowitz et al., 2007). Thus, the survivors in the current study should not be perceived, under any circumstances, as "collaborating" with the secret-keeping tactics employed by social systems, not only because of the lack of choice and power built into the sexual abuse events but also because these tactics also offered them a way for both psychological and physical survival. Revealing the secret means losing control. Even when engaging in a long and thoughtful process of deliberation, which is more typical in adulthood (Tener & Murphy, 2015), survivors cannot necessarily predict the short- and long-term consequences of their disclosure, which can cause symptoms of distress in cases of negative responses (Glover et al., 2010). In reality, few studies have actually determined that disclosure of sexual traumas has positive effects (Ullman, 2011).



## **Limitations**

The present study voiced specific and subjective perspectives. While the literature tends to emphasize a variety of barriers to disclosure (Alaggia, 2010; Draucker & Martsof, 2008), this study was designed to understand the more unique, subtle, and complex tactics used by several secret keepers within the family through the victims' point of view. This is related to its first limitation: interviews were conducted only with survivors; the perceptions of perpetrators and other family members are important for fuller understanding of the phenomenon. Second, most of the interviews were conducted with women abused by their fathers. Still too little is known about the experience of women sexually abused by siblings, about male survivors, or about survivors whose perpetrator was female. Moreover, the sample did not include women who were still being sexually abused at the time of study. Third, the participants were women for whom the IFCSA was still very prominent (those seeking help or therapy or active on websites focused on sexual abuse). Finally, the study was conducted in Israel and is, therefore, related to a specific sociocultural context, affecting the generalizability of its findings.

## **Implications**

Professionals working in the field of IFCSA with abused children, adult survivors of abuse, and their families must decide whether to disclose. In light of the high rates of IFCSA, it is most likely that every mental health professional will encounter IFCSA families during their routine work. Professionals need the strength, courage, and ability to deal with this dangerous and toxic secret. Understanding the complex and varied methods used by family members and the family system as a whole to guard the secret is essential for both intervention and prevention. Discussing these tactics may also help ease the blame and shame so common among children as well as adult survivors of IFCSA (e.g., Dorahy & Clearwater, 2012; Zinzow, Seth, Jackson, Niehaus, & Fitzgerald, 2010). It may also ease the blame often directed at professionals themselves for not being able to identify the families or individuals they work with as experiencing IFCSA; concealment can be that deep-rooted and sophisticated.

Future studies should consider the fact that the tactics described here have been selected deliberately for their uniqueness. Common tactics described in the literature, such as a direct threat or manipulation, have been deliberately omitted. Future research may examine how frequently survivors experience the tactics described here and in what contexts. Future studies should also address the complexity of disclosure during therapy and how therapists deal with the sophisticated ways of avoiding disclosure. Furthermore, they should address the role played by society, including social stereotypes. Social norms are

among the most powerful predictors of human behavior (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991; Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Violators risk negative reactions (Blake & Davis, 1964). The most toxic and dangerous secrets are the ones most toxic and dangerous to society (Zerubavel, 2006). Mechanisms used to keep IFCSA secret may not necessarily be unique to the families involved: moving beyond the family to study society's coping with toxic secrets would contribute significantly to our understanding of this phenomenon. If families are to hope they can survive IFCSA, the mechanisms for maintaining secrecy and the social structures undergirding them must be addressed.

## Acknowledgment

I am thankful to my PhD supervisor, Professor Zvi Eisikovitz, who guided and supported me throughout all the projects stages and provided expertise and wisdom that greatly assisted this research.

## Disclosure of interest

The authors have nothing to disclose.

## Ethical standards and informed consent

All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the University of Haifa Ethics Committee. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, and additional informed consent was obtained from all participants for whom identifying information is included in this article.

## Notes on contributor

**Dafna Tener, PhD**, is a faculty member at the Paul Baerwald School of Social Work and Social Welfare, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a research fellow at the Haruv Institute, a training and research center in the field of child maltreatment, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel.

## References

- Alaggia, R. (2010). An ecological analysis of child sexual abuse disclosure: Considerations for child and adolescent mental health. *Journal of the Canadian Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, 19*(1), 32–39.
- Alaggia, R., & Kirshenbaum, S. (2005). Speaking the unspeakable: Exploring the impact of family dynamics on child sexual abuse disclosures. *Families in Society, 86*(2), 227–234. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.2457
- Anderson, G. D. (2015). *How do contextual factors and family support influence disclosure of child sexual abuse during forensic interviews and service outcomes in child protection cases?*

- (doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses—Gradworks. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota.
- Anderson, K. (2006). Surviving incest: The art of resistance. *The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 87(3), 409–416. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.3546
- Atlas.ti 5 [computer software]. [2016]. Retrieved from <http://atlasti.com/>
- Blake, J., & Davis, K. (1964). Norms, values and sanctions. In R. E. L. Faris (Ed.), *Handbook of modern sociology* (pp. 456–484). Chicago, IL: Rand McNally.
- Bolen, R. M., & Lamb, J. L. (2004). Ambivalence of nonoffending guardians after child sexual abuse disclosure. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 19, 185–211. doi:10.1177/0886260503260324
- Bollnow, O. (1967). Lived space. In N. Lawrence, & D. O'Connor (Eds.), *Readings in existential phenomenology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Campbell, R., Dworkin, E., & Cabral, G. (2009). An ecological model of the impact of sexual assault on women's mental health. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 10, 225–246. doi:10.1177/1524838009334456
- Caprioli, S., & Crenshaw, D. A. (2015). The culture of silencing child victims of sexual abuse: Implications for child witnesses in court. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 190–209.
- Cialdini, R. B., Kallgren, C. A., & Reno, R. R. (1991). A focus theory of normative conduct: A theoretical refinement and reevaluation of the role of norms in human behavior. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 24, 201–234.
- Cialdini, R. B., & Trost, M. R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity, and compliance. In D. T. Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (Vol. 2, 4th ed., pp. 151–192). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- Collin-Vézina, D., De La Sablonnière-Griffin, M., Palmer, A. M., & Milne, L. (2015). A preliminary mapping of individual, relational, and social factors that impede disclosure of childhood sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 43, 123–134. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2015.03.010
- Craven, S., Brown, S., & Gilchrist, E. (2006). Sexual grooming of children: Review of literature and theoretical considerations. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, 12(3), 287–299. doi:10.1080/13552600601069414
- Crisma, M., Bascelli, E., Paci, D., & Romito, P. (2004). Adolescents who experienced sexual abuse: Fears, needs and impediments to disclosure. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28(10), 1035–1048. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2004.03.015
- Denov, M. (2003). The myth of innocence: Sexual scripts and the recognition of child sexual abuse by female perpetrators. *Journal of Sex Research*, 40(3), 303–314. doi:10.1080/00224490309552195
- Doherty, W. J., & Colangelo, N. (1984). The family FIRO model: A modest proposal for organizing family treatment. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 10(1), 19–29. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.1984.tb00562.x
- Dorahy, M. J., & Clearwater, K. (2012). Shame and guilt in men exposed to childhood sexual abuse: A qualitative investigation. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21(2), 155–175. doi:10.1080/10538712.2012.659803
- Draucker, C., & Martsolf, D. (2008). Storying childhood sexual abuse. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(8), 1034–1048. doi:10.1177/1049732308319925
- Easton, S., Saltzman, L., & Willis, D. (2014). “Would you tell under circumstances like that?": Barriers to disclosure of child sexual abuse for men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 15(4), 460–469. doi:10.1037/a0034223
- Ford, L., Ray, E., & Ellis, B. (1999). Translating scholarship on intrafamilial sexual abuse: The utility of a dialectical perspective for adult survivors. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 27(2), 139–157. doi:10.1080/00909889909365531

- Foster, J. M., & Hagedorn, W. B. (2014). Through the eyes of the wounded: A narrative analysis of children's sexual abuse experiences and recovery process. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 23*(5), 538–557. doi:10.1080/10538712.2014.918072
- Giorgi, A. (2009). *The descriptive phenomenological method in psychology: A modified husserlian approach*. Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press.
- Glover, D. A., Loeb, T. B., Carmona, J. V., Sciolla, A., Zhang, M., Myers, H. F., & Wyatt, G. E. (2010). Childhood sexual abuse severity and disclosure predict posttraumatic stress symptoms and biomarkers in ethnic minority women. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation, 11*(2), 152–173.
- Goodman, G. S., Ghetti, S., Quas, J. A., Edelstein, R. S., Alexander, K. W., Redlich, A. D., Cordon, I. M., & Jones, D. P. (2003). A prospective study of memory for child sexual abuse: New findings relevant to the repressed-memory controversy. *Psychological Science, 14*, 113–118. doi:10.1111/1467-9280.01428
- Goodman-Brown, T. B., Edelstein, R. S., Goodman, G. S., Jones, D. P. H., & Gordon, D. S. (2003). Why children tell: A model of children's disclosure of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 27*, 525–540. doi:10.1016/S0145-2134(03)00037-1
- Hershkowitz, I., Horowitz, D., & Lamb, M. E. (2007). Individual and family variables associated with disclosure and nondisclosure of child abuse in Israel. In M. E. Pile, M. E. Lamb, Y. Orbach, & A.-C. Cederborg (Eds.), *Child sexual abuse: Disclosure, delay and denial* (pp. 65–75). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Hershkowitz, I., Lanes, O., & Lamb, M. (2007). Exploring the disclosure of child sexual abuse with alleged victims and their parents. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 31*(2), 111–123. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2006.09.004
- Husserl, E. (1962). *Ideas: General introduction to phenomenology*. London, UK: Collier Macmillan..
- Husserl, E. (1931). *Ideas: An introduction to pure phenomenology*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Imber-Black, E. (1998). *The secret life of families: How secrets shape relationships and when and how to tell the truth*. London, UK: Thorsons.
- Jensen, T. K., Gulbrandsen, W., Mossige, S., Reichelt, S., & Tjersland, O. A. (2005). Reporting possible sexual abuse: A qualitative study on children's perspectives and the context for disclosure. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 29*(12), 1395–1413. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.07.004
- Kenny, M. C., & Wurtele, S. K. (2012). Preventing childhood sexual abuse: An ecological approach. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 21*(4), 361–367. doi:10.1080/10538712.2012.675567
- Kogan, S. (2004). Disclosing unwanted sexual experiences: Results from a national sample of adolescent women. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 28*(2), 147–165. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2003.09.014
- Leichtentritt, R., & Arad, B. D. (2006). The impact of sexual abuse as portrayed by Israeli social workers through the victim impact statement. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services, 87*(1), 123–132. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.3492
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lyon, T. D., Ahern, E. C., Malloy, L. C., & Quas, J. A. (2010). Children's reasoning about disclosing adult transgressions: Effects of maltreatment, child age, and adult identity. *Child Development, 81*(6), 1714–1728. doi:10.1111/cdev.2010.81.issue-6
- Malloy, L. C., Brubacher, S. P., & Lamb, M. E. (2011). Expected consequences of disclosure revealed in investigative interviews with suspected victims of child sexual abuse. *Applied Developmental Science, 15*(1), 8–19. doi:10.1080/10888691.2011.538616
- Malloy, L. C., & Lyon, T. D. (2006). Caregiver support and child sexual abuse: Why does it matter? *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 15*(4), 97–103. doi:10.1300/J070v15n04\_06
- Maniglio, R. (2011). The role of child sexual abuse in the etiology of suicide and non-suicidal self-injury. *Acta Psychiatrica Scandinavica, 124*(1), 30–41. doi:10.1111/acps.2011.124.issue-1

- Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. E. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide* (Vol. 6). Hove, UK: Psychology Press.
- McElvaney, R. (2015). Disclosure of child sexual abuse: Delays, non-disclosure and partial disclosure. What the research tells us and implications for practice. *Child Abuse Review*, 24(3), 159–169. doi:10.1002/car.v24.3
- McElvaney, R., Greene, S., & Hogan, D. (2012). Containing the secret of child sexual abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27, 1155–1175. doi:10.1177/0886260511424503
- McElvaney, R. A. (2008). How children tell: Containing the secret of child sexual abuse. *Other Resources*, 3.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Oates, K. (2007). Problems and prejudices for the sexually abused child. *Australian Law Journal*, 81(5), 313–319.
- Paine, M. L., & Hansen, D. J. (2002). Factors influencing children to self-disclose sexual abuse. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 22(2), 271–295. doi:10.1016/S0272-7358(01)00091-5
- Priebe, G., & Svedin, C. G. (2008). Child sexual abuse is largely hidden from the adult society: An epidemiological study of adolescents' disclosures. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 32(12), 1095–1108. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.04.001
- Reitsema, A. M., & Grietens, H. (2016). Is anybody listening? The literature on the dialogical process of child sexual abuse disclosure reviewed. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 17(3), 330–340. doi:10.1177/1524838015584368
- Roesler, T. A., & Wind, T. W. (1994). Telling the secret: Adult women describe their disclosures of incest. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 9(3), 327–338. doi:10.1177/088626094009003003
- Schönbucher, V., Maier, T., Mohler-Kuo, M., Schnyder, U., & Landolt, M. A. (2012). Disclosure of child sexual abuse by adolescents: A qualitative in-depth study. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 27(17), 3486–3513. doi:10.1177/0886260512445380
- Schutz, W. C. (1958). *FIRO: A three-dimensional theory of interpersonal behavior*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.
- Smith, L. P. (2011). *The impact of keeping the secret of childhood sexual abuse: A qualitative research study* (unpublished master's thesis). Chester, UK: University of Chester.
- Staller, K. M., & Nelson-Gardell, D. (2005). "A burden in your heart": Lessons of disclosure from female preadolescent and adolescent survivors of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 29(12), 1415–1432. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2005.06.007
- Stronach, E. P., Toth, S. L., Rogosch, F., Oshri, A., Manly, J. T., & Cicchetti, D. (2011). Child maltreatment, attachment security, and internal representations of mother and mother-child relationships. *Child Maltreatment*, 16(2), 137–145. doi:10.1177/1077559511398294
- Tashjian, S. M., Goldfarb, D., Goodman, G. S., Quas, J. A., & Edelstein, R. (2016). Delay in disclosure of non-parental child sexual abuse in the context of emotional and physical maltreatment: A pilot study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 58, 149–159. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.06.020
- Taussig, M. (1999). *Defacement: Public secrecy and the labor of the negative*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Tener, D. (2010). *Between me and them: Forgiving incest?!* (unpublished doctoral dissertation). Haifa, Israel: University of Haifa.
- Tener, D., & Murphy, S. B. (2015). Adult disclosure of child sexual abuse: A literature review. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 16(4). Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/1524838014537906
- Ullman, S. E. (2007). Relationship to perpetrator, disclosure, social reactions, and PTSD symptoms in child sexual abuse survivors. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 16(1), 19–36. doi:10.1300/J070v16n01\_02

- Ullman, S. E. (2011). Is disclosure of sexual traumas helpful? Comparing experimental laboratory versus field study results. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, 20(2), 148–162. doi:[10.1080/10926771.2011.546751](https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2011.546751)
- Ullman, S. E., Townsend, S. M., Filipas, H. H., & Starzynski, L. L. (2007). Structural models of the relations of assault severity, social support, avoidance coping, self-blame, and PTSD among sexual assault survivors. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 31(1), 23–37. doi:[10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00328](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2007.00328)
- Welfare, A. L. (2010). *Sibling sexual abuse: Understanding all family members' experiences in the aftermath of disclosure* (Doctoral dissertation). Melbourne, Australia: La Trobe University.
- Yancey, C. T., & Hansen, D. J. (2010). Relationship of personal, familial, and abuse-specific factors with outcome following childhood sexual abuse. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 15(6), 410–421. doi:[10.1016/j.avb.2010.07.003](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2010.07.003)
- Zeligman, T., & Solomon, R. (2004). *Introduction to incest: "There is no truth and no mercy and no pity."* Tel Aviv, Israel: Tel Aviv University Press (Hebrew).
- Zerubavel, E. (2006). *The elephant in the room: Silence and denial in everyday life*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Zinzow, H., Seth, P., Jackson, J., Niehaus, A., & Fitzgerald, M. (2010). Abuse and parental characteristics, attributions of blame, and psychological adjustment in adult survivors of child sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 19(1), 79–98. doi:[10.1080/10538710903485989](https://doi.org/10.1080/10538710903485989)