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Intrafamilial Child Abuse in a Probation Setting

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Between 1989 and 1991, an innovative and experimental form of treatment for 'incest' offenders was carried out. Criminally persecuted suspects of violating the Dutch penal laws considering sex with a minor in a familial setting, when found guilty and certain conditions were met, were given the choice between being essentially free and entering the treatment programme and going to prison. The court followed the progress of the treatment. Over two years time this involved a representative sample of 68 subjects, of whom 37 entered the programme. Seven dropped out of the programme. A wealth of information has been gathered around these subjects, involving societal background and functioning, criminal records, psychiatric and psycho diagnostic evaluations, specifics about victims, (number involved, age and sex and length of period in which sexual abuse occurred) analysis of the sexual deeds they were accused of, (in nature and in frequency) detailed evaluations of treatment goals, homework and progress. A follow up consisted of:

1. for those who completed the programme: an evaluation of treatment goals and psychosocial functioning, 18 months after finishing;
2. general recidivism rates for conditions of treatment, drop out and no treatment, 14 years after the index case.

Results: over 14 years, there is no indication of positive change in general recidivism rate for the treatment condition. The group as a whole, despite their age at follow up, (mid fifty) shows a consistent involvement with the penal system. From the evaluation of the treatment programme, though not being carried out under optimal circumstances, appear difficulties that are consistent with the type of structural pathology that is being encountered. From this, it can be hypothesized that the group as a whole is chronically very vulnerable for outside disturbances in social and societal functioning and that these should be a long term focus for treatment programs.