

The Reproduction of Gender Privilege in the Popular Construction of Sibling Sexual Abuse

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Reports of sexual abuse perpetrated by one member of the well-known Duggar family in 2015 against four of his sisters and another female non-relative might have damaged that American family's popular television empire. Legitimizing rhetorics by two of the sisters and the Duggar parents during interviews saved the day. This paper reports on a critical discourse analysis of their public statements as well as statements made by their families during interviews with news reporters. Various justifications and absences are examined to uncover the deep ideology of patriarchal privilege. Analysis of the discourse is set against that of gender in contemporary Western society. Through the analysis of these discourses, this paper seeks to illuminate the ways in which the Duggar family's powerful position of hyper-visibility through media coupled with their reactions to the incestuous abuse underscores the popular myth that sibling sexual abuse is benign, and reinforces the gender hierarchy prevalent in varying degrees in American culture.