

Incest taboo: who you are and where you are essay



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Incest Taboo: Who You Are and Where You Are Incest Taboo: Forbiddance of sexual relationship between certain relatives. In the majority of cultures an incest taboo is placed in order to dictate whom a person can and cannot have sexual relations with or marry. There is no distinct boundary for all of the incest taboos, which our planet holds, although some are very similar. In different cultures the taboo restricts particular individuals from others for many distinct explanations.

The taboo is a cultural universal that many children are brought up by, but each individual culture tweaks the restrictions in order to make it pertain to them, their customs, and beliefs. The cross-cultural universal of an incest taboo is apparent in all cultures but the limits within the taboo vary and alter depending on where you are geographically located. A budding relationship between a brother and sister is unheard of to us, but in fact is quite the common practice for some.

There are many different cultures that at some point or another would allow, and often preferred marriage between siblings, and sometimes this only applied to royalty. Sinhalese kings used to typically marry their sisters, but only if they're trying to have a child and keep the royal bloodline flowing. In any other case, "tis held abominable, and severely punished." (C. Ember, M. Ember, and Pasternak 105104). Although sometimes the children were not blood siblings, but they were raised together like so.

Margaret Mead explains that in New Guinea and Taiwan (until the mid-twentieth century) young girls are raised in the home of their future husband

as if to be a sister: “ An Arapesh boy grows his wife. As a father’s claim to his child is not that he has begotten it but rather that he has bed it, so also a man’s claim to his wife’s attention and devotion is not that he has paid a bride-price for her, or that she is legally his property, but that he has actually contributed the food which has become flesh and bone of her body.

A little girl is betrothed when she is seven or eight to a boy about six years her senior, and she goes to live in the home of her future husband. Here the father-in-law, the husband, and all of his brothers combine to grow the little bride” (qtd. in C. Ember, M. Ember, and Pasternak 105). In ancient Egypt children of royalty were dismissed when it came to the taboo against sibling sex, therefor able to do whatever they pleased. In Egypt during the Roman period commoners would often marry their siblings (C. Ember, M. Ember, and Pasternak).

People of Korea in the 1950s extended their opposition towards incest so that those with the same clan name could not engage in sexual relations or marry (C. Ember, M. Ember, and Pasternak 127). However South Korea is now stopping the ban on same-name marriages in order to increase eligible mates by up to 25 percent. In some cultures certain members of tribes are only allowed to have sexual relation with or marry people from other, very particular, tribes. Example: in Cunow (1894) “ An Urgilla can marry only an Obur; the children are Wungo.

An Unburri can marry only a Wungo; the children are Obur. An Obur can only marry an Urgilla; the children are Unburri. A Wungo can marry only an Unburri; the children are Urgilla” (Durkheim31). Although all these are

similar situations dealing with the incest taboo, they are not a part of the norm. The most common form of the incest taboo that you will find culture-to-culture is one restricting sexual contact or marriage between members of the nuclear family. The incest taboo has even been extending out to restriction against cousinly courtship. C. Ember, M.

Ember, and Pasternak explain, when discussing the incest taboo overall, that, “ most striking was the fact that sex (meaning sexual intercourse) is almost everywhere forbidden between blood relatives of opposite sex within the nuclear family” (104). The nuclear family is defined as parent and child, or brother and sister. Incest seems to typically be discouraged or prohibited in order to bring multiple families or cultures together. If you have a tribe who only marries inside their own tribe they will not spread and grow as a culture and they would slowly depreciate.

These regulations help blend communities and keep the peace between diverse cultures. Some argue that the extension of incest taboo to include cousins depletes the relevance of frowning upon incestuous practices due to mutilations of the biological form. Incest breeding tends to cause genetic mutilation to the child and could bring harm to the parents as well. Thus slowly depleting the human race. The closer the inbreeding the worse it will be. When dealing with recessive genes they are to be few and far between. If you have many recessive genes so concentrated then they will be too apparent, resulting in the worst of birth defects, ven going as far as an early and sudden death. It has even been said that outbreeding may even have positive effects; it “ increases potentially adaptive variations in the gene pool” (C. Ember, M. Ember, and Pasternak 118). Outbreeding helps for <https://assignbuster.com/incest-taboo-who-you-are-and-where-you-are-essay/>

people to find what is referred to as their soul-mate and find someone who is compatible to them, so they will have a good life together and easy living: “ All societies have rules excluding some potential mates and favoring others. In our own society, we consider some people too “ closely related” to have sex with and we eliminate them as possible marriage partners.

Other people may be too old or too young to marry, or perhaps of the wrong family background. Many of us believe it is a good idea to marry people like ourselves—of the same religion, race, ethnic background, level of education—or at least people with similar attitudes, interests, and opinions” (C. Ember, M. Ember, and Pasternak 103) Incest is clearly nothing new; in fact it was more acceptable and heard of ages ago. Frazer explains that primitive people had a very strong attraction towards incest (Ellis 123). Most vertebrate animals avoid sex within the family, even if there are no rules stated against it.

Jane Goodall observed, long-term, chimps at Gombe National Park; there were only three cases of chimps crossing the lines of incest and two out of the three were protested strongly by the female participant, who was, in these particular studies, the mother. A son partaking in sexual intercourse with his mother would be what we call a maternal link, since it is on the mother’s side. Ancestry that is on the father’s side is called paternal, and inside some incest taboos the rules may be broken if it is with a paternal family member. There are numerous studies depicting this from a Chinese culture.

In the early twentieth century a woman could wed her father's sister's son; but nay marriage between any other cousins was unheard of. There are similar regulations in the Middle East, like in Arab Bedouin and Kurds. Similar to the Chinese culture these people trace their ancestry in a patrilineal way. Here too a marriage with the father's brother's son is allowed and often sought, but relation with any other cousin is punishable. In Jamaica the Akan women are allowed to marry their paternal aunt's son, but not maternal, even though both are just as equally first cousins.

I was able to find one example, where the people in the culture could marry from the maternal side. The people of Osset and Sema were also allowed to wed their sister's son (Durkheim). There are many different views on the laws of incestuous taboo and each individual culture has it's own rhyme or reason for the fine print of their incest regulations for their very own purposes. There is some reason to believe that incest all begins in a child's mind and as they mature they have this everlasting attraction to their family, most commonly their mothers.

Sigmund Freud believed that incestuous nature began with the Oedipus complex: a child being attracted to the mother and having strong feelings of hatred towards the father. The child feels very close to the mother after being in the womb and being breastfed and some may grow what we deem 'too fond' and begin experiencing feelings of attraction. Feeling attracted to the mother results in harmful feelings towards the father, the mother's sexual partner, and so begins jealousy and incestuous habits (Durkheim).

Bronislaw Malinowski was very intrigued by incest and justifies that “ there is not the slightest doubt that exogamy is correlated with the prohibition of incest, that it is merely an extension of this taboo” (Ellis 124). Bronislaw states that outbreeding is a side effect from the incest taboo that in trade helps humans and cultures grow and flourish. The cross-cultural universal of an incest taboo is apparent in all cultures but the limits within the taboo vary and alter depending on where you are geographically located.

Without guidelines dealing with incest there would be an abundance of inbreeding, resulting in many disfigurements to the child’s physique and mind. C. Ember, M. Ember, and Pasternak have all rationalized to us that in tribal communities if it wasn’t for the incest taboo the tribes would strive to either marry each other out, or kill each other out, in order to protect themselves and their tribe members. Disobedience pertaining to the incest taboo is not taken lightly, for example the Ashanti tribe of Western Africa puts any offender of the incest taboo immediately to death.

Ashanti phrase mogyadie is translates to “ eating up one’s own blood” signifying those whom have sex inside their bloodline or clan (C. Ember, M. Ember, and Pasternak). Over all these regulations are modestly put to help the human race strive, both mentally and physically without interference of war, birth defects, and having to worry about marrying someone who in your eyes is your brother. These rules and protocols are set in place, like most, to keep everyone out of harms way however they can and are very important to preserving the safety of the human body.