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**COVER:** Working from photos taken by the two Voyager spacecraft, cartographers have recently completed maps of the diverse surfaces of Jupiter's Galilean satellites. Shown is the south polar region of the spectacular, volcanically active moon Io (with unphotographed areas left blank). The maps of Europa, Ganymede and Callisto will appear in upcoming issues. For the rest of Io, see p. 251. (Map: U.S. Geological Survey Branch of Astrogeologic Studies)

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# LETTERS

**All in the family**

There is an extensive literature dealing with incest/inbreeding which Joel Greenberg's correspondents (SN: 4/5/80, p. 218) must not have called to his attention.

1. Kinsey found incest "occurs more frequently in the thinking of clinicians and social workers than it does in actual performance... The most frequent incestuous contacts are between pre-adolescent children... [The incidence] among adolescent or other males is very small."

2. Evidence that incest produces an unusually high ratio of defective offspring is both abundant and unequivocal.

3. Inbreeding avoidance is common at all phylogenetic levels. I suspect that of all sexual strategies only sexual reproduction itself is more systematically selected for in the evolutionary process.

4. Primates very rarely mate with their mothers or siblings. Jane Goodall's Fifi exhibited marked consternation when her brothers mated with her and was never again observed mating with them although her enthusiasm with other mates was so marked that Goodall called her a nymphomaniac. Female chimps which have been reared in human families behave seductively with male guests but not with members of their own adoptive families.

5. Long ago Spiro observed widespread sex behavior in the Kibbutzim among pre-adolescents which terminated when the girls reached adolescence. Shepher demonstrated that those who grew up together in a Kibbutz did not find each other sexually attractive in adolescence or adulthood. Wolf found evidence that childhood association produced sexually unsatisfactory marriages in Asia.

6. Folk wisdom has long recognized that nuclear family members are not sexually attracted to one another. More than one disappointed male has summarized his date with, "It was just like kissing my sister."

7. Step-relatives or siblings who were not together during the early childhood of one of the pair certainly may find each other sexually exciting. Step-fathers, and I suspect step-mothers as well, are much more frequently involved in "incest" than are true nuclear family members. Since Oedipus was abandoned in infancy even the myth fits the facts!

In the rare instances when incest occurs in an intact family there is almost always evidence of other and marked psychopathology. There are so many pressing issues that one can only hope we do not dissipate our energies in the resolution of a largely imaginary problem.

Ray H. Bixler  
Louisville, Ky.

I deeply resent Brian Stabler's statement that incest is almost a way of life in western North Carolina. I don't know the man in question, but if he is typical of other "flatlanders," he has made one pass through the mountains with the hope of saving all the hillbillies from their collective ignorance and found naught but stereotypes to please his psychological lusts.

If you must defame any ethnic group in your articles, won't you at least print the basis of the reasoning or give equal time to the opposite viewpoint? In my experience, I've never known anyone involved in an incestuous relationship, but I can also assume that us "hillbillies" fall somewhere within the national norm for most categories — after all, we do have TV, running water, and some other modern conveniences.

Bob Harrison  
Franklin, N.C.

The various parties researching the harmful effects of incest seem to be missing a key point. In every case mentioned they appear to be talking of child (or teenage?) abuse. I do not have any studies to back me up, but I wouldn't be surprised if children sexually abused by relatives were (statistically, at least) no different than those sexually abused by strangers or acquaintances. Ditto for children compared by sexually abused vs. non-sexually abused. In either case, it is essentially child abuse, except that with incest there are the social consequences beyond the physical ones.

What, however, are the effects of consenting incest, not necessarily between adults? Teenagers — 14 or 15, say — for example, or even precocious children. I am specifically minded of the recent incest case in Massachusetts. A natural brother and sister, separated and given to adoptive parents in infancy, they met in their early twenties and eventually married, knowing who they were and what they were doing. One of the adoptive parents complained and criminal proceedings started on the charge of incest, which is a criminal offense in Mass. It boiled down to a charge of breaking a specific marriage law, to which they pleaded guilty, and the moral and philosophical issues were neatly sidestepped, apparently to everyone's relief, judging from the total lack of discussion that followed the case. The only harm either of the "victims" seemed to suffer was the hassle from uptight courts and parents, some social ostracism, and the nuisance of court-ordered psychiatric counseling, which they seemed to need a lot less than most of those hassling them!

K.A. Boriskin  
Framingham, Mass.

Is SCIENCE NEWS going X-rated? I note something different: a nude figure on the cover. I like nude pictures *inside* a magazine, but not on the cover, please, where postmasters and mail carriers can see them and gossip about it.

Robert D. Smith  
Swisher, Iowa

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