

Hans-Werner Gessmann

Frotteuristic Disorder

Frotteurism/frotteuristic disorder seems to be a fairly rare paraphilia/paraphilic disorder, as attested not only by its relatively low, but mainly by the lack of data about it in the literature. Interestingly, the DSM-III did not include frotteurism among its 8 paraphilias listed with diagnostic criteria. Frotteurism first appeared in the DSM-III-R, basically replacing zoophilia in the list of paraphilias with DSM diagnostic criteria. Frotteuristic disorder is included in DSM-5.

The use and meaning of the word frotteurism in sexual terms originated with a French psychiatrist Valentin Magnan in 1890. He described men committing an act of what he called frottage—rubbing an exposed penis against the buttocks of unsuspecting women. The word frottage comes from the French “frotter,” which means to rub or to put pressure on someone, and has no sexual connotation. Frotteur means the “one who rubs.” The word was incorporated into sexology terminology and popularized by Richard von Kraft-Ebbing in his seminal book. A frotteuristic act in contemporary thinking means deriving intense sexual arousal from touching or rubbing, usually one’s genitals (penis) or pelvic area against a non-consenting person. ^[1]

The professional handbook of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition, lists the following diagnostic criteria for frotteuristic disorder.

- Recurrent and intense sexual excitement from touching or rubbing against a non-consenting person, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors, over a period of at least 6 months.
- The person has acted with a non-consenting person on these sexual urges, or the sexual urges or fantasies cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other significant areas of functioning. ^[2]

The diagnostic criteria are fairly nonspecific about what touching and rubbing exactly means. Over the years, there has been some disagreement about whether frotteurism has to really include rubbing genitals against an unsuspecting person. Some have argued that frotteurism does not need to include the perpetrator’s genitals and that the act of frotteurism should also include sexual urges to touch and acts of touching. Thus the recent view includes both rubbing and touching as part of a frotteuristic act. Others also argued that toucherism—sexual arousal derived from touching, grabbing, or rubbing one’s hand against an unsuspecting person’s areas such as crotch and breasts— should be included. The DSM-III-R specifies that its category of frotteurism includes both frotteurism and toucherism. A bit vague DSM-5 terminology basically implies the same. ^[1]

The individuals typically chose a place with a large selection of victims (e.g., subway, sports event, elevator, shopping mall). The initial rubbing of the woman may not be noticed immediately in such a setting; the victim does not usually protest because she is not absolutely sure what has happened. Most people who engage in frottage usually fantasize during the moment of contact that they have an

exclusive and caring relationship with their victims. Once contact is made and broken, however, the individual engaged in frotteurism realizes that to avoid apprehension, escape is essential. ^[3]

Popular media have reported that frotteurism is “widespread” in some countries, e.g., India and Japan. Reportedly, in Japan there are some trains and buses with women-only spaces to decrease the opportunity for men to perpetrate the act of frotteurism. There is a special Japanese term—chikan—for public molestation, or for the person who commits such an act, e.g., groping on crowded trains. ^[1]

References

- Richard Balon. Practical Guide to Paraphilia and Paraphilic Disorders, DOI- 10.1007/978-3-319-42650-1
- Wikipedia contributors. (2020, June 7). Frotteurism. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 14:53, September 17, 2020, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Frotteurism&oldid=961314552>
- First MB, Skodol AE, Williams JBW, Spitzer RL: Learning DSM-5 by Case Example. Arlington, VA, American Psychiatric Association Publishing, 2017