

Relational Patterns Associated With Sexual Sadism: A Study of 20 Wives and Girlfriends

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This study is derived from in-depth interviews with 20 wives or girlfriends of sexually sadistic males. The study was designed to explore the sexual preferences of sexually sadistic males in terms of their consensual sexual relationships and to examine the dynamics by which they introduce their partners into extreme and, at times, murderous forms of behavior. Previous research has demonstrated that although sexually sadistic criminals are often forthcoming about their criminal and murderous behavior, they become misleading and vague when describing the sexual fantasy and pattern of arousal that underlie these activities. The search for secondary sources of information, such as diaries, manuscripts, videos, and photographs, that might further illustrate these preferences and fantasies resulted in the interviews summarized in this paper. These women report early life experiences that were characterized by physical abuse and incestuous relationships within their families. However, they attained relatively stable and normal lifestyles before meeting and becoming involved with a sexually sadistic male. Once immersed in a relationship with these sadistic men, the lives of these women changed radically and, in some instances, they voluntarily entered into dangerous forms of sexuality and criminal behavior. In describing these experiences, the authors highlight the relational context of these behaviors in which the sadistic fantasy of the male becomes an organizing principal in the behavior of the woman. They also emphasize the importance of forensic evaluator and law enforcement pursuing this type of information when attempting to describe and understand the criminal behavior of a sexually sadistic offender.

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Jeff and his wife Carol drove into a shopping center and parked their van. Carol was 22 years old, but appeared much younger and was dressed as a teenager. She was to be the bait for Jeff's choice of victim, a young woman who would be kidnapped for use as part of his ritualistic sexually sadistic activities.

The couple entered the mall and walked until the man found a female teenager he liked. He pointed to a 14-year-old girl and told his wife "I want her." He then pointed to two other young girls and said "If you can't get the first one, try to get one of those." He returned to the van which was equipped with a bed, binding materials, a variety of sexual objects, gloves, and a shovel.

The woman approached one of the girls and began a conversation. The targeted girl asked what Carol was doing at the mall and was told that she was making \$100 passing out flyers for her uncle. A few minutes later she asked if the girl wanted to earn money handing out flyers. The young girl agreed and, leaving the mall, she became one of the couples' multiple murder victims.

The perpetrator in this series of murders was a sexual sadist who was aroused by the control and domination of another and who enacted these urges in the most brutal forms of violent criminality. A part of his mechanism for obtaining victims involved the use of an accomplice, his girlfriend, wife, and eventual codefendant. The purpose of this paper is to explore the dynamics that lead to this and other women becoming involved in brutal forms of abuse and criminality and to explore descriptively the characteristics of this particular type of intimate relationship, one in which the sexual fantasies of the man become a part of the voluntary and "compliant" behavior of the woman.

The fantasy of the sexual sadist involves a variety of verbal, physical, and sexual behaviors involving the domination, control, and suffering of partners. Such fantasized behaviors may include the scripting of a partner to verbally demean or degrade herself, inflicting physical pain through the use of implements or devices, and forcing the partner to engage in sexual acts alien to her experience. These behaviors are designed to establish, in the most violent instances of behavior, the sense of having ultimate control over the life, and death, of another. The enactment of these types of fantasies occur along a continuum of intrusiveness and can involve procurement of complete strangers and, in some instances, the domination of a person who is compliant in such behaviors.

The motivation for the women in this study to be compliant in the victimization of themselves and others appears to be complex and diverse. Although all express some willingness to exchange their compliance in return for the attention and affection of the sadistic male, there also appears to be a more subtle dynamic operative in which some of the women become assimilated into the sexual aggression of their partner. The vehicle the men used to initially introduce the women to such aberrant acts ranged from the women being deeply in love with the man to being fearful for their lives or the lives of their children, or both. Other motivations included a sense of

isolation from all but the sadistic male, a sense of dependency on him, and, in some of the more extreme cases, a sense of exhilaration in sharing behavior that is extreme and outside all definitions of normalcy.

The authors have chosen to describe the 20 women in this study as "compliant victims." Our use of the term "compliant victims" is designed to reflect the acquiescent nature of these women's cooperation in their own and others' victimization. It is not intended to excuse the women's criminal behavior in those instances in which the women became accomplices to sexually violent crime. Rather, our intent in offering this descriptive overview is to identify a relational dynamic that we encountered in our earlier study of sexually sadistic males (Dietz *et al.*, 1990; Warren *et al.*, 1996) and which we briefly introduced in an earlier paper (Hazelwood *et al.*, 1993). It is our impression that this relational dynamic ensues with some of the most brutal forms of sexual violence and entails the transformation of a women's sense of self and of her behavior in response to intimate contact with the fantasies and the overtly expressed desires of a sadistic male. It is our premise that these women became involved in this type of behavior subsequent to the establishment of intimacy, and that their response to this paraphilic interest in the man lies at the core of gradual assimilation of behavior that integrates the sadist's sexual desires into their own behavior. It is the erosion of self-preserving and law-abiding boundaries that lies at the heart of this descriptive effort.

METHODOLOGY

Each of the 20 women in this study was interviewed by one of the authors. These women were identified either through the earlier study that examined sexually sadistic male murderers (Warren *et al.*, 1996) or through the speaking engagements and presentations of the authors to both law enforcement and mental health audiences. Women were scheduled for interviews if it was ascertained that they had been the voluntary partner of a sexually sadistic male in a manner that knowingly involved them in his paraphilic behavior. The interviews ranged in time from $4\frac{1}{2}$ –15 hr and were conducted in both Canada and the United States. The decision to interview these women emanated from the earlier study of sexually sadistic criminals and murderers. It was observed by the authors that although the men were willing to describe the most brutal of their behaviors, they were reticent and, at times, misleading in acknowledging the highly erotic and arousing basis of their behavior. The pleasure they obtained from their sexually sadistic behavior constituted the "secret" that often had to be surmised from secondary sources that included manuscripts, videos, photographs, and sexual

paraphernalia. Although victimization and murder was not taboo to these men, the arousal and pleasure they obtained from it appeared to be the hidden part of their experience that could not be articulated.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

The women were interviewed extensively about their families of origin and their early developmental experiences. Seventeen or 85% of the women were raised in an intact family. The majority of these women, however, were subject to fairly extensive abuse as children. Seven or 35% of these women reported that the discipline within the family was abusive; 9 or 45% reported being sexually abused on a continuous basis, ranging from 1 to 36 months; and 6 or 30% reported being physically abused by their father from the ages of 4 to 8. The youngest age at which the sexual abuse began was 1 and the oldest 11. The sexual abusers included fathers, brothers, a grandmother, an aunt, a sister, and other acquaintances. It is of note that none of the sexual abuse experienced by this sample was committed by strangers.

Eleven or 55% of the women reported having sexual experience as an adult prior to meeting the sadistic male and two of those eleven advised that they were highly promiscuous. Eight or 45% of the women had been married prior to meeting the men, and 4 (20%) of them reported having children from those unions. Twelve (60%) of the women had not been married and five (25%) of the women reported that they had no previous sexual experience prior to their relationship with the sadist. Even though these women were the recipients of extreme and violent sexual acts, only one advised that she had any type of sadomasochistic experience prior to meeting the sadistic partner.

These numbers suggest early experiences that are characterized by abuse, incest, and sexual exploitation. As noted above, the perverse nature of these experiences often occurred within the context of the family unit. It is our impression that the patterns for intimacy and sexual relatedness that eventually emerged for these women were potentiated by these early experiences that contained themes of aggression and exploitation. However, the consensual or compliant involvement of these women in a second generation of abuse found expression only in the intimacy that they established with the sadistic male.

MENTAL HEALTH, EDUCATIONAL, AND CRIMINAL HISTORY

As summarized in Table I, two of the woman reported using drugs, four (20%) reported abusing alcohol, and three reported having attempted suicide at least once in the past. Four (20%) women reported having had

contact with mental health professionals prior to meeting their sadistic partner and an additional four of the woman reported suffering from some type of chronic physical illness.

The educational level of the women ranged from 11 to 18 years and their level of employment varied from none (2 or 20%), unskilled (8 or 40%), and skilled (6 or 30%) to professional (4 or 20%). For example, one woman worked as an insurance broker, another as a fire system engineer, and others as teachers, bank loan officers, and owners of small businesses. Five of the women were students at the time of meeting the men.

These characteristics suggest that the woman were living rather conventional, stable, and noncriminal lives before the initiation of the relationships that culminated in rather radical changes in their behavior. The types of employment reported further suggest that these woman were not economically vulnerable, and that the trajectories of their lives might well

Table I. Criminal, Health, and Educational History of 20 Compliant Victims

Variable	Accomplice to murder	Murder/no involvement	Noncriminal
Arrest prior to meeting sadist			
Yes	1 (5%)	0 (0%)	1 (5%)
No	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	12 (60%)
Drug abuse prior to meeting sadist			
Yes	0	0	2 (10%)
No	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	11 (55%)
Alcohol abuse prior to meeting sadist			
Yes	0	1 (5%)	3 (15%)
No	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	9 (45%)
Mental health contact prior to meeting sadist			
Yes	0	1 (5%)	3 (15%)
No	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	9 (45%)
Suicide attempt prior to meeting sadist			
Yes	0 (0%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
No	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	11 (55%)
Chronic illness prior to meeting sadist			
Yes	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	1 (5%)
No	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	11 (55%)
Educational level			
Some high school	2 (10%)	0	3 (15%)
High school graduate	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)
Some college	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	5 (25%)
College graduate	0	0	1 (5%)
Other	0	0	1 (5%)
Work experience			
None	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)
Unskilled	0	2 (10%)	6 (30%)
Skilled	3 (15%)	0	3 (15%)
Professional	0	1	3 (15%)

have been different had they not become engaged with these particular men.

Of significant interest is that of the 20 women in the study, 17 had no arrest history prior to meeting their sadistic mates, and the remaining three had been arrested for misdemeanor offenses. One stole a tube of lipstick when she was 14 years old; one stole a typewriter from her place of employment when she was 19, and a third woman stole a check from her place of work at 18 years of age.

Although seven of the men associated with these women murdered at least 19 victims and four of the women assisted in some of those murders, only five women were charged with crimes against persons. One of the women, "Marcia," was given probation in return for her testimony against her husband. Another woman, who had not assisted her husband in any crime, was arrested for being a coconspirator in *his* murder. He had physically and sexually abused her over the years of their marriage and had paid a man to commit "stranger" rape against her on two occasions. She confided in a female friend and that woman told her that she had associates who would beat the husband and warn him against further harming his wife. She agreed and the men not only beat him, but also set him on fire; he died from those injuries. The remaining three women received reduced sentences in return for testimony against the men. A number of the women were also involved in offenses with the sadistic males, but were not charged with those offenses by the authorities. The offenses in which they participated, but were not charged, included possession of an illegal substance, smuggling, theft, and accessory to incest. Since being separated from the men, two have been arrested for felony offenses and two for misdemeanor offenses.

Of interest is how the four women who were present when their husbands killed, came to be involved in a first murder. "Susan" had been married to her husband for over a year when the murder of a young teenager was carried out by her husband. She met and married her husband when she was in her early teens and her husband had been subjecting her to physically violent sexual abuse since before her marriage. Susan very much wanted to have a child and he told her that he would allow her to have a child if he could have a sexual slave. She agreed and they abducted a young girl and took her back to their residence. As Susan remained on her couch, her husband took the victim to his basement where he tortured and raped the girl. Susan advised that while this was occurring, she could feel herself "floating" above herself, looking down at herself, thinking that she should do something about what was happening in the basement but finding herself unable to move. Her husband subsequently decided to mute his victim by cutting her vocal cords and took her into the bathroom where he cut into her throat, causing the victim to die from external bleeding. The husband

forced Susan to accompany him when he buried the victim. Following the burial, Susan recalled sitting on a fallen tree thinking that he was going to kill her. She described him coming up behind her and standing still for several minutes before he stepped in front of her and said "let's go."

Another of the women, "Wendy," had been deeply in love with a sadistic male for a number of years and even remained "true" to him as he involved himself with a series of other women. He became engaged to a woman named "Carla," but continued to see Wendy "on the side." Eventually, Carla decided to end the relationship because of his sadistic behavior. He asked for one last date. He solicited Wendy's help in giving his girlfriend a "sex-therapy" lesson at Wendy's home and she consented. On the night of the murder, the man brought Carla to Wendy's home and advised her that she was going to have a sex therapy lesson and that if she did not agree, she would die. Over the next several hours, the man photographed Carla in a variety of poses and then sent Wendy to the bathroom to get a wet washcloth to wipe Carla's tear-stained face. When she returned, Carla was dead but there were no wounds or blood. She asked him how the victim had died. He told her that all she needed to know was that she was dead. And, if she did not assist him in burying the body, they would be discovered, she would be charged with conspiracy to murder, and they would both go to prison for the rest of their lives.

"Francis" was a woman who had met an attractive and professionally successful sadistic male when she was 17 years old. They were about to be married when he convinced her to participate in the rape of another girl to whom he was very attracted. The man had introduced Francis to sadistic behaviors very early in their relationship and gradually had her play the role of this other woman to whom he was attracted. During the sexual assault of the woman, she died and the man convinced Francis that it was in their best interests to redress the deceased woman and call the authorities, claiming that they had been drinking extensively. The woman was buried as an accidental death due to alcohol overdose. It was only after their involvement in the murder of two other women became known to the police that the true cause of the woman's death was ascertained. Francis cooperated with the police and testified against her husband.

"Teresa" was very attracted to her husband during the courtship even though she recognized that he had a "dark side." After their marriage, he was initially a very loving person who was apparently "devoted" to making her happy. However, he was also beginning to involve her in a progressively abusive sexual relationship which she was willing to endure in return for his "love." He was excessively demanding sexually and they would engage in sex several times a day. He told her that he was oversexed and he eventually convinced her that he "needed" more sexually than she could provide. He

convinced her to assist him in abducting a young woman whom he sexually assaulted and then took from the car into nearby woods. She reported that she was not aware that he was going to kill the woman until he returned to the car alone. He then told Teresa that she was now an accessory to murder and that if he was caught, so was she. This couple went on to kill in excess of five individuals over a matter of months. This particular woman also cooperated and testified against her husband.

In each of these cases, the women reported not being explicitly aware of the man's intent to kill the first victim. It is not possible to determine if these explanations are self-serving and constructed as part of an exculpatory stance, reflections of a defensive posture that emanates from a personal sense of guilt for having allowed these events to occur in their presence or near presence, or the actual description of their surprise at the actual intent of their partner and husbands. It seems possible, however, that they did not understand that the sexual assaults were going to lead to murder and that they were, in fact, influenced in three of the four instances by the threats of their partners to include them as conspirators in the crime. This type of explanation does not, however, adequately encompass the obvious willingness of the women to participate in the sexual assault of another woman and to participate in behaviors that were physically and emotionally tortuous to them. As such, it would require distinguishing for them between a willingness to participate in rape and assault, but not murder.

DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE SADIST

The age of the women at the time of meeting the men ranged from 14 to 37 years and the context of the first meeting included school, work, through a friend or relative, or at a social gathering. The male initiated the contact in all but one of the cases. The women reported the male as being shy in only one case, friendly and outgoing in 13 (65%) of the cases, and nonsexually aggressive in 2 (20%) of the cases.

Case One

A fourteen-year-old girl, Sara, met a nineteen-year-old young man, Mike, at an ice-skating rink. At the time of their meeting, Sara had never dated and had never been kissed. That evening, Mike asked her on a date but she indicated to him that her parents were very strict and that they would never allow her to spend time with him alone. Mike subsequently urged her to let him meet her parents and, upon doing so, proved so engaging that they suggested that he take their daughter to a local scenic attraction while they remained at home.

Within a month, this couple was engaging in sexual activities, and within six months, Mike had begun to tie Sara to a winch on the back of his truck and lift her for whipping and penetration. Approximately a year later, they were married. Their sexual activity continued to center around sexually sadistic behavior including whipping, burning, and bondage.

When Sara and the other 19 women were asked why they became involved in these sadistic relationships, 15 (75%) attributed it to love and a subsequent desire to please the man, 2 described themselves as being extremely naive, 2 indicated that they wanted to get away from home, and one could not explain her behavior.

In the initial phase of the relationship, the majority of the women reported that the men were gentle and caring (17 or 85%). While they were dating, they were given unexpected gifts (13 or 65%), taken on trips (8 or 40%), and had a great deal of money spent on them (85%). In some instances, this type of courtship behavior continued unabated for months and even years.

Case Two

A popular, out-going cheerleader, Laura, met a young man, Tom, while a senior in high-school. She initially thought him rather uninteresting and unattractive. However, he lavished her with expensive gifts and conveyed to her a sense of unwavering devotion. In response to this behavior, Laura eventually agreed to go out on a date with Tom and began a relationship that continued for 48 months and culminated in marriage. For the first 42 months of their courtship, Tom was polite and mannerly and did not use drugs or alcohol. When they began to be sexually active, they engaged only in vaginal sex. One night, Tom became intoxicated and held her down while vaginally raping her. Because this behavior was so atypical, Laura accepted his profuse apologies and continued with plans for their marriage. Three days after their marriage, Tom began beating her vagina with his fists, calling her a "bitch" and a "whore" and ejaculating onto her face. At the time, Tom had moved her into a new home that was at great distance from her family and friends.

In contrast, some of the women were aware of a darker side to the men they were dating. Nine (45%) of the men displayed explosive anger during the courtship and 11 (55%) were subjected to sadomasochistic activities.

Case Three

A 21-year-old woman, Jill, who had been married twice previously, was introduced to Steve on a blind date arranged by a mutual friend. Jill found Steve to be exciting and darkly attractive. He was involved in illegal activities but was charming and attentive in his interactions with her. As they became more intimate, Steve introduced Jill to anal sex and began to physically and verbally abuse her. Jill married Steve within 60 days and, over the ensuing two years, assisted him in the abduction and murder of several women.

Thirteen of the women in the study married the men and the marriages lasted from 18 months to 26 years.

These case examples suggest that some of the women were relatively unaware of the sadistic propensities of their partners whereas others seemed cognizant of, and perhaps attracted by, the "darker" side of the men with whom they became involved. It is interesting to note that the woman who participated in murder seemed to fall into both categories. These dynamics highlight the pervasive polarities of responsibility/culpability as well as victimization that characterize the experience and behavior of these women. Although the men were motivated to exploit, assault and, in some instances, kill others as part of their unique sexual and personality characteristics, the women seemed to be activated into participation only through the relational effect of the man and his sexual deviance.

SEXUAL/PHYSICAL DYNAMICS OF THE RELATIONSHIPS

As summarized in Table II, the sexual and physical activities of the women were similar to those reported by Dietz *et al.* (1990) in the sadists' nonconsensual, criminal activities. These behaviors included foreign object insertion (45%), fetishism (40%), whipping (60%), bondage (35%), costuming the woman (50%), verbally (75%) and/or behaviorally (75%) scripting the woman, and hanging (25%) or strangulation (50%) of the women. Incestuous activity or suspected sexual involvement with children also occurred in 3 of the 16 (19%) cases in which children were present. In one instance, the incestuous relationship began when the girl was 7 years old, continued for over 8 years and, as with the marriage, involved primarily anal sex. On one occasion, while the wife was driving his next victim home, the sadist was overheard by his wife, whispering into the woman's ear, "Are you going to be my Judy [daughter's name] tonight."

Often asked why they stayed in this type of highly unusual relationship, three of the women stated that they stayed out of love, seven because of fear, one emotional dependence, one financial dependency, and eight "stupidity, naivete, or expectation that their [partner] would get better." When asked why they finally left the relationship, eight reported leaving out of fear for their own lives, three for fear of their children's lives, three because of the arrest of the partner, five for other reasons and, in one instance, the offender left the woman when she refused to participate in his sex with his new girlfriend.

In this study, all women had separated from the sexual sadist at the time of their interviews. Sixteen of the women reported that they had lost interest

Table II. Sexual/Physical Dynamics of Relationships Described by 20 Compliant Victims

Variable	Accomplice to murder	Murder/no involvement	Noncriminal
Sexual abuse			
Yes	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	13 (65%)
No	0	0	0
Sadist, or sex with children			
Yes	1 (5%)	0	2 (10%)
No	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	7 (35%)
Suspected		1 (5%)	2 (10%)
Frequency of demands for sex by sadist			
<3 times/week	1 (5%)	0	3 (15%)
4-6 times/week	0	3 (15%)	3 (15%)
Daily	1 (5%)	0	4 (20%)
>7 times/week	2 (10%)	0	2 (10%)
Drugs or alcohol before sex			
Yes	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	11 (55%)
No	2 (10%)	2 (20%)	1 (5%)
Use of foreign objects			
Yes	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	9 (45%)
No	1 (5%)	0	3 (15%)
Specific terms/body parts			
Yes	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	6 (30%)
No	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)
Fetishes			
Yes	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)
No	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	5 (25%)
Costumes and roles			
Yes	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	6 (30%)
No	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	6 (30%)
Whipping Involved			
Yes	3 (15%)	1 (5%)	10 (50%)
No	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)
Sexual bondage			
Yes	0	3 (15%)	4 (20%)
No	4 (20%)	0	8 (40%)
Hanging involved			
Yes	1 (5%)	0	4 (20%)
No	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	8 (15%)
Sex with other men/women			
Yes	4 (20%)	2 (10%)	5 (25%)
No	0	1 (5%)	7 (35%)
Burning involved			
Yes	1 (5%)	0	5 (25%)
No	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	7 (35%)
Strangulation involved			
Yes	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	8 (40%)
No	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	4 (20%)
Verbal scripting			
Yes	2 (10%)	1 (5%)	12 (60%)
No	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	0
Behavioral scripting			
Yes	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	10 (10%)
No	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)

Table II. (Continued)

Variable	Accomplice to murder	Murder/no involvement	Noncriminal
Record sexual activities			
Yes	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	10 (50%)
No	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
Cross-dressing			
Yes	0	0	3 (15%)
No	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	8 (40%)
Rape other women			
Yes	4 (20%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)
No	0	0	3 (15%)
Suspected	0	0	4 (20%)
Unsure	0	0	3 (15%)
Collect violent literature			
Yes	0	3 (15%)	8 (40%)
No	4 (20%)	0	3 (15%)
Sexual paraphernalia			
Yes	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	9 (45%)
No	1 (5%)	0	3 (15%)
Sexual dysfunction			
Yes	3 (15%)	3 (15%)	11 (55%)
No	1 (5%)	0	1 (5%)
Request sex with animals			
Yes	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)
No	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	9 (45%)
Other activities			
Nipple clamps	1 (5%)	7 (35%)	0
Ingest urine/feces	1 (5%)	1 (5%)	0
Enema	0	1 (5%)	2 (10%)
Write obscenities on body	0	0	2 (10%)
Pour substances on body	0	0	4 (10%)
Biting	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	10 (50%)
Ejaculate on face	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	11 (55%)
Demeaning language	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	11 (55%)
Physical abuse			
Yes	4 (20%)	1 (5%)	13 (45%)
No	0	2 (10%)	0
Highest level physical abuse			
Open-hand	0	0	0
Fists	1 (5%)	2 (10%)	8 (40%)
Throwing	0	0	0
Striking/objects	3 (15%)	0	4 (20%)
Other	0	0	1 (5%)

in sex as a result of their experience with the sadist. Seventeen of the women also reported having recurring physical ailments. When asked about their feelings toward the sadist at the recurrent time, 18 reported anger or hate, 1 pity, and 1 was unsure of how she felt.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In examining the experience of these 20 women, it appears that their experience encompasses a type of intimacy that can lead to very extreme and potentially murderous forms of violence. This study suggests that this form of adult intimacy is related to early experiences of physical, sexual, and incestuous abuse, which seems to leave the women vulnerable to intrusive and demeaning sexuality. Similar observations regarding the relationship between childhood abuse and subsequent involvement in violent and abusive relationships have been reported (Bloom *et al.*, 1994; Browne *et al.*, 1999; Fletcher *et al.*, 1993; Sargent *et al.*, 1993). However, in the current description, it can be noted that these women also became involved with sexually sadistic men who were adept at seducing them into sexual behaviors and forms of violence that were clearly outside their previous parameters of experience. It is our assertion that the behavior these women experienced, and their own involvement in criminal behavior, grew out of a combination of these factors, and had either the developmental or relational components been missing, the events would not have occurred. It is also our impression that, in the most extreme cases of murder, the women would not have decided to perpetrate the murders independent of the men; alternatively, the behavior of the men suggests that the men would have murdered as an expression of their sexually sadistic urges independent of the availability of their female partner. As such, the relational experience of these women helps to expand our understanding of the potential effects of one of the more dangerous paraphilic disorder (i.e., sexual sadism).

It is also our opinion that these men and their behaviors do not reflect the more extreme end of the continuum of behavior associated with "wife batterers." Although some men who batter their wives may also be sexual sadists, it is our impression that the majority of them are not. Moreover, although there is no doubt that issues of control and dominance characterize all battering relationships, in these sexually sadistic relationships the themes of dominance, control, and humiliation have become eroticized and integrated into the sexual fantasy life and sexual arousal of the male. They constitute the core fantasy of the male's sexual life and, therefore, a powerfully organizing theme in all of their sexual behavior. In some instances, the erotic impulse also sought its most arousing form, which included murder.

This sample further suggests that sexually sadistic men tend to perpetrate incest against biological children at rates greater than that found in the general population (i.e., 19% of cases in which a biological child was present in the home). This kind of criminal behavior appears similar to the "morally indiscriminant" type of situational child molester described by

Lanning (1986). According to his paradigm, this type of offender exploits the opportunity and the vulnerability of his victim and is motivated by a "why not" stance to this readily available sex partner. In these particular cases, it appears that the taboo nature of this type of incestuous sexuality further enhanced the appeal of the encounter. In those instances in which information was available, the sexual behavior enacted with the child victim encompassed the sexually sadistic preferences of the perpetrator. In terms of relevance to the mental health community, this preliminary finding suggests that when a diagnosis of sexual sadism is suspected, the possibility of child sexual abuse should be carefully reviewed and investigated.

This type of corroborating information can be of central importance in the evaluation or investigation of this type of criminal offender. When law enforcement officers and forensic evaluators are faced with a sexually sadistic offender, it will benefit their inquiries to explore the likelihood that the sexual behavior that has likely contributed to the crime, or series of crimes, has been enacted with the consensual partners of these men as well. The assumption that men will offend criminally against women who are strangers while maintaining normal sexual relationships with their wives and girlfriends cannot be generalized to the offender population. And explicit conversations with current and past intimate partners can often be highly illustrative of the fantasy that drives and organizes the criminal behavior. In conducting these interviews, it is important for the interviewer to be aware that these experiences carry humiliation, shame and, in some instances, legal liability for the woman. Therefore, the interviewer will have to demonstrate familiarity with this type of sadistic expression and reflect a nonreactive response to the behavior that is being described to them.

Finally, it is of interest to note that this kind of sadistic "symbiosis" is not a new phenomenon but one that has been observed throughout the centuries. In her recent book, *At Home With The Marquis de Sade*, Francine du Plessix Gray describes the evolution of the relationship that developed between the Marquis de Sade and his rather innocent and sexually naive wife, Pelagie. Meeting for the first time on the eve of their marriage, these two individuals entered into a marriage contract that was of value to both families, the Montreuil because of the aristocratic origins of the Sade family, and to the Sade family because of the waning expanse of the family's wealth and growing outrage among the bourgeoisie with the Marquis' sexual exploits. Despite the highly structured nature of this introduction, over the course of the marriage, Pelagie grew increasingly entranced by her husband, abandoning her three children to the care of her mother, while she assisted the Marquis de Sade with his sexual exploits and devoted herself to ardent attempts to free him from his increasingly routine periods of imprisonment. In the famous

"Little Girls Episode," which reportedly lasted 6 weeks in the winter of 1774, Pelagie assisted the Marquis not only in hiring six young, nubile servants for sexual purposes at their castle, La Coste, but also was instrumental in dispersing them to various convents when parents began to accuse her husband of having abducted their children through a process of seduction. In letters written later by the Marquis de Sade to his wife, he makes reference to these sexual exploits in a manner which indicates that Pelage was either participating or watching. With rather extraordinary insight, Pelage's mother, who arranged for a number of police raids on the castle, observed, "if they stay together . . . he will drag her into the abyss with him," while observing that her daughter also exerted an effect on her detested son-in-law: "when he is in the castle with her, he thinks of himself as too powerful, too secure, and he permits himself all kinds of excess." This description of sexually sadistic fantasies and behavior becoming a shared preoccupation in a marriage that was contrived primarily for social and economic reasons illustrates the compelling nature of this type of interchangeable sexuality that emanates from the eroticization of domination and control.

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