

The Sexually Sadistic Criminal and His Offenses

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This is an uncontrolled, descriptive study of 30 sexually sadistic criminals. All were men, and all intentionally tortured their victims in order to arouse themselves. Their crimes often involved careful planning, the selection of strangers as victims, approaching the victim under a pretext, participation of a partner, beating victims, restraining victims and holding them captive, sexual bondage, anal rape, forced fellatio, vaginal rape, foreign object penetration, telling victims to speak particular words in a degrading manner, murder or serial killings (most often by strangulation), concealing victims' corpses, recording offenses, and keeping personal items belonging to victims.

Sexual sadism was named by Richard von Krafft-Ebing¹ after the Marquis de Sade, whose writings describe a pairing of sexual acts with domination, degradation, and violence. The century that has passed since Krafft-Ebing's description has produced case histories extending along a spectrum from accounts of sexually sadistic dreams or fantasies related by neurotics in the course of psychoanalysis to the continuing stream of popular biographies of sexual sadists who have been convicted of sensational crimes. The innocuousness of those who

only fantasize contrasts dramatically with the viciousness of those sexually sadistic offenders whose translation of fantasy into criminal actions causes them to be seen in the practice of forensic psychiatry and criminal investigation. To understand the entire spectrum of sexual sadism, it is necessary to study not only the neurotically conflicted, but also the sadist unencumbered by ethical, societal, and legal inhibitions.

Among the most useful publications to forensic psychiatrists are the clinically informed case histories of those who have committed serious crimes, such as those reported by Krafft-Ebing,¹ Stekel,² Macdonald,^{3,4} or Groth.⁵ Such cases occur so infrequently in any one jurisdiction, however, that it has proved difficult for researchers to gather information about a series of cases that can permit more generalized observations than can be made on the basis of the small number of cases typically accumulated in a

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single individual's practice. For this article we used the unique resources of the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime to study a series of sexual sadists who have engaged in remarkably predatory behavior.

Although the men in this series were serious criminals, it is important to recognize that sexual sadists, like other paraphiles, do not necessarily engage in any actions in fulfillment of the paraphilia.⁶ Indeed, it is possible that a majority of sexual sadists never engage in a sexually sadistic act, much less a crime. Among those who act on their fantasies, there are those who limit their actions to lawful behaviors with consenting partners or to behaviors with paid partners. In some cases, however, the sexual sadist does not content himself with lawful or quasi-lawful adaptations, but rather indulges himself at the expense of unwilling partners.⁷ It is this latter group of sexually sadistic offenders that poses the greatest problem for society.

Sexual sadism has often been confounded with other mental disorders, particularly where a psychotic offender has cruelly harmed someone or where a patient has described bizarre fantasies. In our experience the extremities of behavior among sexually sadistic offenders prove perplexing to even seasoned clinicians, who find themselves tempted to ascribe psychosis to those who engage in extraordinarily cruel acts despite the absence of delusions, hallucinations, or markedly illogical thinking. Compounding the diagnostician's difficulty, the offenders generally conceal the truth—sometimes even in the face of compel-

ling evidence of guilt—and even when they reveal it, it is so bizarre as to invite disbelief.

This report focuses on 30 sexually sadistic criminals who probably have character pathology in addition to the Axis I condition of sexual sadism, but this does not mean that sexual sadism is invariably associated with such pathology. Presumably, sexual sadism can occur in the absence of any other diagnosable mental disorder or in combination with any other diagnosis. Even here, however, diagnostic errors are common. The behavior of a sexual sadist with antisocial personality disorder may be markedly different from one with schizoid personality disorder, for the latter may be so shy as to have limited the number of victims attacked and so odd when examined as to invite a psychotic diagnosis. Likewise, the clinician may find it difficult to differentiate the individual who engages in sexual behavior of a seemingly sadistic nature only when psychotic from the individual with an established pattern of sexual sadism who subsequently becomes psychotic. Only the latter is a sexual sadist, as all manner of sexual thoughts and behaviors can occur during psychosis without a diagnosis of a paraphilia being warranted.

A variety of cruel sexual and criminal acts has evoked attributions of sexual sadism, even by so astute an observer as Stekel.² Rada⁸ has surveyed the varied, often contradictory, definitions of sadism that have been offered by psychiatrists of various camps. To be clear, we must state our position, which is that only those crimes reflective of an endur-

ing pattern of sexual arousal in response to sadistic imagery ought to be regarded as sexually sadistic offenses.

Although such varied actions as mutilation followed by murder, murder followed by mutilation, and cannibalism have been said to provide sexual excitement to sadistic murderers,³ these actions are not necessarily indicative of either sexual excitement or sexual sadism. Sexually sadistic offenses must be differentiated from seemingly similar crimes, such as genital mutilation motivated by other than sadistic sexual arousal patterns⁹ (e.g., the severely disturbed prostitute who emasculates her client while he sleeps or the schizophrenic murderer who dissects his victim from pelvis to neck); cruelty motivated by revenge or other nonsexual motives (e.g., the gang which tortures and castrates a man in retaliation for his liaison with a gang member's "girl"); pathological group behavior (e.g., atrocities against civilians in a combat zone); torture during interrogation; ritualized human sacrifice (e.g., within the Aztec culture); or institutionally sanctioned cruelty (e.g., concentration camp atrocities). Likewise, acts such as those that occur in sexually sadistic role-playing (e.g., by prostitutes or others who enact a sadistic role for the benefit of their clients, partners, or pornographers) and sexually sadistic acts among psychotics or sexual experimenters must be carefully distinguished from acts indicating sexual sadism.

Although not universally true, some sexual sadists have considerable insight into their sexual deviation and devote

significant energy to self-scrutiny. One of the clearest definitions of sexual sadism comes from the writings of a man who kidnapped, kept captive, raped, sodomized, and in some instances murdered victims in several states over an extended period of time. Audio tapes of his sexual torture of his fourth wife and of one of his stranger victims, photographs he took of foreign object penetration of another captive victim 20 years earlier, and his own written plans for building an "S & M play area," cells, and an incinerator, confirm an enduring pattern of sexual arousal to the suffering of his sexual partners. He wrote:

Sadism: The wish to inflict pain on others is not the essence of sadism. One essential impulse: to have complete mastery over another person, to make him/her a helpless object of our will, to become the absolute ruler over her, to become her God, to do with her as one pleases. To humiliate her, to enslave her. are means to this end, and the most important radical aim is to make her suffer since there is no greater power over another person than that of inflicting pain on her to force her to undergo suffering without her being able to defend herself. The pleasure in the complete domination over another person is the very essence of the Sadistic drive. [Emphasis in original.]

Although it is possible that he may have copied this material from a published source, a diligent search has failed to disclose a similar passage in any of the writings on sexual sadism. The passage is consistent with both the other writings of this man and his enduring pattern of behavior. More importantly, it is consistent with the behavior of all of the sexually sadistic offenders we have studied.

Methods

Case files were drawn from a pool of cases referred to or studied by the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC). When President Ronald Reagan announced the establishment of the NCAVC in 1984, he identified its primary mission as that of identifying and tracking repeat killers.¹⁰ The NCAVC today encompasses four programs: the Profiling and Consultation Program (now the Criminal Investigative Analysis Program), the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program, the Research and Development Program, and the Training Program.¹¹ The NCAVC is a tertiary referral center for unsolved crimes and particular types of extreme offenses, providing services to law enforcement agencies and prosecutors analogous to the services provided by the Centers for Disease Control to state and local health departments¹² such as epidemiologic surveillance, intelligence, specialized consultation, training, and research.

The sampling universe for the present study consisted of all cases identified as possible sexually sadistic criminals that were submitted to the NCAVC for analysis or were sent to specialists within the NCAVC for teaching and research purposes between 1984 and 1989. Each case within this universe was screened by the authors for the presence of an enduring pattern of sexual arousal in response to images of suffering or humiliation. For a case to be admitted to the study, all three authors had to agree that a factual basis was available for finding that the subject had been sex-

ually aroused in response to images of suffering or humiliation on two or more occasions spanning an interval of at least six months. Most often the evidence of sexual arousal consisted of documented sexual acts or self-reported sexual arousal occurring simultaneously with a victim's expressed suffering. Most of the cases that others had believed to be possible sexual sadists but that were eliminated through this screening process were those in which an offender committed a single rape or murder with torture or mutilation, but without evidence of an enduring pattern of arousal to such activities, or cases in which cruel behaviors occurred at times other than those at which the victim was conscious and the offender aroused. Thus, for example, we excluded cases in which a rapist injured or killed his victim if there was no evidence of sexual arousal accompanying the injury or killing and cases in which sexual activity or mutilation occurred only after a victim was unconscious or dead. The sample thus consists of consecutively referred sexually sadistic offenders, but two of the offenders admitted to the study had committed their crimes many years before the case files were referred for teaching and research purposes.

For each case, information was available from at least two of the following sources: police investigative reports, crime scene photographs, victim statements, reports of interviews with family members, confessions, psychiatric reports, grand jury or trial transcripts, presentencing reports, and prison records. In addition to these, materials pro-

duced by the offenders such as manuscripts, diaries, photographs, sketches, audio tapes, videotapes, and threatening letters were available in the majority of cases. Five of the 30 subjects have been interviewed at great length by at least one of the authors, with informed consent. In six of the 30 cases, published book-length biographies were used to supplement available investigative information. The many published biographies of serial killers include some notoriously unreliable and inaccurate volumes (including some with fabricated data), but the ones used here are among the most reliable of such books according to investigators familiar with the cases. For two of the cases the book proved the more complete source of data, but in the other four the investigative information was superior to the book-length account.

Each of the 30 men on whom this report is based meets stringent criteria for sexual sadism, having engaged in repeated fantasies and actions evidencing sexual arousal to the suffering and humiliation of other persons for periods in excess of six months. Each of the 30 also engaged in extensive patterns of antisocial behavior in adulthood. The available evidence does not often include juvenile police records (which were generally sealed) or extensive information on the adolescence of the men. It is thus not possible to be certain how many of the men would meet DSM-III-R¹³ criteria for antisocial personality disorder. None of the individuals studied was psychotic at the time of onset of a

pattern of sexually sadistic behavior, but one became psychotic later in life.

All of the data reported in this article must be regarded as minimum estimates of the true frequency of the variables studied among this population because of variations in the quantity of information available about particular cases. The data about which we are least confident are those on reported physical and sexual abuse during childhood, because no systematic effort was made to collect such data or to verify spontaneous claims of abuse.

Results

Offender Characteristics Table 1 presents the characteristics of offenders in the sample. Note that each of these characteristics is also found among persons who are neither sexual sadists nor offenders. Without comparable data on males in the general population or other comparison groups, these data must be interpreted cautiously. Each of the offenders was male, and all but one was white. Forty-seven percent of the men came from homes characterized by parental infidelity or divorce; approximately equal proportions reportedly had been physically abused (23%) or sexually abused (20%) in childhood. While committing offenses, 43 percent were married. The nine who were incestuously involved with their children comprised 30 percent of the total sample, but 60 percent of the 15 subjects who had children.

Forty-three percent were known to have had homosexual experiences, excluding childhood sex play and two cases

Table 1
Characteristics of Sexually Sadistic Criminals

Characteristics	n	%
Male	30	100.0
White	29	96.7
Parental infidelity or divorce	14	46.7
Physically abused in childhood	7	23.3
Sexually abused in childhood	6	20.0
Married at time of offense	13	43.3
Incestuous involvement with own child	9	30.0
Known homosexual experience*	13	43.3
Known cross-dressing	6	20.0
Known history of peeping, obscene telephone calls, or indecent exposure	6	20.0
Shared sexual partners with other men	6	20.0
Education beyond high school	13	43.3
Military experience	10	33.3
Established reputation as solid citizen	9	30.0
Drug abuse (other than alcohol)	15	50.0
Suicide attempt	4	13.3
Excessive driving	12	40.0
Police "buff" (excessive interest in police activities and paraphernalia)	9	30.0

* Excluding childhood sex play.

in which suspected homosexual activity could not be confirmed. Nonsadistic paraphilic activities included cross-dressing (20%) and minor sex offenses (peeping, obscene telephone calls, or indecent exposure; 20%). Six men shared their consenting sexual partners with other men (including three who shared their wives).

Forty-three percent had been educated beyond the high school level. Of the 10 known to have military experience, eight served in the ground forces. At least five had been honorably discharged, and one received a medical discharge for unknown reasons. The occupations of these subjects were baker (two), cook, chef, candy maker, bartender, restaurant owner, musician, bouncer/truck driver, laborer, rancher, logger, television repairman, barber/nude

photo studio proprietor, amusement park train conductor, mechanic, construction worker, construction contractor, house painter, upholsterer, salesman, sales manager, real estate developer/race car driver, photographer, cardiovascular technician, security guard, sheriff's deputy, law student, military officer, and banker. Note that the majority of these occupations involve contact with the public. Thirty percent of the offenders had established reputations as solid citizens through involvement in civic activities, volunteer work, charitable contributions, political activity, and sound business dealings.

Half of the offenders were known to abuse drugs other than alcohol. Thirteen percent had a history of at least one suicide attempt. These four men had a total of six parasuicidal episodes, includ-

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ing hanging (two), carbon monoxide poisoning, industrial chemical ingestion, wrist cutting, and drug overdose.

Excessive driving, defined as driving with no clear goal or driving long distances only to spontaneously change course in another direction, characterized 40 percent of the men. Thirty percent of the men were police "buffs" who habitually showed excessive interest in police activities and paraphernalia. This interest ranged from collecting literature dealing with police technology to having complete police uniforms, counterfeit identification and badges, and vehicles modified to resemble police cars (black wall tires, two-way radio, Bearcat scanner, whip antenna, flashing red lights, and siren).

Seventeen (57%) of the men had no known arrest history prior to their arrest for the sadistic offenses described below. Thirteen (43%) had prior arrests for a variety of nonsexual and nonsadistic sexual offenses.

Eighty-three percent of the men maintained collections of items related to sexual or violent themes or both. The most commonly occurring collection was pornography (53%), followed in frequency by guns (37%), bondage paraphernalia (27%), and detective magazines (23%).¹⁴ Smaller proportions of men collected knives (10%), *Soldier of Fortune* magazine (7%), sexual devices (7%), and women's undergarments (3%). As with the offender characteristics given in Table 1, the collections specified here are not necessarily associated with either sexual sadism or criminality.

Offense Characteristics Characteristics of the offenses are given in Table 2. Eleven (37%) of the men committed at least some of their offenses with a partner who assisted in all phases of the crime. These 11 offenders were assisted by 11 male partners and seven female partners. Two of the male partners were the offender's fathers. Five of the female partners were wives of the offenders, and one was a victim who had been held captive for weeks before she began assisting in the abduction and torture of other victims. Five of the offenders shared sexual access to their victims with 11 other men.

Ninety-three percent of the offenders were judged to have carefully planned their offenses, as evidenced by such behaviors as studying law enforcement procedures; studying and collecting weapons; constructing a torture rack or a specially equipped torture room; altering a vehicle for use in abduction and torture (soundproofing a van, disabling windows and door handles, or installing police vehicle accessories); preparing a "torture kit" containing binding materials, torture implements, weapons, cameras, recording devices, and burial equipment (e.g., a shovel and lime); taking provisions for travel to remote locations (e.g., water and food for the desert; extra fuel to fly to a remote island); conducting systematic surveillance and stalking of victims; impersonating a police officer in the commission of the offense (23%) or other elaborate ruses; wearing gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints; and taking the victim to a location selected in advance (77%).

Table 2
Characteristics of Offenses

Characteristics	n	%
A partner assisted in offense	11	36.7
Careful planning of offense	28	93.3
Impersonation of police in commission of offense	7	23.3
Victim taken to preselected location	23	76.7
Victim kept in captivity for 24 hours or more	18	60.0
Victim bound, blindfolded, or gagged	26	86.7
Sexual bondage of victim*	23	76.7
Anal rape of victim	22	73.3
Forced victim to perform fellatio	21	70.0
Vaginal rape of victim	17	56.7
Foreign object penetration of victim	12	40.0
Variety of sexual acts with the victim†	20	66.7
Sexual dysfunction during offense	13	43.3
Unemotional, detached affect during offense	26	86.6
Told victim what to say during assault	7	23.3
Intentional torture	30	100.0
Murdered victim	22	73.3
Committed serial murders (three or more victims)	17	56.6
Concealed victim's corpse	20	66.6
Victim beaten (blunt force trauma)	18	60.0
Recorded the offense‡	16	53.3
Kept personal item belonging to victim	12	40.0

* Sexual bondage is distinguished from bondage for the sole purpose of restraining the victim's movements by the use of a variety of positions, excessive binding, symmetrical bindings, and neatness.

† A variety of sexual acts is defined as having subjected the victim to at least three of the following: vaginal rape, forced fellatio, anal rape, foreign object penetration.

‡ Includes recordings through writings, drawings, photographs, audio tapes, or videotapes.

The most commonly used means of gaining access to the victim was determined for each of the 30 offenders. The largest number (27 or 90.0%) used a "con" approach,¹⁵ openly approaching the victim under a pretext such as requesting or offering assistance, asking directions, or making an arrest. For example, one man hired models to pose in photo sessions, ostensibly to be used for the covers of detective magazines, but would take the victims to the desert, photograph, and strangle them. Two men tended to use "surprise" approaches, in which they suddenly grabbed the victims to gain control. One used a "blitz" approach, suddenly strik-

ing the victims over the head with a blunt object.

Sixty percent of the offenders kept one or more of their victims captive for periods ranging from 24 hours to six weeks before killing or releasing them. Three offenders persuaded or coerced former captives to return for additional abuse. Victims were kept captive by being bound or locked in a confined area, by the continuous physical presence of the offender, or by a combination of these. Eighty-seven percent of the offenders bound, blindfolded, or gagged one or more victims. Seventy-seven percent of the offenders engaged in sexual bondage of one or more victims. Sexual bondage

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refers to restriction of movements or use of the senses to enhance the sexual arousal of the offender. It is distinguished from binding for the sole purpose of restraining the victim's movement by the use in sexual bondage of elaborate and excessive binding material, unnecessarily neat and symmetrical binding, and binding the victim in a variety of positions, often while being photographed.

As shown in Table 2, the sexual acts forced on victims by the largest numbers of offenders (in decreasing order) were anal rape, forced fellatio, vaginal rape, and foreign object penetration. Sixty-seven percent of the offenders forced one or more victims to engage in at least three of these activities. Forty-three percent of the offenders experienced sexual dysfunction during their offenses, including retarded ejaculation (11), premature ejaculation (one), and conditional ejaculation (one). In addition to the sexual acts listed in Table 2, small numbers of offenders engaged in other sexual acts with their victims, including inserting a finger into the vagina or anus (three); performing cunnilingus on the victim (two); forcing the victim to masturbate self or offender (two); forcing two victims to engage in sexual activity with one another (two); forcing the victim to drink urine or eat feces (two); urinating on the victim (one); penetrating the rectum with a fist (1); and post-mortem intercourse (one).

The demeanor of the offenders during the commission of offenses could be ascertained from victims' statements, recordings made by the offender, or inter-

views in a sufficient number of cases to know that at least 87 percent had an unemotional, detached affect. Twenty-three percent instructed their victims to utter particular words during the offense, sometimes from written scripts. Such forced utterances included descriptions of the sexual acts occurring, self-deprecating phrases, and role playing of third parties.

One hundred percent of the offenders intentionally tortured their victims, mostly with extreme and obvious methods as listed in Table 3. To illustrate the extremity of torture used by these 30 men, we cite only the two least offensive examples: The first was a man who bound and suspended his daughter with ropes in painful positions and with painfully tight bindings from ages two to eight while he photographed her. The second was a man who forced his captive rape victim to watch as he raped and killed a second woman. Individual of-

Table 3
Methods of Physical Torture Used by Sexually Sadistic Criminals

Method of Torture	n	%
Instruments	8	26.7
Painful insertion of foreign objects	7	23.3
Beating	6	20.0
Biting	5	16.7
Whipping	5	16.7
Painful bondage	5	16.7
Electrical shock	4	13.3
Twisting breasts until victim unconscious	4	13.3
Asphyxiation until victim unconscious	4	13.3
Burning	3	10.0
Other*	7	23.3

* Other methods of torture included amputation (two), threatening with snakes (two), cutting (one), pulling out hair (one), insertion of glass rod in male urethra (one), injection (one), and submersion (one).

fenders often used multiple means of torture. Psychological torment through humiliation, degradation, and threats was often combined with physical methods of torture to heighten the victim's fear. The importance to the offender of the victim's terror is underscored by the caution taken by several offenders to insure that their victims retained consciousness while being tortured and the resuscitation of near-dead victims by two offenders in order that they might cause additional suffering before their victims died.

Twenty-two (73%) of the 30 men were known to have murdered; together they had 187 known murder victims. Five men were responsible for 122 of the known murders, and the other 17 known murderers killed 65 known victims. The total number of murders committed by the 22 known killers is suspected to be more than 300. Seventeen of the men (57% of offenders and 73% of murderers) were known to have been serial killers,^{16,17} having murdered three or more victims in separate incidents. (Three other murderers were suspected of serial killings that could not be proved.) All but two of the murderers concealed at least one of their victims' corpses. This was not consistent behavior, however, as some victims were left where they would be seen by intimates or easily found, and others were disposed of carelessly.

The 187 known murder victims died from a variety of causes. Cause of death could be established for 130 cases (see Table 4). The most striking difference between the causes of death in these

Table 4
Cause of Death of 130 Murder Victims

Cause of Death	n	%
Ligature strangulation	42*	32.3
Manual strangulation	34†	26.1
Gunshot wounds	32‡	24.6
Cutting and stabbing wounds	13	10.0
Blunt force trauma	4	3.1
Hanging	2	1.5
Suffocation	1	0.8
Torture	1	0.8
Exposure	1	0.8

*One man was responsible for 32 of these murders.

† One man was responsible for 25 of these murders.

‡ One man was responsible for 17 of these murders.

murders and the distribution of causes of death among murder victims generally is the relatively high proportion of asphyxial causes of death (61%), and the relatively low proportion of gunshot wounds (25%). Serial killers were inconsistent in the means by which they killed their multiple victims, with the exception of one man who manually strangled all 25 of his murder victims and one man who shot all 17 of his murder victims. Although beatings caused death in only three percent of the murders, 60 percent of the offenders beat their victims. Cause of death could not be determined for victims whose bodies were destroyed by fire (17), decomposed (28), or skeletonized (7); and of the three men responsible for these murders, two denied involvement in the crime and one committed suicide after arrest and before questioning. (For five victims, cause of death data were missing.)

Fifty-three percent of the offenders recorded at least one offense in writings, drawings, photographs, audio tapes, or videotapes. The amount of detail in such recordings varied from making an en-

rypted notation on a calendar to a videotape of torture or a book-length autobiography detailing every nuance of the crimes. Several offenders maintained extensive records of their offenses, including collections of photographs of the victims (13%), collections of audio tapes of the crimes (7%), and collections of videotapes of the crimes (7%). Forty percent of the offenders kept one or more personal items belonging to the victim (undergarments, shoes, jewelry, wallets, driver's license, or other identification), which were often found hidden among the mementos of the offender.

Victim Characteristics Ninety-seven percent of the offenders victimized only whites. The sole black offender victimized only whites, and one white offender victimized both whites and blacks. Eighty-three percent of the offenders focused their crimes primarily on strangers. Seventy-three percent victimized only females, 17 percent only males, and 10 percent both females and males. Fifty-seven percent victimized only adults, and 17 percent victimized only children. It is noteworthy that 43 percent of the offenders victimized one or more children.

In only five (17%) of the 30 cases was there some evident resemblance between the victims chosen and someone of psychological significance in the offender's life. For example, one man who killed at least two women had been married to a woman with long black hair. His victims had dark hair, and he referred to his actions with them as "practice" for what he would do when he gained control over his former wife. He

prepared written scripts for his victims that echoed the words he had forced his former wife to utter during tape-recorded sessions in which he brutalized her.

Discussion

Although the sexually sadistic offenders studied were responsible for large numbers of serious crimes, we must caution that there are far larger numbers of sexual sadists who commit less extreme crimes and thus would not have been referred to the National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime. While these data may not be generalizable to the entire class of sexually sadistic criminals, they provide insight into a class of offenders who are the most proficient and destructive of all sexual criminals. These cases are not extreme in the severity of their sexual sadism but in the severity of their criminality. If these are "terminal" sexual sadists whose crimes are particularly extreme, we believe they differ from less destructive sexual sadists not in the "severity" of the paraphilia, but in the character pathology that permits them such uninhibited expression of their sexual desires.

The clinician evaluating someone who may suffer from sexual sadism must be able to elicit an adequate history without undue shock or disbelief. It is not within the customary clinical repertoire to inquire as to the particular forms of torture that the interviewee finds most appealing or the subject of the most arousing fantasies, yet questions about such taboo areas of inquiry are necessary if the interviewer hopes to elicit the rel-

evant diagnostic information. Such inquiries are relevant not only to forensic assessments of persons who have committed sexually sadistic offenses, but also in taking a sexual history from anyone who has given evidence of paraphilic patterns of arousal. Even the best of interviews, however, will fail to elicit the complete truth in most cases. Where there is reason to suspect sexual sadism, the clinician would also be wise to seek information from sources other than the interviewee, such as the sources on which this article is based.

A few of the observations reported here require some explanation. The meaning of excessive driving was aptly captured by one man who described the "sense of freedom" "to go where I want, when I want, with no one telling me what to do." Fascination with police activities and paraphernalia reflects the offenders' fantasies of and strivings for power. Sexual partners are shared with others as a means of humiliation. Victims are held captive for ready access, to reshape their behavior through "training," and to prolong their suffering. Victims are told what to say during assaults in order to recreate previously fantasized scenarios with idealized partners. Victims' corpses are concealed—in contrast to the body being left at the death scene as occurs in most homicides—to reduce the likelihood of rapid discovery and therefore of apprehension. Personal items belonging to victims are kept as trophies of the offenders' "conquests" or as stimuli to facilitate arousing recollections. Strangers are selected as victims

to reduce the odds of their being linked to the offender.

One particularly intriguing observation is that larger proportions of these offenders committed forcible penetration of the anus and mouth than of the vagina. Although this might be thought an artifact of the number of male victims, it remains true even among those whose victims were all females. Among the possible explanations for this observation are that the high proportion of offenders with a history of homosexual activity in adulthood predisposes to anal and oral sexual contact and that anal and oral penetration are intended to be more degrading to victims than vaginal penetration.

One of the most important findings from this study is that 53 percent of sexually sadistic offenders produced and retained records of their crimes. Although some have shared these records with crime partners, they are otherwise their most secret possessions, intended to be seen by no one else. These records—whether writings, drawings, photographs, or electronic recordings—are sources of unusual depth for understanding the offender, his fantasies, and his behavior.

Through the offenders' personal records, it is possible to uncover his secret world, otherwise hidden during interviews with mental health or law enforcement professionals. Although offenders sometimes are forthcoming about their criminal acts, they are rarely forthcoming about the pattern of sexual arousal that motivates or accompanies the crimes.

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The unemotional, detached affect of the offenders during their crimes contrasts dramatically with the emotionally intense crimes of so many other violent offenders, and is consistent with their highly methodical offenses. As one listens to the recordings of their crimes, one is struck by the deliberate manner in which the offender maintains a calm, instructional tone in the face of his victim's obvious and intense distress. Although anger sometimes surfaces, there is never a hint of any loss of control or dominance over the situation. We consider the unemotional, cold tone of the offenders during their crimes as evidence—if any more were needed—of their lack of empathy for their victims. This lack of empathy may reflect psychopathy, narcissism, an extraordinary capacity to dehumanize victims, or a combination of these.

Although systematic data were not collected on the features of narcissistic personality disorder in these men, we noted that all were interpersonally exploitive and many were grandiose, lacked empathy, responded to criticism with rage, and demanded a show of admiration from those victims they kept captive. These narcissistic features are related to the subjects' self-consciousness of their status as "super criminals." For example, one subject recently wrote one of the authors a demeaning letter criticizing the author's previous writings, bragging that someone is writing a book about him, and suggesting that with sufficient incentive he might be willing to share a few of his insights with the researcher. We have no basis for believing

that sexual sadism is generally associated with narcissism; rather, it is the psychopathy of these subjects that is probably associated with narcissism. These observations are reminiscent of Leaff's opinion that "psychopathic personalities represent one form, a severe form, of a narcissistic personality structure."¹⁸

The men described herein engaged in crimes that are regarded as grotesque, bizarre, and horrible, yet not one was perceived as particularly odd by those who knew them well before their offenses. More importantly, none of the men received any psychiatric or psychological attention for their sexual sadism before the commission of their crimes, though many had been examined in connection with military discharge, incarcerations for earlier offenses, or for other purposes.

Their contacts with clinicians were strikingly ineffective, as illustrated by a few examples. One, at age 12, was taken to a physician by his mother because she had discovered that he was hanging himself (he was engaging in autoerotic asphyxiation¹⁹). The physician told her the boy would outgrow it, but he remained sexually attached to ropes as he strangled a series of three women. Another consulted a psychiatrist when he found that sexually sadistic rapes were no longer gratifying and grew concerned at his thoughts of adding murder to his repertoire. As he described his fantasies of murder, his elderly psychiatrist fell asleep; the offender walked out of the session, never to return. Another who had been arrested for enticing young boys to his home to photograph them as

they defecated and held knives to one another using ketchup or red ink to simulate wounds was committed to a state hospital; he eloped, murdering one young boy and wounding another. In yet another case a psychologist asked the offender to write out his most bizarre fantasies as part of psychotherapy. The offender wrote detailed descriptions of his actual crimes, but the therapist did not recognize that these were recollections, not fantasies. Other cases met with equal failure.

Even more disturbing than the treatment failures are the failures of ordinary personal security measures to prevent their crimes and the failures of ordinary police methods to capture the offenders after the first offense. As one offender responded when asked how a woman could prevent being raped:

[T]here's a lot of steps you can take to help eliminate the average criminal [who is] just spontaneous and reckless and careless. . . . If somebody wants somebody bad enough . . . it's nearly impossible [to prevent]. . . . They could have the best security in the world. They could have guards and dogs and everything else. But if you have the time and the patience, the opportunity is going to arise when you can hit somebody.

Conclusions

We have described the characteristics of 30 sexually sadistic criminals, their offenses, and their victims, including some of the details of the offenses that constitute patterned behaviors to be expected in this offender group. It is important to recognize that the noncriminal characteristics described in this population each occur among persons who are neither sexually sadistic nor

criminal. We do not suggest, for example, that the characteristics given in Table 1 are predictive of sexual sadism. On the contrary, we would maintain that the necessary condition for a diagnosis of sexual sadism is the presence of sexually arousing fantasies about the kinds of behavior in which this sample of offenders actually engaged. When such fantasies are identified, for example when a patient volunteers bondage fantasies or when an investigator learns of a subject's drawings of torture, the possibility of sexual sadism should be considered and explored by further inquiry into the other behaviors described here.

The factors associated with sexual sadism have not previously been described in sufficient detail to permit universal recognition of this pattern of behavior by clinicians or by law enforcement officials. Among clinicians, it has not become sufficiently common to take a history of paraphilic patterns of sexual arousal, to ask patients' consent to obtain police records, or to offer behavior therapy or antiandrogens to known paraphiles. Among police investigators, it has not become sufficiently common to recognize the distinction between sexually sadistic offenses and other brutal crimes or to anticipate the importance of written records, drawings, audio tapes, videotapes, and souvenirs of offenses when applying for and executing search warrants in such cases.

Because this was an exploratory, uncontrolled study of a highly selected group of offenders, it would be inappropriate to draw conclusions about sexual sadists in general from the data reported

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here. We would, however, recommend that researchers studying more representative populations of sexual sadists and with access to comparable data on normal and criminal control subjects address the following questions:

1. Are parental infidelity or divorce or a history of physical or sexual abuse during childhood predisposing factors for sexual sadism even among nonoffenders?

2. Are nonsadistic paraphilic activities, adult homosexual experiences, sharing of sexual partners with others, excessive driving, interest in police activities and paraphernalia, and collecting pornography, bondage paraphernalia, weapons, or detective magazines associated with sexual sadism even among nonoffenders?

3. Are sexual dysfunction, minor sexual offenses, and incestuous involvement with their own children complications of sexual sadism even among those sexual sadists who do not commit violent offenses involving torture?

Each of these features was observed among the 30 men on whom this report is based, but it is not possible to determine from the data reported here which features are associated with sexual sadism and which are associated with criminality or character pathology. Drug abuse, for example, is known to be associated with criminality^{20,21} and may have no independent association with sexual sadism. Nonsadistic paraphilias, on the other hand, are known to be associated with sexual sadism²² and may have no independent association with criminality.

Our data do allow us to draw conclusions about the features of crimes by the most dangerous sexually sadistic offenders, which is the group fairly represented by the 30 men studied. The hallmark of their offenses is intentional torture of the victim to sexually arouse the offender. We conclude that such offenders tend to commit crimes that often but not invariably involve the following features: selection of strangers as victims; advance selection of a location to which the victim is taken; participation of a partner; careful planning (including impersonating a police officer); use of a pretext in approaching victims; beating victims; keeping a victim captive; binding, blindfolding, or gagging a victim; sexual bondage of a victim; anal rape, forced fellatio, vaginal rape, foreign object penetration; performing multiple sexual acts with victims; telling victims to speak particular words in a degrading manner; intentional torture; murder or serial killings (most often by strangulation); concealing victims' corpses; recording offenses; and keeping personal items belonging to victims.

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