

Sexual sadism and  
sex offenders  
psychology essay



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Sexual Sadism is a type of paraphilia that may involve making a person suffer in some way that may or may not lead to death. It varies from extreme forms of torture to mild. It can be with a consensual partner who is a masochist and also the injuring of a non consensual person. Sexual sadists usually have mental disorders such as psychopathy and antisocial personality disorder which can explain their level of violence and their lack of empathy for their victims.

Many sex offenders are diagnosed with Paraphilia's and sexual disorders. Paraphilia's are recurrent intense sexual arousing fantasies or urges involving nonhuman objects, suffering, humiliation of oneself or ones partner, children or non consenting persons (APA, 1994). For some people these fantasies are necessary to achieve erotic arousal whereas for others they are episodic and the individual can be stimulated otherwise. This type of behavior, urges and fantasies can cause significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other areas of functioning. It has to last over a period of at least six months (APA, 1994) . One of the most dangerous paraphilia's is sexual sadism, which involves violence that may lead to death in which the offender gets sexual pleasure by inflicting pain on the victim. According to the DSM IV, sexual sadism is the act of humiliating, binding, beating, or making another person suffer in some way were sexual excitement is the result of control over the victim. It typically develops in adolescence with interests coming from masochistic masturbatory practices. Autoerotic asphyxia is a practice that constricts the oxygen during masturbation, accomplished with the use of a strangulation device. The purpose is to create a higher level of sexual excitement through the

restriction of oxygen in the brain (Terry, 2006). The restriction of oxygen itself it's not what's sexual exciting but it's the combination of the behavior, lack of oxygen, danger and the fantasy. Sexual sadists are aroused by the torture and pain of the victim which can lead to death, but these offenders do not derive satisfaction from the murder itself. They are likely to mutilate and torture their victims becoming more aroused as there is an increase in the level of agony.

Sexual sadism is usually not consensual and involves injury or death to the victim. The element of fear in the victim and complete control of the victim is the major stimuli in sexual sadism. Such as severe beating, torture, burning, cutting, rape and murder. Sexual offenders who are potentially most likely to meet the criteria of sexual sadism are typically those who sexually assault or who molest children. Some of the characteristics for sexual offenders are usually, schizoid, psychopath, antisocial, narcissist, lack of social skills and relationships. Sadists have been found to exhibit a large number of other paraphilia's including transvestic fetishism, masochism, voyeurism, and exhibitionism. Some have alcohol and drug abuse, obsession traits, collects pornography, a history of impaired social relationships, physical and sexual abuse in childhood and extensive fantasy lives incorporating detailed sadistic fantasies (Kirch).

Sex offenders who are sadistic usually lack empathy and emotion which might be a reason why they commit the most violence to their victims because they detach themselves. Deficits in empathy facilitate offending behavior, suggesting that offenders' lack of awareness or sensitivity to other people's feelings may impair their ability to appreciate the effects of their

behavior on others (Kirsch). Emotions such as anger and shame are believed to fuel aggressive and retributive fantasies, and these fantasies are maintained and enhanced through the process of positive and negative emotional reinforcement. Feelings of inferiority are believed to be reduced during fantasy, while feelings of control, power, and dominance are enhanced.

Sexual sadism may begin with fantasies and in some cases these may never be acted upon or be acted out in the more mild forms of consensual relationships. Sadistic fantasies and behaviors can include dominance, humiliation, bondage, biting, burning, whipping, penetration with foreign objects, strangulation, and mutilation of the body (Kirsch) Sadistic sexual fantasies are noted

in certain adolescents. In some of these the fantasies serves rehearsal for future sadistic sexual acts, especially in adolescents with callous-unemotional personality who often emerge in adult life as psychopaths(Stone, 2010) . There is a difference in practicing sadism with a consenting partner and non consenting partner. In non-consensual cases, the behavior usually continues and often escalates over time as the perpetrator experiences a need for increased violence in order to stimulate the sexual response. The level of sadism varies from being in control, dominant and submissive in which the offender does this to a masochist person to injuring a non consensual partner. Sexual sadism is found predominately in males and usually onsets with puberty although sadistic behavior may be evident earlier in children. In all male cases, it becomes evident by early adulthood.

In cases of female sexual sadism, onset is often later and often triggered by relationships with men who want to be dominated.

Kraft-Ebbing suggested that mastering and possessing an absolutely defenceless human object is part of sadism. He sub-classified sexual sadism into several categories including lust murder where there was a connection between sexual arousal and killing which may extend to cannibalism. These men are thought to rarely derive sexual satisfaction from the assault or murder and this distinguishes them from lust murderers for whom “aggression and sexuality become fused into a single psychological experience sadism in which aggression is eroticized” (Myers, W. C., Burgess, A. W., Burgess, A. G. and Douglas, J. E., 1999. Serial murder and sexual homicide. In: Van Hasselt, V. and Hersen, M., Editors, 1999. Handbook of psychological approaches with violent offenders, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York, pp. 153-172. Marshall, 2003) Then there’s the offender who mutilates the corpses, those who like to injure females, defilement of women, symbolic sadism, ideal sadism or sadistic fantasies alone without acts, sadism with other objects and sadistic acts with animals.

Macculloch argues that the wish to control that is the primary motivating force in sadism, and because there is a range of degrees and kinds of control which can be applied by one person to another, sadism may manifest itself in a variety of ways. Normal sexual relationships include elements of dominance and submission, and hence control: indeed, modern manuals of sexual behavior often include bondage games as part of a suggested repertoire of sexual activity He defines sadism as the repeated practice of behavior and fantasy which is characterized by a wish to control another

person by domination, denigration or inflicting pain, for the purpose of producing mental pleasure and sexual arousal whether or not accompanied by orgasm in the sadist'. The range of controlling behavior under consideration forms a continuum from subtle verbal control through various types of psychological control to actual physical intervention such as bondage, imprisonment, hypnosis, anesthesia and even blows to render the victim unconscious or dead. As sadistic behavior gives pleasure to the sadist, and self-pleasuring behavior almost always has to be contrived, it would be expected that sadists devise situations which enable them to practice their sadism. If a central feature of sadism is control, then sadists would be expected to seek out actively and create situations where they have control. The concept that assailants stage-manage their control over others in order to give themselves pleasure provides a new frame of reference (Kuhne, 1962)

Among sexual sadists ritualistic behaviors are one of the defining features. Not all the men violate the letter of the law, however much they may violate the spirit of the law. Some seek, and manage to achieve, attachment to willing partners (Stone, 2010). Researchers Janet Warren and Roy Hazelwood interviewed female partners of sexual sadists. Seven of the 20 sexual sadists with whom these women had affiliated had also murdered some of their victims . The relationships with these women were consensual, at least in the early phases; women had histories of having gone through physical abuse from a parent, or nine of the women were victims of incest by a father, brother, or even a female relative. These experiences these women experienced at an early age from their care takers allowed them to somehow

expect, tolerate, and in some instances, even desire sadistic treatment at the hands of their sexual partners. The sexual sadists themselves initiated their partners into sadistic practices through a series of stages. In the “candy and flowers” stage, the man would win a woman with gifts, be a gentle man and be tender towards her, but then progress to a stage in which he expanded her sexual repertoire well beyond, and alien to, her prior experience. This might take such forms as forced anal sex, bondage, urinating on the woman, measured choking with release before unconsciousness occurred, etc. The man’s quest for domination and total control might proceed to cutting the woman off from relatives and friends, such that she were now his sexual slave. If she were lucky, the pattern would progress no further. But in some cases, the drama would end in her death. Those sexual sadists who maintained ongoing relationships with a wife or girlfriend might lead a kind of double life, in which they exacted pain and suffering of a controlled sort with their partners, but also had a secret life in which they trolled for other women whom they tortured and murdered. In a number of examples, the female partners were forced into becoming the inadvertent accomplices of sexually sadistic torture murder of other women. Some of these women, having been compliant in the beginning, desperately wanted “out” of the relationship toward the end but they were routinely threatened with torture and death themselves if they dared to exercise that option.

Robert Anderson is an example of a sexual sadist who abducted Piper Streytle and ended up killing her. Her husband Vance Streytle remembered him coming to their trailer days before his wife’s abduction to inquire about

enrolling his kids into bible camp for the children. Several witnesses had seen Robert parked around the Streyles trailer in his black truck. When interviewed by the investigators he denied knowing anything about Piper's abduction or her whereabouts. It wasn't until the investigators got a search warrant to search his car and home.

When investigators searched his car they found a wooden platform that had holes drilled into it. It was believed that it was made as a restraining device in which a person's ankles and hands could be tied to metal hoops that were strategically inserted into the board. The investigative team also found hairs attached to the wooden platform, which genetically matched pipers. More gruesome physical evidence was discovered around the river, which included several lengths of rope and chains, eyebolts, a vibrator and a half burned candle. It was believed that these items were used to torture Piper.

According to investigators Hazelwood and Michaud, there was sufficient proof that Anderson was a sexual sadist who was excited by the physical and psychological suffering and helplessness of his victim. Their opinion was based on four factors one of them being that Anderson displayed an obvious interest in sexual bondage, a hallmark of the sexual sadist, which was represented by the restraints, dildo, partially burnt candle, eyebolts, handcuff , keys, duct tape and plywood platform. The evidence found by investigators clearly indicated physical torture. It was surmised that after Piper was abducted, Anderson drove her to a wooded area near Baltic. While there he may have bound her to the platform, gagged her with duct tape, sheared her shirt off and then methodically tortured her with the dildo and candle before raping her. It is believed that he then murdered Piper and

disposed of her body. Anderson admitted to police and friends that he liked anal sex, a preference his wife did not share. Research conducted by Hazelwood and Michaud found that sexual sadists prefer this form of sex. They believed that the dildo was used by Anderson to act out his fantasy.

Conclusion

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