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Law Enforcement Bulletin



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Hammer Spinning Impressions Physical Evidence in Suicides

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FBI

Law Enforcement Bulletin

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A hammer spur impression can prove to be an important piece of physical evidence in suicide investigations. See article p. 11.

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The Maligned Investigator of Criminal Sexuality

"One has only to examine some of the concepts associated with deviant sexuality to realize the enormous task confronting the modern-day investigator."

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

The male pronouns are used at times when the female gender would be equally applicable. This is done in the interest of sentence structure and readability.

Richard Beck was an individual respected for his ability to solve the most difficult homicide cases. He was also known as an officer who didn't let departmental rules and regulations stand in the way of his investigations. After numerous warnings, the powers that be decided to teach Detective Beck a lesson. He would be reassigned to the Sex Crimes Unit! If that didn't teach him a lesson, nothing would.

He was called into the captain's office and given the bad news. This time, the department had his attention. He tried to reason with the captain, explaining that he would reform his ways. The captain was unsympathetic. This time, Detective Beck had gone too far and even his excellent record wouldn't save him. The captain advised Beck that he was being assigned to the Sex Crimes Unit to teach him a lesson.

This scene was presented in a television movie starring Richard Crenna and entitled "The Rape of Richard Beck." The intent of the film was to portray a macho male who, after becoming a rape victim, is forced to confront the resultant physical and emotional

trauma. However, the filmmakers' perceptions of individuals who investigate sexual crimes are worth noting.

A similar scene appeared in the Burt Reynolds' movie, "Sharky's Machine." After being transferred from Narcotics to Vice, Detective Sharky finds that his old partner won't even accompany him as he descends into the bowels of the building to his new desk in a squad room filled with stereotypical oddballs and misfits. It is a classic illustration of the popular perception that only "weirdos" investigate "weird" crimes.

Unfortunately, these fictional accounts are not simply the products of writers' active imaginations; they mirror



Special Agent Lanning



Special Agent Hazelwood

perceptions often shared by individuals in and out of law enforcement. Conversations with investigators, friends, families, and associates confirm this attitude about those who work in the investigation and prosecution of sexual crimes. As used in this article, the term "investigation" also includes prosecution, instruction, and research. The term "sexual crimes" also includes sexual vice (prostitution and pornography).

An Analogy

A simple analogy is helpful. Investigating sex crimes is like being a garbage collector. It is important that garbage be collected and removed. If it is not, people quickly complain. Used to putting garbage by the curb, coming home from work, and finding it gone, they give little thought to the details of its disposal. The only time they pay any attention is when their garbage is not picked up, when a new landfill or incinerator is to be located near their homes, when toxic waste seeps into their drinking water, or when a garbage barge can't find a place to unload. People are interested in garbage collection only when it directly affects them. Even so, few ever become interested to the point of wanting their children to grow up to be garbage collectors. Those who do the dirty job of garbage collecting are "dirty" by association. The same may be said of investigators of sexual crimes.

Sex is probably the most talked about and least understood subject in American culture, and those who investigate, research, prosecute, or teach criminal sexuality are viewed like those who deal with the world's trash, as "dif-

ferent" or "dirty." This is unfortunate, but it is something with which the investigator must learn to cope. There will always be those, both within and outside the department, who cannot, or will not, appreciate the seriousness of sexual offenses. Nor will they understand the emotional impact such investigations can have on the investigator.

Society's attitude toward child sexual abuse, child prostitution, child pornography, rape, and other sexual crimes can be summed up in a single word—DENIAL. People don't want to hear about these problems, much less deal with them. This includes not only the average citizen but government leaders, law enforcement administrators, and investigators. Only when they or someone they know or love is victimized does this attitude change. Most of the few people who show up at public presentations on sexual assault awareness or prevention have been directly or indirectly victimized.

When people do attempt to confront these crimes, they tend to have preconceptions of offenders as evil monsters and not people who can appear and act normally. Every time a "pillar of the community" is arrested for a sexual offense, the media react as though this were a first. However, it is not amazing that "nice" people commit sexual crimes. What is amazing is that people are still surprised by it.

Criminal Sexuality vs. Sex Crimes

One of the major hindrances to an investigator's work in sexual criminality is the title most commonly associated with such work—Sex Crime Unit or Sex

"One of the major hindrances to an investigator's work in sexual criminality is the title most commonly associated with such work—Sex Crime Unit or Sex Crime Investigator."

Crime Investigator. When one of the authors was given the responsibility of teaching a course entitled "Sex Crimes," his first order of business was to change the title to "Interpersonal Violence." He did so because of his experience in teaching classes entitled "Sex Crimes." The student reaction invariably was, "Oh, boy, this is what I've been waiting for." Or, "Let me tell you a joke you can use in class." Or, "Here is where we get to see the dirty pictures." Sex crime instruction is too often considered to be a porno sideshow for cops.

Why do such stereotypes persist? Simply stated, it is the power of the word "sex." It overwhelms the word "crime." When one hears the word "sex," a range of emotions is evoked, from pleasure, ecstasy, and lust to love, warmth, and sharing. The word "crime," however, is associated with violence, anger, harm, devastation, and fear. "Sex" and "crime" do not complement each other. They don't seem to belong together at all. So, when an individual hears "sex crime," what actually registers is "sex." Is it any wonder that a person meeting or dealing with one involved in such work smiles and says, "You're one of those, huh?"

The terms "criminal sexuality" or "sexual crimes" leave no doubt as to the involvement of crime (violence, fear, harm) in sexual matters. The reader or listener automatically registers all of the feelings associated with crime, as well as, or perhaps rather than, those associated with sex. Even the word "sexuality" has a more neutral impact than the word "sex." While such a distinction may seem trivial to some, the power of

words must never be underestimated. If the reader doubts the truth of this, notice the reaction of individuals as they pass a classroom with the topic "Sex Crimes" posted on the door.

The Investigator of Criminal Sexuality

What type of person investigates sexual crimes in America today? How old are they? What is the amount of experience in law enforcement, the educational level, or marital status of the typical investigator assigned to such crimes?

In 1984, LeDoux and Hazelwood conducted a nationwide survey of police officers to determine primarily their attitudes and beliefs about the crime of rape.¹ Included in the survey were questions concerning the individual respondent, which also addressed the questions presented above. Three thousand questionnaires were mailed, and usable returns were received from 2,170 or 72 percent of those queried. Two hundred and two of those respondents were found to be currently involved in the investigation of sexual crimes. Data extracted from the study provide the reader with information about what type of individual investigates such crimes.

Ninety-two percent of the investigators assigned to sexual crimes were white males, with a mean age of 38.2 years and 13.1 years of law enforcement experience. Eighty-one percent were married and 54 percent had either attended college or obtained a bachelor degree. Statistical analysis was performed to compare sexual crimes in-

vestigators and other investigators on the variables of age, experience, gender, race, marital status, and education.² The sexual crimes investigators were found to be older (38.2 years vs. 35.9 years) and more experienced (13.1 years vs. 11.3 years) than the other investigators. On the other variables, there were no significant differences. Although slightly more female officers were assigned to sexual crimes investigation, the difference was not statistically significant.

In other words, sexual crimes investigators are not unlike other investigators in law enforcement today. Why is it then that they are viewed as being different? The authors believe that there are multiple reasons. The investigators, their departments, and their fellow officers must share equally in the responsibility. In the following sections, the authors address what each must do to correct an incorrect perception.

The Investigator's Responsibility

The investigator of criminal sexuality plays the most important role in influencing how others perceive him. If he does not approach the task in a professional manner, how can professional treatment be expected? When teaching an instructor's course in criminal sexuality, the authors reserve the first 2 hours for ethical issues. Future instructors are advised against the use of unnecessary slides (those without a learning objective), profanity, inappropriate joke telling, or sexist remarks. Professionalism must be maintained when speaking on so volatile a subject. If the classes are professionally conducted, not one word, slide, or joke

“The attitude a law enforcement agency has toward the commission of sexual offenses is reflected in its selection of individuals to investigate such crimes.”

should have to be changed because a female is present.

Pictures, Profanity, and Jokes

The same advice can be applied to those who investigate such crimes. All of us have met the individual who wants to share some “dirty” pictures recovered from a case; however, when the sexual crimes investigator does so, he confirms the suspicion that he is in the job because he likes “dirty” pictures. If the truth be known, the photographs are probably being displayed for much the same reason a teenager takes the first drink or a modest person tells an off-colored joke—to prove that they are not different from their peers. Regardless of the reason, such behavior can and will be misconstrued.

The sexual crimes investigator must maintain absolute control over any pornography in his possession. Failure to do so not only causes legal problems involving the chain of custody but personal problems for the investigator. No professional investigator should ever become known as the supplier of pornography for parties or officers working the late shift.

There is nothing wrong with telling a joke, and most people will use some profanity during their lifetime. But when the investigator earns a reputation as the premier “dirty” joke teller or the most profane individual in the department, he has almost certainly compromised his position, detracting from the professionalism of the job and demeaning himself in the eyes of his colleagues.

Confidentiality

Sexual crimes investigators also have a responsibility to the victims of the crimes they investigate. The victims have a right to confidentiality, both with respect to their identity and to the information they provide the investigator. Information given to the investigator is for investigative and prosecutive purposes only! The victim never intended that it be shared with those not having a legitimate need to know. It goes without question that certain information must be shared for case comparison; however, the neighbor, bartender, service station attendant, or anyone not involved in the investigation or a similar investigation does not need to know what the victim of a sexual crime was forced to do or say while under the control of the offender. The investigator is absolutely dependent upon the victim for information pertaining to the crime and the criminal; he must not betray the victim's trust.

The instructor must also remember this concept when using investigative evidence during a training presentation. The possibility of revealing the identity of victims in crime scene photographs, sexually explicit pictures taken by an offender, or videotapes of victim statements must be carefully considered before using such material for training purposes.

Professional Space

The investigator's office or professional space is also under the scrutiny of others. The authors are reminded of entering the office of an individual who was reputed to be an expert in criminal

sexuality. On the wall behind the “expert” were a pair of black lace panties and a brassiere. On a side wall was a leather thong whip, beneath which was a sign: “Without Pain There Is No Pleasure.” On the individual's desk was a statue of a robed figure. The “expert” demonstrated the function of the statuette; he pushed the figure's head and an erect penis projected from beneath the robe. Needless to say, our opinion of his “expertise” (not to mention his professionalism) was substantially diminished. It is difficult for the authors to envision a victim entering that environment and feeling comfortable discussing a very personal experience at the hands of a “pervert.” Even disregarding the impact of such an environment on victims, what did this person's peers or everyday visitors feel upon entering that office?

Expertise

The professional investigator of sexual crimes improves his knowledge of criminal behavior and the types of offenders investigated. He seeks out opportunities to become more proficient in investigations through readings, attendance at seminars, or job-related courses. He is well-acquainted with recent research on offender typologies, underlying motivations for the various types of sexual offenses encountered, and the emotional impact (short and long term) of sexual crimes on victims. In other words, he is not satisfied with what he learned on the job, in a book, or in a course 7 years ago. Every day brings new and startling information relevant to investigating criminal sexuality,

and it is the responsibility of the investigator to remain current in the field. The authors are convinced that education and training can only result in better performance, and consequently, more peer respect. One has only to examine some of the concepts associated with deviant sexuality to realize the enormous task confronting the modern-day investigator. The following are but a few of the areas of concern—sadism, masochism, bondage, paraphilias, sexual dysfunction, autoerotic fatalities, ritualism, fetishism, child erotica, child pornography, sado-masochism, infibulation, fellatio, sodomy, pedophilia, coprolagnia, urolagnia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and rape. The list is seemingly endless.

Terminology

The development and use of professional terminology is essential for individuals involved in this type of work. The investigator of sexual crimes deals with physicians, lawyers, judges, mental health personnel, peers, as well as offenders, victims, and witnesses. With the possible exception of offenders, victims, and witnesses, the rest are professionals. They use and expect others to use proper terminology, and while the victim and witnesses may or may not be professionals, they have the right to know that they are being questioned by a professional. While the authors recognize the investigative value of a knowledge of "street terms," the interview of a sexual assault victim, or the instruction of classes, may not be the forum for a display of such knowledge. For example, the term "fellatio"

refers to the performance of oral sex on a male. The investigator would be well advised to initially ask a rape victim if she were forced to perform fellatio or oral sex on the offender, rather than asking about "head," "face," or a "blow job." Obviously, to avoid confusion or misunderstanding, the investigator must also be familiar with various family or slang terms for body parts and sexual acts. In some cases, it may be important to determine the exact words used by an offender or the terms as understood by the victim. In other words, the professional investigator knows both the slang and professional terms, but he also knows the appropriate times for using each. As his method of investigation, as well as his attitude, becomes known within police circles, the investigator's reputation can be enhanced or diminished by such knowledge.

The Department's Role

The attitude a law enforcement agency has toward the commission of sexual offenses is reflected in its selection of individuals to investigate such crimes. It is generally accepted that among law enforcement departments, the elite investigative group is homicide. Sheriffs and police chiefs invariably mention with pride the number of homicides solved. Rarely is the same amount of pride exhibited in discussions of those who investigate sexual crimes. One has to wonder why the solution rate of homicides (70% during 1986) is almost always greater than the solution rate for sexual crimes (52% during 1986).³ In a homicide case, the

victim is deceased and can provide no verbal information for the investigator, but the rape victim most often survives to help the investigator.

Is homicide simpler to investigate because the crime is generally committed by a relative, neighbor, or associate? If it is simpler to investigate, should the best detectives be assigned to the cases? If the reason for the higher solution rate is because the better investigators are assigned to homicides, then wouldn't the department, and the public, be better served by the assignment of a higher caliber of individual to crimes of a sexual nature? In addition, if children are our most valuable resource, is not the investigation of child sexual abuse or child pornography more important than the investigation of robbery or white-collar crime?

The investigation of sexual crimes is emotionally and psychologically demanding. No department should assign investigators to such work without providing them with support and recognition, as well as monitoring their situation. If this is a dirty job that someone has to do, then that someone needs adequate office space, secure facilities for pornographic evidence, private interview rooms for victims, and funds for basic and advanced training. But even more important is someone to talk to, an occasional pat on the back, a thank you—those signs of interest and recognition that cost no money, only time. By monitoring an investigator's situation, a supervisor will also recognize when it's time to transfer an investigator to another type of work.

"The investigator working child sexual abuse and exploitation must learn to cope with an added stigma within law enforcement."

Selection of Investigative Personnel

Law enforcement agencies would do well to be selective in assigning individuals to the investigation of criminal sexuality. Any officer assigned to the investigation of sexual crimes should be a volunteer who is then carefully screened and trained for this highly specialized work. This work is not for everyone. And such an assignment should never be considered a form of discipline or punishment! If sexual crime assignments are considered to be disciplinary in nature, only the marginal performers or those in trouble will be dealing with the victims of an intrusive and violent crime.

It must be recognized that the officer selected to work with victims of sexual assault immediately and directly influences the victim's sense of self-worth. The victim has experienced fear, anger, guilt, and humiliation. The investigator's ability to recognize and deal with these emotions will affect the victim's well-being for a long period of time.

Investigators must also deal with offenders who have committed "sick," "disgusting," and "repulsive" acts. If an investigator ever expects to get a confession, he must be able to communicate empathy and understanding, even if he is repulsed. The investigator must be able to control his emotions in order to reduce his ability to reason. Holding an offender up to public ridicule like a hunting trophy accomplishes little if the case is later dismissed due to avoidable investigative error. In essence, the investigator must be able to control his emotions and do some acting when necessary.

Investigators With a Hidden Agenda

An unpleasant reality of life is that there are individuals who are attracted to this type of work for reasons other than a sense of duty toward, or concern for, victims. Some investigators are voyeuristic in their investigations; they get a vicarious thrill out of interviewing victims or viewing the pornography often associated with sexual crimes. They may demand sexual acts from prostitutes, ask a rape victim to describe her assault an unreasonable number of times, or make copies of seized materials for their private use.

There is an old joke that defines psychiatry as the study of the id by the odd. Some investigators are drawn to these cases because they are unable to confront their own sexual problems or concerns. They believe that by investigating sexual crimes, they can better understand or repress their own sexual feelings or urges. Reaction formation, a Freudian defense mechanism, is defined as "preventing the awareness or expression of unacceptable desires by an exaggerated adoption of seemingly opposite behavior."⁴

Still others are drawn to this type of work because of their own prior victimization. Former victims of child abuse or sexual assault should not be automatically excluded from the investigation of sexual crimes. However, they should be carefully evaluated to ensure that they are still functioning as objective fact-finders, not as recruiters for the brotherhood or sisterhood of sexual abuse victims. Some even get involved in these cases as a way to express their hatred or resentment of the opposite sex.

Finally, some enter this field to enforce their own moral or religious values on others. Investigators must remember that they enforce the penal code and not the Ten Commandments. Child molestation and rape are of professional interest to the law enforcement investigator because they are crimes, not because they are sins. A personal code of ethics is an important asset to any investigator. However, personal moral values are the criteria by which the investigator should judge his own behavior and not the behavior of others.

The agency responsible for selecting individuals to work in the area of sexual crimes will find that common sense in the selection process goes a long way. The axiom "the best prediction of future behavior is past behavior" is applicable here. Individuals who have had problems with the public, their peers, supervisors, or subordinates should not be selected for such work.

Training

The department must not only ensure that individuals are qualified for such an assignment but must do everything in its power to enhance or sharpen the skills of the officer in sexual assault investigation. Ideally, some training should take place *prior* to the time the officer assumes investigative duties. All too often, investigators are assigned to patrol or robbery one day and transferred to sexual assault investigations the next. An investigator cannot hope to have any understanding of criminal sexuality from the ordinary experiences of life. In some departments, officers desiring to attend job-enhancing training must do so on their own

time (often after working a shift or by taking leave) and/or must pay for such training themselves. Such an attitude sends a strong message of the importance the department attaches to such crimes and/or training.

Fellow Law Enforcement Officers

The importance of peer support (or lack thereof) cannot be overemphasized in law enforcement. What one's fellow officers say or think about him or his work affects his performance, self-esteem, and attitude. Individuals involved in the investigation of criminal sexuality say that this is the one area that is most bothersome to them. Daily, these investigators are dealing with women and children who have been emotionally and physically torn apart by the most horrific types of body invasion. They deal with offenders who are held in disdain even by other criminals—rapists, child molesters, exhibitionists, fetish thieves, and obscene phone callers. Investigators are expected to remain "above it all"; yet, when they get back to the office, fellow law enforcement officers refer to them in terms meant to be humorous—"pervert," "diaper dick," "kiddie cop." These terms offend and degrade both the investigator and the job being done.

The authors have themselves experienced, and have been told of other investigators, being introduced to law enforcement officers or members of related disciplines as the "department's expert on wienie wagers" or "our local pervert." This immediately places the investigator in the position of trying to legitimize his work. He has been labeled a "pervert" by his fellow officers

to a stranger and must now convince another individual that he is involved in a serious and demanding task. It often seems that much of a sexual crimes investigator's time is spent convincing people of his legitimacy. To some readers, this may sound trivial. The reality of the matter is that it has a negative effect on a person.

As stated previously, the respect of one's peers is extremely important to an individual, and while the authors do not believe that the comments made by fellow workers of the sexual crimes investigator are malicious in intent, the fact remains that they neither reflect nor build esteem.

Child Sexual Abuse

There are some special problems for the investigator who deals with child victim crimes. Investigators repeatedly say that they successfully separate the work they do from their personal emotions in almost all cases, except victim crimes—and especially child sexual abuse cases. Male police officers seem to have a bigger problem with this than female officers. Both male and female police officers are typically repulsed by, and strongly condemn, child sexual abuse; they both believe such cases should be aggressively investigated and prosecuted. However, the female officer is often more willing, albeit reluctantly, to do the "dirty" job, while the male officer tends to try to avoid it, in some cases with the excuse that women are better-suited for these cases. The authors are aware of no evidence to indicate that as a general rule, women are better at interviewing chil-

dren than men. Although special cases or circumstances may call for an investigator of one gender or the other, the skill and training of the investigator is more important than gender. Females are often assigned to these cases, not because they relate better to children but because they tend to be emotionally stronger and less likely to vehemently complain than males.

The investigator working child sexual abuse and exploitation must learn to cope with an added stigma within law enforcement. An investigator who seizes adult pornography at least has seized material of some interest to his fellow investigators. This normal interest in the evidence recovered gives the investigator some status. The investigator who seizes child pornography, however, returns to his department with material which offends and repulses fellow officers. When fellow officers take a brief glance at the material, the investigator is quickly left alone with his evidence.

Even some supervisors have difficulty dealing with these cases. They frequently do not want to hear the details of a case and sometimes seem to treat case files themselves as though they were contaminated. Some would prefer to deny that the problem even exists. An investigator once wrote that trying to talk to his superior about the sexual exploitation of children was like trying to convince the Air Force of the existence of UFO's.

Yet, the investigator must examine, catalog, and analyze the evidence. He may take hours, days, or even weeks, doing something his fellow officers cannot or will not do. All too often, fellow

"While much on-the-job humor may be 'gallows' humor . . . among professional, experienced investigators, it can be an effective coping mechanism."

officers assume that if they cannot deal with it, there must be something wrong with someone who can. Initially, they respond in jest, with open jokes and "humorous" remarks. However, they often progress to comments made behind the investigator's back, requests that the material be examined someplace else, requests that the investigator be moved out of the squad room, requests that the investigator be prevented from openly discussing the case in front of others, and ultimately, comments about the mental health and sexual inclinations of the investigator.

Some seem inclined to believe that the sexual crimes investigator has a personal involvement or interest in whatever activity is under investigation. Some want to believe that the vice officer is having sex with prostitutes or that the rape investigator is involved in some form of kinky sex. In other words, how could anyone work that kind of case and be normal?

It is bad enough being labeled a "pervert" if your "interest" is in other adults. The implication that the child sexual abuse investigator has some perverted interest in children is especially devastating. Usually, this takes the form of innocent joking. An investigator who specializes in child victim sexual crimes may become the brunt of numerous jokes about a lack of interest in attractive adults, playing with anatomically correct dolls, postcards picturing the Vienna Boys' Choir, and so on. Little can be done about this. One can only be careful not to overreact and add fuel to the comments. It comes with the territory. Occasionally, joking can

go further, even to the point of becoming mean and vindictive. Under these circumstances, supervisory intervention may be necessary; yet, the investigator should ensure that he is doing nothing to compound this tendency, that he is doing his job in a professional manner.

It is interesting to note how quickly the jokes and ribbing stop when a colleague has a loved one who has been molested and advice is needed. Then suddenly, this is an important and serious subject, and the investigator is a valued professional.

The officers working child sexual abuse, especially in medium or small departments, frequently become isolated from their peer groups. While police officers frequently socialize with each other and talk "shop," they don't want to hear about child molesters and child pornography. This problem is not as bad for officers assigned to specialized child abuse units or to specialized task forces. They can share experiences, vent their frustrations, and mutually reinforce one another. This is an important secondary benefit of the task force concept of investigation and of specialized training programs.

Unfortunately, many officers also can't talk about this work to spouses, family members, loved ones, or friends. Some officers may not admit, or might even deny, that they work with child sexual abuse. Family members or friends can add to the problem when they ask, "Are you still working that child stuff?" or "Can't you get a transfer to something else?" or, "Do you have to tell people you work that?"

The authors have received numerous phone calls and letters from police officers who have no specific questions but merely want to talk about a case. A recently received letter from an officer demonstrates how such work can affect an individual. It stated in part:

"I am currently assigned to forgery and auto theft. However, my first assignment as an investigator was in Juvenile/Sex Crimes. I can *honestly* say that that was the *most* trying and stress-filled assignment to date . . .

"I know that your job is tough, unforgiving, and constantly supplied with sarcasm by other agents; when I worked sex crimes, my peers called me 'diaper dick.' My warrants were taken in jest, vice seemed 'all important.' Which I find a terrible joke; in a robbery, all one goes without is money or jewelry, but in sex crimes with children, these peers don't realize that you're talking of a potentially *ruined* life!"

Symptoms of Stress

Carole W. Soskis, M.S.W., J.D. and David A. Soskis, M.D., consultants to the FBI's Psychological Services Program, have identified work on cases involving criminal sexuality as involving a number of special stresses that must be managed appropriately if the investigator is to function well professionally and maintain good health. The strong emotional reactions provoked by this material and the isolation and prejudice to which it may expose the investigator can make this work "toxic" psycholog-

ically and socially. In these situations, as in medical settings, professionalism means the control of exposure and monitoring its effects. A worker who deals with radioactive material has a dosimeter to indicate overexposure; the investigator's only gauges are his own reactions and behavior, both at work and at home. He must be alert to the early warning signs of overexposure or stress.

Special Agent James T. Reese of the FBI's Behavioral Science Instruction and Research Unit has categorized the following early warning signs of stress problems:

"The numerous symptoms that may relate to stress disorders can be grouped in three categories: (1) emotional, (2) behavioral, and (3) physical. The number of symptoms a person may exhibit is not important, but rather the extent of changes noted from the person's normal condition. Furthermore, the combined presence of symptoms determines the potency of the problem. Indicators range from isolated reactions to combinations of symptoms from the three categories. Finally, the duration, the frequency, and the intensity of the symptoms indicate the extent to which the individual is suffering.

"In the emotional category, symptoms include apathy, anxiety, irritability, mental fatigue, and overcompensation or denial. Individuals afflicted with these symptoms are restless, agitated, overly sensitive, defensive, preoccupied and have difficulty

concentrating. These officers will overwork to exhaustion and may become groundlessly suspicious of others. They may be arrogant, argumentative, insubordinate, and hostile. Their feelings of insecurity and worthlessness lead to self-defeat. Depression is common and chronic.

"Behavioral symptoms are often more easily detected than emotional ones, for its sufferers withdraw and seek social isolation. Such individuals are reluctant to accept responsibilities and/or tend to neglect current ones. They often act out their misery through alcohol abuse, gambling, promiscuity, and spending sprees. Much of their desperate behavior is a cry for help and should be recognized as such. Other indications could be tardiness, poor appearance, and poor personal hygiene, both at work and at home. These patterns can lead to domestic disputes and spouse/child abuse.

"The physical effects of stress are extremely dangerous. The individual may become preoccupied with illness or may dwell on minor ailments, taking excessive sick leave and complaining of exhaustion during the workday. Among the many somatic indicators are headaches, insomnia, recurrent awakening, early morning rising, changes in appetite resulting in either weight loss or gain, indigestion, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Such psychophysical

maladies may be a direct result of excessive stress upon the officer." ⁵

Coping Strategies

The following coping strategies are recommended for individuals responsible for the investigation of criminal sexuality.

Limit Exposure—This can be accomplished in two ways. First, an investigator should never devote himself exclusively to criminal sexuality. His life simply cannot become a 24-hour-a-day crusade. He needs to pursue outside interests, develop hobbies not related to his work, and find both family and personal time. On an occupational level, he should consider getting involved in cases or work not involving criminal sexuality. Second, an investigator probably should not make a life-long career of criminal sexuality. For many, promotion is the built-in safety valve which limits their career exposure to criminal sexuality. The authors do not believe that there is a specific time limit to an investigator's career in criminal sexuality, but each individual should carefully and regularly consider whether the time to move along has come.

Humor—A good sense of humor is a valuable attribute for the investigator dealing with such an unpleasant matter. On some occasions, the investigator must almost choose between laughing in self-defense and crying with pity. The absence of a sense of humor may make an investigator ill-suited for this type of work, and its loss is often a sign of significant psychological stress. While much on-the-job humor may be "gallows" humor or joking about things

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which aren't really funny, among professional, experienced investigators, it can be an effective coping mechanism. “Once it finds its way out of the locker room, however, and into the public eye, it is a clear sign of maladaptation of stress”⁶ and constitutes unprofessional behavior.

Peer Support—Turning to others who deal with the same kind of work can also help. As previously discussed, this is easier for investigators in large departments or in specialized units. Other investigators can accomplish this by participating in specialized task forces, attending training conferences, and joining professional organizations. One such professional organization which offers peer support is the California Sexual Assault Investigators' Association.⁷ A newer, national interdisciplinary organization is the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children.⁸

Physical Fitness—Any attempt to manage stress must include the nurturing of good physical fitness habits. Proper diet, regular exercise, and sufficient sleep are essential. Numerous books and tapes which discuss relaxation techniques for managing stress are available.

Self-satisfaction—In light of the numerous problems discussed, one might well ask why anyone would voluntarily get involved in such work. It is a question that the authors have asked themselves and others many times. The answer heard again and again is that the sense of accomplishment accompanying this kind of work makes one believe his efforts make a difference. Many Federal agents who investigate the sexual exploitation of children mention the feeling they get from help-

ing “real” victims of crime. Little can duplicate an investigator's sense of satisfaction when the victim of such a crime says, “Thank you.” The bottom line, however, is that investigators of sexual assault can't wait around for the gratitude of society or their superiors. They must take pride in their work and be satisfied with what they know they have accomplished.

Summary

Individuals in and out of law enforcement often perceive that those who work in the investigation and prosecution of sexual crimes are “different” or “weird.” Much of this is due to society's inability to deal openly with human sexuality and especially deviant or criminal sexuality. Individual investigators, their departments, and their fellow officers all share the responsibility for dealing with this perception.

Investigators must approach their job in a professional manner. The attitude a law enforcement agency has toward the investigation of criminal sexuality is reflected in its selection of individuals to investigate such crimes. Because of the importance of peer support, fellow officers must appreciate the problems faced by those who investigate criminal sexuality. There are also some added special problems for the investigators who deal with child sexual abuse.

Investigators must be alert to the early warning signs of overexposure or stress. By using appropriate humor, limiting exposure, maintaining good physical fitness, nurturing and seeking peer support, and feeling a sense of self-accomplishment, the investigator of criminal sexuality can turn a job perceived as “dirty” into a rewarding assignment.

Footnotes

¹R. R. Hazelwood and A. W. Burgess, ed., *Practical Aspects of Rape Investigation* (New York: Elsevier, 1987), pp. 43-57.

²t or chi square tests were used as appropriate.

³W. H. Webster, *Crime in the United States 1986* (Washington, D.C.: Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1987), pp. 12-14.

⁴J. C. Coleman, J. N. Butcher, and R. C. Carson, *Abnormal Psychology and Modern Life*, 7th ed. (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1984), p. 64.

⁵Supra note 1, pp. 308-309.

⁶Supra note 1, pp. 306.

⁷Additional information can be obtained from the California Sexual Assault Investigators' Association (C.S.A.I.A.), P.O. Box 1070, Los Angeles, CA 90053, (213) 946-7993.

⁸Additional information can be obtained from the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC), University of Chicago, 969 East 60th, Chicago, IL 60637, (213) 836-2471.

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