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Why the Paraphilias? Domesticating Strange Sex

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Paraphilias (e.g., pedophilia, fetishism) are said to be virtually ineradicable once established. The authors propose that the motivational state known as the Zeigarnik effect, according to which interrupted tasks are better recalled than completed tasks, may provide understanding of this process, especially its later addictive-compulsive quality. Reasoning from Zeigarnik-type research, the authors predict a relation between early sexual arousal, its frustration, and subsequent events associated with such arousal. The paraphilias are thus seen as an unusual by-product of a normal adaptive process, that is, a tendency to privilege the recollection of unfinished over finished activities. The authors discuss why paraphilias are associated nearly exclusively with males, and why paraphilic tendencies are apparently quite rare in traditional societies. They also propose new research on the processes and outcomes entailed by the Zeigarnik effect, such research including, but not being limited to, sexuality.

Authors' Note: Suzanne Frayser offered encouragement and useful information in our pursuit of the current topic and carefully and constructively



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Nothing is as intense as unconsummated love.

James Salter, *Burning the Days*

In this article, we explore a new hypothesis about one aspect of human sexuality, that of the paraphilias. In their summary of the characterization of the paraphilias in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV)* (American Psychiatric Association, 1994), Stein, Black, and Pienaar (2000) describe the syndrome as follows:

Sexual disorders with recurrent, intense sexual urges, fantasies or behaviors generally involving nonhuman objects, along with the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one's partner or children or other nonconsenting persons. . . . Paraphilias included in the *DSM-IV* are exhibitionism, fetishism, frotteurism, pedophilia, sexual masochism, sexual sadism, [and] voyeurism. (p. 60)

The paraphilias have often been treated in the literature as separate entities. The recently published *Encyclopedia of Psychology* (Kazdin, 2000), for example, contains five entries on paraphilic phenomena, with each seen as distinct from the others. Such a particularistic conception is accurate at the level of behavioral manifestations. Occasional symptoms may, in fact, be unique to individual cases, such as the person whose desired source of sexual excitement was listening to church sermons (Money, 1985). But researchers and scholars have also pointed out that the paraphilias, once established, become essentially ineradicable¹ (Money, 1985), that they display a quality of desperation and fixity

reviewed a version of the article. Ronald Macaulay and Susan Seymour also commented on a draft of this article. Lucian Marquis provided translations from the German, and Carmella Moore and Ralph Bolton suggested relevant literature. Margaret and William Faust obligingly listened to the main argument of the article and made several helpful comments, as did Albert Wachtel. Robert and Julie Albert patiently and insightfully responded to various elements of the argument over a period of months. An earlier version of this article was presented in a session on "Sexualities 2000" (Ralph Bolton, chair and organizer) at the annual meeting of the Society for Cross-Cultural Research, New Orleans, February 2000. Responses to the article by the participants and members of the audience were very helpful. The suggestions of Harry Triandis were of especial value. The contents of this article, of course, remain the responsibility of the authors.

(Kaplan, 1991), and that they seem “to be related at least in part to a personalized experience of early sexual arousal” (Money, 1985, p. 149). In our view, these commonalities may arise as a consequence of similar psychological underpinnings shared by many paraphilias. We shall examine a motivational state termed the *Zeigarnik effect* (Deutsch, 1968) as a possible contender for a process of this sort. After tracing hypothetical connections between the paraphilias and the Zeigarnik effect, we will describe two pieces of epidemiological evidence relevant to our argument, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the hypothesis, and then point to various lines of research that could be brought to bear on the question.

Zeigarnik (1927) and others (see Deutsch, 1968, for a brief review), working from the Lewinian concept of *tension system*, posited that “the tendency to recall interrupted activities should be greater than the tendency to recall finished ones” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 435). In a series of experiments in which participants were given various tasks to perform and then prevented from completing half of them, individuals recalled approximately twice as many unfinished as completed tasks. The process also appeared when investigators looked not to memory but to later activity: A strong tendency emerged for participants to complete interrupted tasks when later allowed to do so (Henle & Aull, 1953; Ovsiankina, 1928).² The results appear to establish a face validity for the assumption that “when there is a need present for a certain goal . . . it follows that so long as a task is psychologically incomplete the subject should continue to try to perform the task” (Deutsch, 1968, p. 436). Barker, Dembo, and Lewin (1941/1976) added a developmental perspective to this view, arguing that development could be affected by a situation in which a high level of tension in a person is paired with some obstruction that does not allow the goal to be attained. The resulting frustration leads to the development of a new form of tension in the person, one targeted at circumventing the obstruction to the goal.

Although the Zeigarnik effect proved highly robust and the research was well known up to about three decades ago, in the recent past it has been largely disregarded and has, indeed, almost disappeared from the current scene in psychological inquiry.³ The discussion quoted above of Zeigarnik-type research by Deutsch was taken from the 1968 second edition of *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, but in that handbook’s third edition in 1985 (Lindzey & Aronson), there are only two oblique mentions of it, both in reference

to the original set of studies by Zeigarnik in 1927. The 1998 edition of the *Handbook of Child Psychology*, in four volumes, contains a mention only in a historically oriented chapter (Valsiner, 1998). A recent book on the self-regulation of behavior (Carver & Scheier, 1998) does discuss the Zeigarnik effect in passing, pointing out that even though people may disengage from goals, the goals may retain an attraction. In this article we resuscitate the concept and apply it to sexual behaviors that to many would appear strange (our label for them in the title), by which we mean both unusual and not easy to account for. What we hope to show is that rather than strange, the syndrome characteristic of many paraphilias is available for “domesticating,” or for naturalizing, which is to say, for explicating in the terms of an existent psychological construct.

In the commonalities shared by many types of paraphilia, we see elements that are Zeigarnik-like, though in an extreme form: fixation on a particular type of experience, which is analogous to continuing recall of the experience, or hyper-recall; ineradicability, or persistence; and the source of the fixation as often locatable in some early experience, such as sexual arousal, or in a need or tension that was left unsatisfied. The sequence, as we interpret it, can be drawn as follows: sexual arousal, thus, a powerful need that is elicited but remains unmet; then, given an unfinished task (i.e., unsatisfied need), a continuing effort to try to perform the task that is frustrated in such a way that the goal cannot be met. The goal, nonetheless, remains and becomes fixated upon, but by its nature (its location in the past) it cannot be completed and is then, to all intents, a permanent part of the individual’s repertoire.

John Money (1985) uses the phrase “a personalized experience of sexual arousal” (p. 149), which may explain the unique form that some paraphilias take. By this he is referring not only to the arousal itself but to the fact that under circumstances in which the sexual excitement exists, there is present some originally nonsexual, or mildly sexual, element—for instance, an expression of aggression, an item of clothing—that becomes linked to the arousal.⁴ In the paraphilias, the arousal and its means of satisfaction get confused with the originally extraneous element. As a result, the paraphile pursues the associated element.⁵ These elements may be unique not only for individuals but also for societies, as can be seen in transformations over historical time. For example, braid cutting, known in the 19th century as an aphrodisiac for some, is now an anachronism (Kaplan, 1991). In London in the 1960s, many men of a certain age would ask prostitutes to don gas masks and

bathrobes instead of contemporary lingerie. These men had spent some time in their formative years during World War II with women who were wearing such apparel during air raids (Kaplan, 1991).

Typically, the defining experiences, when identifiable retrospectively, have occurred between the ages of 4 or 5 and 8 or 9. In the case of pedophilia, the experience is often related to the pedophile's own remembered childhood relationship with an older partner. But the full emergence of the paraphilic "formula" (fantasy and often overt behavior of a particular sort) commonly occurs during puberty and sometimes later, according to Money (1985). To be clear, Money does not claim that paraphilias can be traced to single events or even to solely experiential origins. There is evidence that for some paraphiles, genital defects may play a role (Money & Lamacz, 1989). Other commentators give etiological accounts ranging from classical conditioning (for fetishism) (Hall, 2000) to one or another version of psychoanalytic arguments (Freud, 1905/1975; Kaplan, 1991) to complex, multicausal explanations for single paraphilias (Finkelhor & Araji, 1986). Although classical conditioning processes can be shown experimentally to accomplish the pairing of potential fetish stimuli with sexual arousal (McGuire, Carlisle, & Young, 1965), such processes are unlikely to eventuate in anything resembling the extreme motivational states characteristic of paraphilic attachments. More fundamentally, the problem with attempting to apply a learning paradigm to any paraphilia is that in many cases the source experiences appear lodged in frustrating rather than reinforcing events, and that the paraphilic expression is not an exact replay of an earlier experience but a uniquely constructed set of behaviors adapted to developmental needs.⁶

Money's long-term research program at Johns Hopkins provides a picture of the paraphilias that seems compatible with the hypothesis we are advancing. The strongly marked features of the paraphilias, especially their obligative, compulsive character,⁷ may appear out of proportion to any effects obtained in classic Zeigarnik-type research, but we emphasize that what is being considered here is the question of frustration of a puissant human need—the sexual—along with that need's inescapable emotional baggage. To repeat James Salter's phrasing from our epigraph, "Nothing is as intense as unconsummated love."⁸

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

We turn now to two empirical regularities that are strong and are consistent with our hypothesis. We describe the evidence as “epidemiological,” adopting the term after Caspi (2000), who states, “It is a misunderstanding of epidemiology . . . to think that . . . it is only concerned with describing pathology. The real importance of epidemiology lies in its ability to yield an unbiased understanding of association between variables” (p. 159). The first regularity we want to set out is the tie between the paraphilias and men. Kaplan (1991) asserts that for the paraphilias as a whole, excepting only sadomasochism, one finds more than 99 males for every female. The ratio for sadomasochism is 20 to 1 favoring males. Although these figures are inexact, no commentator of whom we are aware has ever challenged the notion that the paraphilias are overwhelmingly associated with male actors.⁹

The second set of epidemiological evidence describes an association that seems to be as strong as the first, but it is based on problematic data and will require some detailed discussion. The cross-cultural evidence, such as it is, indicates that the paraphilias are almost nonexistent in traditional societies. This contrasts with what we know about modern societies. For pedophilia, to speak of only 1 among more than 30 known paraphilias, there is evidence in multiple nations in North America, Asia, and Europe of fairly extensive child sexual abuse (Korbin, 1987).

Before discussing the substantive materials further, we will delineate our methodological procedure and some of the associated difficulties. We began with the 60-culture Human Relations Area Files (HRAF) Probability Sample (Naroll, 1967) and searched for information in HRAF Category 839, Miscellaneous Sex Behavior, which includes descriptive data on topics such as bestiality, necrophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, and sexual fetishism (Murdock et al., 1961). For 24 of the 60 cases there was no information included in Category 839. In each of those cases without data we replaced the original culture-case with a recommended substitute (as specified by Naroll, 1967). The second search yielded some data for an additional eight societies, giving us a final sample of 44 cases. What this means is that, in toto, some information codeable into Category 839 was mentioned in 44 of 84 ethnographic cases. The absence of information for almost half the searched literature could well indicate

not an absence of the pertinent behavioral patterns in these cultures but rather the frequently inadequate coverage of sexuality by anthropologists and others. Broude (1981), Frayser (1994), and Korbin (1987) have discussed the general problem and the reasons behind it.

Examination of the 44 ethnographic cases yielded but two instances of probable paraphilic tendencies: first, among the Lozi of subsaharan Africa, a man who exhibited unusual but regular patterns of contact and bloodletting with his wives (all but one of whom had now become his ex-wives), and second, among the Toradja of Indonesia, a man who was described as having taken up with a dog. Eight (and possibly up to 10) other societal cases reported some bestiality, but none was an apparent instance of paraphilic attachment to the practice in that no mention of regularity was present.

Thus, as noted, what we have found is consistent with the idea that in traditional societies, there is little reported evidence of paraphilic behavior.¹⁰ The only study that has explicitly set out to study the paraphilias in a traditional group was undertaken by John Money, together with colleagues (Money, Cawte, Bianchi, & Nurcombe, 1970). Using the Australian Aborigines as the archetypal primitive society, much as Freud, Durkheim, Róheim, and others had done, Money and his colleagues searched for but did not find any evidence for the existence of paraphilias among the Yolngu of Arnhem Land. Also relevant is Graburn's (1987) report on 10 cases of child abuse (in a population of just over a thousand families) among the Inuit of Canada; in none of Graburn's cases was sexual abuse involved.¹¹ Moreover, child abuse of any sort was said to be quite rare among all the Eskimo peoples.

We must acknowledge the methodological problems—most forbiddingly, the overall absence of evidence. Obviously, the paucity of data might reflect not a true low incidence but rather the secrecy with which paraphilias may need to be practiced. It is probably correct to assume that, in many places and under many circumstances, great discretion will accompany the paraphilias because they are going to be defined as deviant. Nevertheless, any practices involving human partners, which is the case for some paraphilias, will be difficult to manage in secrecy with success on all occasions; in some cases, a broader community knowledge would be apt to emerge over time and, therefore, be commented on in the anthropological literature. We offer pedophilia as an example. If practiced (rather than just fantasized), it requires a partner. Granted that in

many instances it would remain unknown outside a specific relationship, in some other instances it would also likely become more widely known. Our point is that if practiced, it will sometimes be found out. Since we know of no society in which its manifestation is positively sanctioned, it would, when discovered, almost certainly be condemned and frequently subject to punishment. Condemnations and punishments are part of the very stuff of anthropological interests, and these would not be absent from the descriptive literature. So we tentatively conclude that the low information level is not merely, or at least not only, a matter of poor reportage but, to some extent, the reflection of a real state of affairs.

ANALYSIS

What do we see as the significance of these regularities? First, as to male-only paraphilic tendencies, we believe, with others, that males' sensitive external genitalia lend toward a more facile and observable sexual arousal than exists for females. Thus, the condition of childhood and/or pubertal sexual arousal, which we have identified as a probable initiating step in a Zeigarnik-like sequence, will be much more common and characteristic for boys than girls.¹²

But assuming a predisposal to arousal on the part of males, why do we find an apparently very infrequent development of paraphilias among men in traditional societies? If we continue to apply the terms of the hypothetical process we are invoking, it suggests that some critical element revolving around early sexual arousal and unmet needs may be very different, in general, in traditional and modern cultures. In American society, it has been true from the 19th century to the present that, as Frayser (1985) has put it, "Parents . . . have difficulty communicating with their children about sex and are unlikely to encourage their adolescents to engage in intercourse" (p. 417). Nonetheless, throughout that time, ever increasing numbers of sexual images—primarily images of females, that is—have been purveyed through various media. As Masters, Johnson, and Kolodny (1988) summarize it, "The heyday of erotic art has unquestionably been the 20th century" (p. 358).¹³ The technical capacity to deliver these images has been steadily improving, and it has relied for the most part on visual erotic stimuli, to which males are more susceptible and in which they are more interested than females (Ellis & Symons, 1990; Feerman,

1990). One may safely say that the quantity and diversity of stimulation has been unlike anything found in traditional societies.

Concurrently with this high availability of erotic stimuli, overt sexual socialization practices within the American family have been near the restrictive end. (We qualify the statement by excepting any very recent changes in American sexuality.) The comparative data on this subject, although far from ideal, allow some generalizations. For example, American middle-class society was informally scored the lowest of all cases in Whiting and Child's (1953) ratings of indulgence of masturbation (initial genital self-stimulation), was tied for the highest score in severity of socialization for masturbation, was one point from the lowest in early indulgence of the child's natural immodesty (regarding clothing, postures, body display, etc.), and was exceeded in lack of overall indulgence of initial sexual habits by only two others (of 31 cases).

The Whiting and Child (1953) ratings refer to infancy and early childhood. There are no comparable quantified scores for puberty in the United States, but we have been assuming that large-scale societies as a bloc are more similar to each other than to traditional societies, as noted above concerning child sexual abuse in various nations. Working with this assumption, we can scrutinize the data from Broude and Greene's (1976) holocultural ratings on sexual permissiveness in puberty. Most of their sample (the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample generated by Murdock & White, 1969) consisted of technologically simple, relatively small-scale societies, but a number of cases were either integrated into complex societies or were themselves complex.¹⁴ What we find is that sexual permissiveness in puberty is more restricted in these complex cases than in traditional societies. For males, premarital sex is rated as "uncommon" in half the complex societies but is so rated in only 10% of the traditional societies, $\chi^2(1) = 5.03, p < .02$, one-tailed, with correction. For females, the findings are stronger: Premarital sex is rated as "uncommon" in 56% of the complex societies, but is so rated in only 9% of the traditional societies, $\chi^2(1) = 12.46, p < .0005$, one-tailed, with correction. An additional consideration is that Schlegel and Barry (1991) found a moderate degree of continuity between sexual restraint in early childhood and in adolescence: for boys, $r(122) = .38, p < .001$, and for girls, $r(122) = .52, p < .001$.

Overall, as Frayser (1994) notes, "Several researchers . . . have concluded that sexual attitudes in the United States are relatively restrictive, particularly in regard to children's sexual behavior" (p. 209; see Bullough, 1990; Ford & Beach, 1951; Frayser, 1985; Jackson,

1990). So we see for American society a combination of very high stimulation (strong arousal) and relatively low satisfaction, the appropriate conditions for being linked with stimuli that may henceforth be attached to the circumstances of arousal. And we see for traditional societies a lower level of stimulation and typically, though not always, some degree of allowed sexual satisfaction—although the latter is not central because, in our understanding, strong sexual restrictiveness by itself will not matter. The critical connection, we maintain, occurs when stimulation much exceeds tolerated expression, and it is this that could be responsible for producing unresolved tension systems similar to Zeigarnik effects.

An immediate question arises: Given the presumably appropriate predisposing conditions in American society, why are the paraphilias not more frequent? We believe that at least some paraphilias are better conceptualized along continuous dimensions—from less to more fixed and “needful,” and from less to more socially acceptable—than as discrete categories of behavior. Some observations support this view. Newspapers carry certain sex-related ads that ask men, “What is your image?” and then offer to produce that image to specification. This implies that many males have a preferred, perhaps strongly preferred, mode of sexual satisfaction that is in some way standardized yet, at the same time, outside what is apparently available through regular channels of sexual outlet. The image conveyed in ads typically displays some form of lingerie, which would imply fetishistic interests, but we do not know the range of possible tastes being catered to. Kaplan’s (1991) information on London prostitutes included the generalization that “men requested . . . the kind of ‘kinky’ underwear worn by women a generation earlier, from the time when the men were little boys” (p. 65). We also do not know the degree to which interests of this sort appeal to men across the entire society. We are reminded, however, of a comment by the author A. J. Liebling (1959/1995), who lamented the disappearance of the women who had earlier been established as his “type”: “To this sharp bend in the river of womanly morphology I sometimes attribute my insatiable nostalgia for the past: I have a fixation on a form of animal life that no longer exists” (p. 44).

In traditional societies there are occasional practices and interests reminiscent of the above. Among the Gusii of western Kenya, a woman cries during coitus and moans to her partner, “You’re hurting me, you bad man” (R. A. LeVine & B. B. LeVine, 1963, p. 72).¹⁵ Gusii men report that they find this sexually arousing. Among the

Amazonian Mehinaku, men and women wear essentially no clothing and the genitalia show clearly, but a belt worn by the women contains a "tail" that focuses attention on the vagina and is seen by the men as "a titillating symbol of female sexuality" (Gregor, 1985, p. 47). The belt is worn during rituals and in the late afternoon, "when the women wish to make themselves especially attractive" (Gregor, 1985, p. 47), and is seen as provocative and said to make sexual relations more gratifying. The obsession of Mehinaku men with women's belts seems fetishistic, whereas the Gusii observance sounds very like a sadistic practice, or a faux-sadistic one, as are many such behaviors in U.S. sexuality (Money, 1985). We suggest that the attachment of males to facilitating and perseverative responses that are beyond straightforward sexual congress may turn out to be more widespread than currently assumed.¹⁶

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

Understanding the processes that underlie human behavior is an important part of the study of development in culture. In all areas of human functioning, including sexuality, these processes include goal-directed behaviors and the motivating forces behind them. Despite a vast literature describing types of paraphilias, there is little understanding of these behaviors as psychological processes related to motivated, goal-directed action. This article has explored one theoretical conception and its associated processes, namely, Lewinian tension systems and the Zeigarnik effect, as a way of thinking about the psychological dynamics involved in aspects of some paraphilias. We hope that our effort can serve as a model for conceptualizing the ways in which people, over time, construct unique forms of action to meet their goals, as well as helping understand how these actions may be related to particular cultural circumstances. Future research could use this basic formulation to explore contemporaneous sexual interests and patterns, including ones that might be called the "mild" end of paraphilias, in order to examine these ideas.

We must acknowledge the abundance of retrospective data in this area of study and the difficulties that any research will necessarily encounter when dependent on the "sins of memory" (Schachter, 1999). This constitutes an additional and large problem in an area of inquiry already fraught with critical methodological issues. At

the conceptual level, a major objection to the current thesis could well be that the paraphilias involve nothing beyond a form of either classical or operant conditioning. Sexual arousal in itself, without release, might be rewarding; or, whether that is so or not, the familiar processes of learning in classical or operant conditioning might be made to account in other ways for the development of the paraphilias. For some paraphilic cases, these arguments are undoubtedly correct.¹⁷ But given the fixedness and practical ineradicability that paraphilias often exhibit, a different psychological process seems to have occurred. That is why we have introduced the tension-system concept and the related Zeigarnik effect. These Lewinian constructs do implicate a learning process but a process more similar to that discussed by Carver and Scheier (1998) than that espoused in conventional views of learning. For Carver and Scheier, learning is the process of linking together information and not the “stamping in” of action sequences through reinforcement. They state that “sometimes the information that’s linked is that particular actions were effective in moving toward a particular goal” (p. 3). We add to this view the idea that heightened arousal toward a goal may intensify this process.

Restrictive sexual training in itself, we have posited, should not result in paraphilic-type sexual interests. But we suggest that to engage in active hiding of sexual features may result in an increased interest in and arousal by those features being concealed. For example, despite the assertion by Money et al. (1970) that no paraphilias existed among the Yolngu Aborigines, the authors reported a case of one teenage male who had a “history of peeping” (p. 396) with respect to (presumably White) female mission personnel. One could not know whether this youth exhibited voyeuristic tendencies in his own camp and among his own people, but there is the possibility that the “hiddenness” of females behind layers of artifacts—that is, inside buildings and under clothing—helped foster this interest. As another example, in the Newar village of Bosigaon (Kathmandu Valley, Nepal), where the senior author carried out fieldwork, villagers’ eliminative behavior was conducted on the sides of public paths, and during such activity, any passersby would walk past in indifferent fashion. When the author and family moved to the village and built an outhouse, however, village children often jumped up or stood on a hillock to try to view what was going on inside. Thus, conditions of high stimulation (strong arousal) could be promoted inadvertently if restrictive sexual training is conducted through a process of concealment that

thereby heightens interest in what is being hidden.¹⁸ To a great extent, this pattern of (partial) concealment seems to be the model, though not an inadvertent one, followed in displaying the female form in U.S. advertising.

Although we have speculated that traditional societies typically do not display the conditions thought appropriate to generating paraphilias with regularity, there is another set of factors that may also act to reduce the incidence of this type of sexuality. It is possible that in some traditional-culture groups the predisposing sexual tension systems for paraphilias are extant, but that, in response, various institutionalized defenses and/or disguised (symbolic) expressions have been devised, thus rendering straightforward paraphilic outlets unnecessary. We know of no pertinent evidence that bears directly on such a hypothesis, but several types of cultural institutions—including the *couvade*, male initiation/circumcision ceremonies, and institutionalized male transvestism—have been interpreted as functioning in large part to express or resolve male conflicts about psychosexual identity (R. L. Munroe, 1980; R. L. Munroe, R. H. Munroe, & Whiting, 1981). A search for comparable sociocultural responses to men's potential paraphilic tendencies might therefore be fruitful.

In concluding that large-scale societies are generally more likely than traditional societies to breed paraphilic orientations, we make no assumptions about homogeneity within or across complex cultures. The evidence points to strong ethnic variation in sexual attitudes and practices of adolescents and young adults among U.S. ethnic groups and also other Western societies (Christensen & Carpenter, 1962; Christensen & Johnson, 1978); this variability, if linked with possible differential degree of exposure to sexual imagery, could form the basis for hypotheses concerning the incidence of paraphilias. In addition to ethnic variation, differences in paraphilic sexuality by social class, geographic location (urban vs. rural), and religious orientation could be investigated along the same lines.

Developmental issues also might be addressed, and not only in the methodologically difficult domain of sexuality. Children's food preferences are often quite marked, and some of these remain fixed for a long period whereas others emerge only to disappear quickly. It would be interesting to see if the stronger and more persistent patterns are products of tension-related learning processes, including some hunger-related situations in which satisfaction is

not achieved. More generally, attention could be directed to any early desires the attainment of which is forbidden or delayed.

We have assumed that the Zeigarnik effect will occur where appropriate tension systems are manifested. It is entirely possible, however, that in other-culture settings, the condition of uncompleted tasks will not result in a similar tendency to recall or to complete such activities more than finished ones, either because the concept of *unfinished* does not create tension or because cultural constructs like *interruption* and *completion* differ greatly from a Western conceptualization.¹⁹ (See Goodnow, 1976, for a discussion of the connection between culture and complex mental systems.) Another direction would be to pursue animal research on similar connections. We do not know the limits or the degree of universality of the Zeigarnik effect, but these are worth discovering. We believe the concept to have a great deal of promise, and we express our hope that it be explored again soon.

Finally, to return to the title of this article, our intention has been to show that the paraphilias can be seen less as “strange sex” than as unusual by-products of a normal adaptive process. Given purposive behavior, a Zeigarnik-effect tendency to privilege the recollection of unfinished over finished activities would exemplify what Roediger and McDermott (2000) have labeled “intelligent errors,” or “errors made by an intelligent cognitive system” (p. 127). To fix the incomplete in memory is to employ a system that will, on the whole, orient the individual to those thoughts and actions likely to be advantageous for well-being and even survival. That this process sometimes may entail by-products such as the paraphilias would be, to quote Daniel Schachter on an analogous problem (in Brookhart, 2000), a “price we pay for an otherwise positive feature” (p. 7).

NOTES

1. Paraphiles typically report that their fantasies and behaviors produce such intense pleasure that they would not consider giving them up (Money, 1980). And many paraphilias can be maintained in the behavioral repertoire because they go undetected, in that they are carried out in private and do not involve others. Nevertheless, Abel, Osborn, Anthony, and Gardos (1992), in a review of the literature on treatment of paraphiles, point out that various cognitive-behavioral and pharmacologic therapies have yielded some notable successes in reducing or eliminating para-

philiias. We are thus not claiming that the paraphiliias cannot be eradicated, but rather that they remain ineradicable except under very strong forms of treatment.

2. Baldamus (1951) calculated strain-increasing and strain-reducing factors in factory work and found that what he termed *object-traction* was an apparent strain reducer. Object-traction, which derived from doing work in which a mental picture could be formed of the completed task, was associated with lower job turnover rates.

3. The concept of *displaced aggression*, which meta-analytic review has shown to be a robust and reproducible phenomenon, has suffered similar neglect in recent textbooks (Marcus-Newhall, Pedersen, Carlson, & Miller, 2000).

4. In a sample of sadomasochistically oriented individuals, Moser and Levitt (1987) found that slightly fewer than one fifth recalled any erotic enjoyment from punishment during childhood. This seems to us to strengthen rather than weaken our argument because we claim only that some unknown but probably meaningful proportion of paraphiliias should fit our model. We also feel, despite commonalities, that the model will probably not apply equally well to all types of paraphilic behavior. It is worth noting, too, that Moser and Levitt (1987) were asking about erotic enjoyment and not (only) sexual arousal, a distinction perhaps important in this context.

5. The Freudian concept of *displacement*, wherein "emotions [are] transferred . . . from one object to another" (Rilling, 2000, p. 311), comes quite close to describing this aspect of the Zeigarnik process, but it does not specify operationally the conditions under which such transference is likely to be elicited. Lewinian-oriented researchers carried out a battery of investigations designed to study the ways in which a substitute activity might reduce tension earlier associated with a different, though similar, activity (8 such citations given in Deutsch, 1968).

6. We thank Drs. William and Margaret Faust for their insightful comments on this issue.

7. These behaviors may appear to qualify as classic obsessive-compulsive (as defined by the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* [DSM-IV] [American Psychiatric Association, 1994]), but psychopharmacologic treatments suggest that paraphilic individuals and those suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder are distinct populations (Kafka, 2000).

8. Salter (1997) speaks elsewhere in his memoir of "the denied love that reality cannot equal" (p. 108). The notion that unsatisfied wants can feed on themselves has been expressed in many ways, by poets (as Keats in "Ode on a Grecian Urn"), novelists (Thomas Hardy in "The Fellow-Townsmen": "It is a very common folly of human nature, you know, to think the course you did *not* adopt must have been the best"), and in proverbs ("The grass is always greener . . ."). At the same time, any overall conceptual-

ization must take into account the reaction-formation phenomenon in which a given tendency may be diametrically opposed to some underlying impulse.

9. Kaplan (1991) is unique in arguing that females are subject to “perversions” to the same degree as males, but that the forms of the fantasies and behaviors differ for women and men. In all cases, she asserts, perversions are pathologies of gender role identity.

10. An interesting exception is the well-known Papua, New Guinea Sambia studied by Herdt (1999). In Herdt’s Sambia sample there were four or five married men and another “handful” of older men who had not given up homoerotic fellatio, even though homosexual behavior in adulthood was considered grossly inappropriate. Any interpretation of such behavior is made all the more difficult, however, by the occurrence of ritual homoeroticism in a significant 10% to 20% of all Melanesian groups (Herdt 1999).

11. Graburn (1987) makes clear that he is referring to traditional contexts and not to the “much changed, ‘urbanized,’ alcohol-available present” (p. 212). In one of Graburn’s cases, an instance of rape occurred, but this was when the girl was 13 or 14 and had already been subjected to much mistreatment by her family, taken away by authorities, and then returned to her natal family and settlement.

12. Even though “there are no large or consistent [physiological] gender differences in response to [explicit] erotica” (Geer & Manguno-Mire, 1996, p. 102), males engage in much more autoerotic activity (especially masturbation) designed to achieve arousal (Geer & Manguno-Mire, 1996). Ralph Bolton has suggested that the sex difference is due less to sexual arousal than to males’ need for orgasmic experience as a way to achieve satisfaction once arousal has occurred.

13. This is not to say that earlier times were without erotic stimuli. The proliferation of pornographic pictures and writing in Victorian times is well known (Marcus, 1967).

14. Decisions concerning relative complexity were made on the basis of Schlegel and Barry’s (1991) brief descriptions of societies in the standard sample. The societies judged as complex, and for which there was at least one rating on sexual permissiveness in puberty, were Abkhaz, Burmese, Chinese, Egyptians, Irish, Japanese, Javanese, Manchu, and Siamese. Interestingly, numerous societies in the standard sample for which a rating of “complex” would have been given were without ratings on pubertal sexual permissiveness, which indicates that in such societies, the topic was sensitive for either ethnographer or informant, and perhaps for both.

15. In this connection, it is of interest that the Gusii rate for rape was 3½ times that in the United States during a comparable time period (R. A. Levine, 1959).

16. In contrast to the United States, where the population numbers in the hundreds of millions, many traditional societies are small scale. On a simple statistical basis, one could argue that in any large-scale society like

our own, extreme responses will be found for any class of behavior we care to examine and that these responses are much less likely to occur in smaller populations. But if, as we suggest, paraphilic-type responses turn out to exist along a continuum instead of as discrete behavioral categories, it would indicate that—as with the “preferred” modes of satisfaction noted for some males in large-scale societies—lesser attachments might exist in many traditional societies. Although data of this kind would be very difficult to gather, the Gusii and Mehinaku practices are consonant with such an assumption.

17. See, for example, McGuire, Carlisle, and Young (1965), Rachman and Hodgson (1968), and Weinberg, Williams, and Calhan (1995).

18. Susan Seymour has commented that in traditional groups, the children often share sleeping quarters with their parents and thus will frequently be present when potentially arousing sexual situations manifest themselves. The point is well taken, though it may be that the treatment of sexuality as “natural” in many traditional societies could mitigate the effects of such tendencies. Another consideration is the fact that personal privacy and separateness are regulated differently in different communities (Altman & Gauvain, 1981). Whereas privacy in more affluent Western communities is regulated largely by environmental features like walls and curtains, in many other communities privacy is regulated by more psychological means, and children are socialized in relation to these cultural provisions and expectations. This may have important consequences for the processes described here.

19. Analogously, the social-loafing effect seemed a good candidate for a universal process, but that is not what has been found (Gabrenya, Latané, & Wang, 1983; Gabrenya, Wang, & Latané, 1985).

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