

PHILADELPHIA

DAILY NEWS

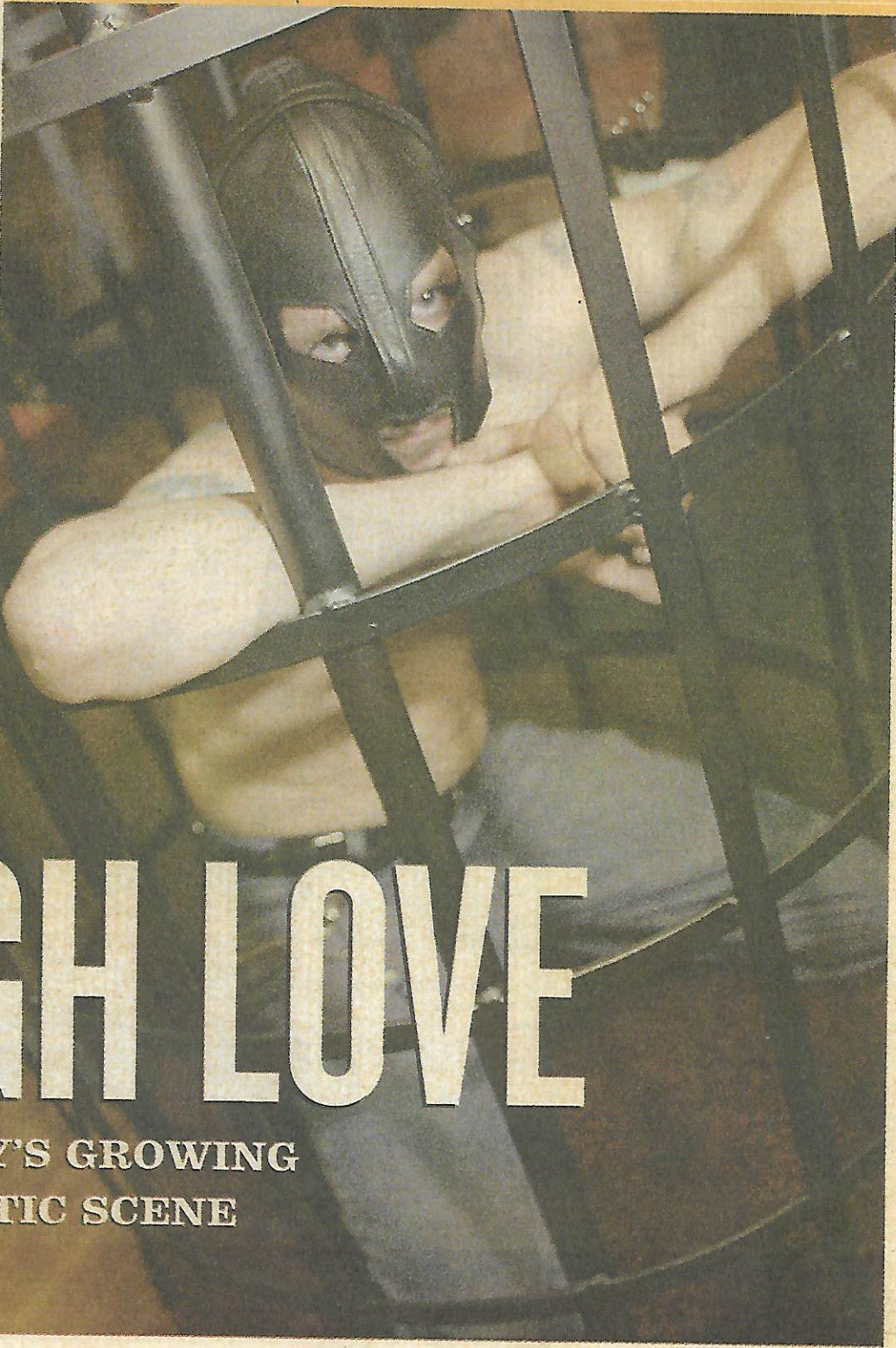
THE PEOPLE PAPER

TUESDAY, JULY 10, 2001

LATE SPORTS 60¢

CROCE: 'I WANT TO GROW'

SIXERS' PREZ ON HIS FUTURE & HIS BROTHERS, SPORTS



TOUGH LOVE

INSIDE THE CITY'S GROWING
SADOMASOCHISTIC SCENE

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Suddenly, it's a spanking-new trend

These days, S&M interest seems to be beating the daylights out of other fetishes

By **NICOLE WEISENSEE EGAN**
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AT FIRST glance, it looks like a regular nightclub.

Couches and other conversation areas hover in the darkness surrounding what appears to be a dance floor.

But then your eyes adjust to the darkness.

You notice the torture racks lining the dance floor. Handcuffs dangle from some. Nearby is a bondage bed. A spanking bench. A whipping post. Off to the side are two large crosses, where patrons of this members-only club can be tied up and flogged.

For the adventurous, two kinds of cages are available. Naked members crouch inside them while others poke and prod them with sharp objects. One cage, called the "Tweety" cage, can be hoisted up and suspended over the floor. The other is a large dog crate.

A large bowl on a coffee table is filled with condoms. Sex here is possible at any time.

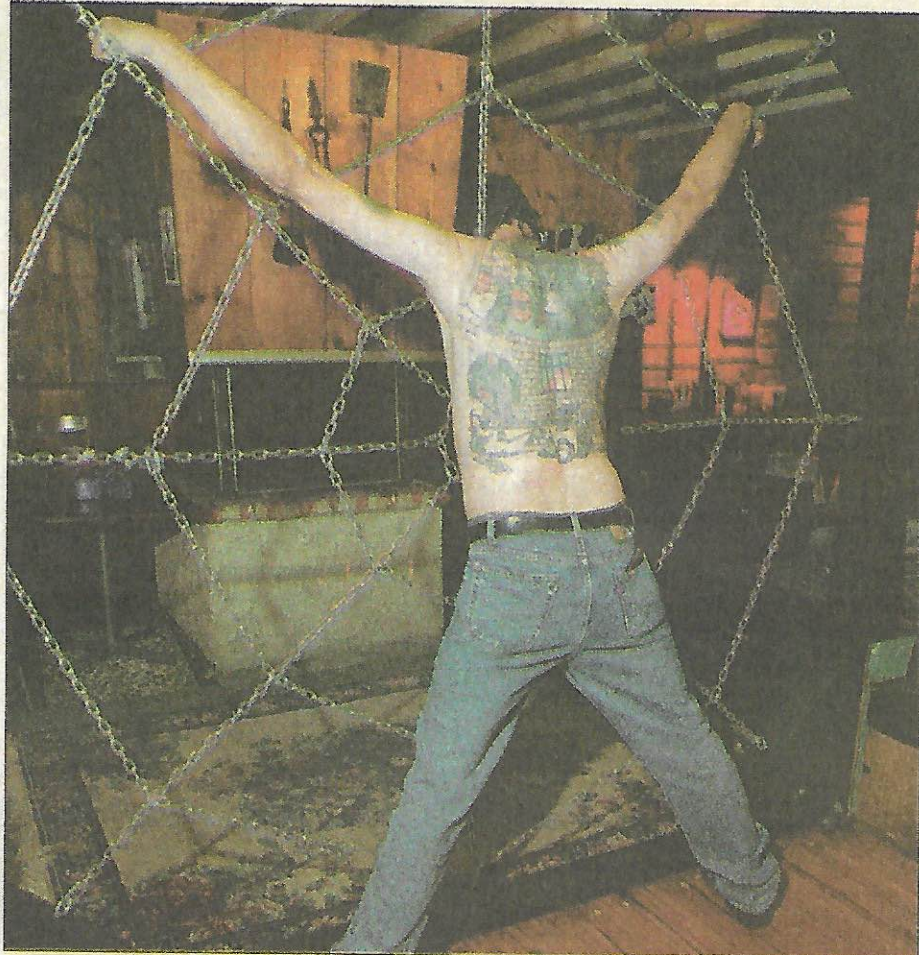
This is Behind the Scenes, which claims to be Philadelphia's only S&M club, according to its owner, "the Queen," who didn't want her real name or the location of her club printed.

But it's only the tip of the city's interest in sadomasochistic sex.

For years, Philadelphians attracted to sex with an S&M kink pursued their desires in secrecy. But along with the growth of the Internet, fascination with the fringes of sexual activity seems to be blossoming. One expert contends as many as 10 percent of the population engages in S&M activity at least some of the time.

Sales of clothing and other bondage paraphernalia are booming. Internet porn traffic is soaring. Dominatrices report full appointment books.

Reflecting the trend, city officials last month shut down a dungeon in South Philadelphia and raided another in Tacony, where they arrested two professional dominatrices.



DAVID MAIALETTI/Daily News

"Even small- and medium-sized towns have S&M clubs whose members number in the hundreds. Colleges are starting to having S&M student groups."

JAY WISEMAN, author of "SM 101" and "Jay Wiseman's Erotic Bondage Handbook."

"The exploration of it is growing astronomically," said Jay Wiseman, author of "SM 101" and "Jay Wiseman's Erotic Bondage Handbook."

"Even small and medium-sized towns have S&M clubs whose members number in the hundreds," he said. "Every major city has an S&M club. Colleges are starting to having S&M student groups."

Behind the Scenes boasts more than 1,000 members at \$40 each. For a \$25 cover charge, members are entitled to use the facilities and each other to fulfill their dark-

est sexual fantasies.

They are cops, lawyers, elected officials, firefighters, members of the media, paramedics — just your average citizens, said the Queen. All members' identities are confidential.

"It's very family-oriented," insisted the Queen, who doesn't allow alcohol or drugs in the dungeon. "We don't sell food. It's pot-

"Behind the Scenes" S&M club, where pain is always on the menu.

luck. Everybody brings food and we share. We're like family."

Kali Morgan, 33, who owns Fetishes Boutique on 5th Street near South, said her sales have doubled each of the five years she's been in business.

"I think fetish activity is becoming very, very mainstream — particularly fetish clothing," said Morgan, whose shop supplies many of Philadelphia's S&M practitioners. She opened her shop three years ago after two years as a successful mail-order operation.

People who want to chase an S&M fantasy can easily find willing partners, thanks to the Internet.

In May, according to research firm Jupiter Media Metrix, 31.3 million people — more than one-third of everyone online — visited an adult-content Web site. It's unclear how much of that Web traffic is S&M, but bondage Web sites are plentiful.

"Five to 10 percent of the American population engages in sadomasochism on at least an occasional basis," claimed Wright of the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, a Washington, D.C.-based lobbying organization.

The growth in S&M has propelled other types of business opportunities, too. That's where professional dominatrices come in.

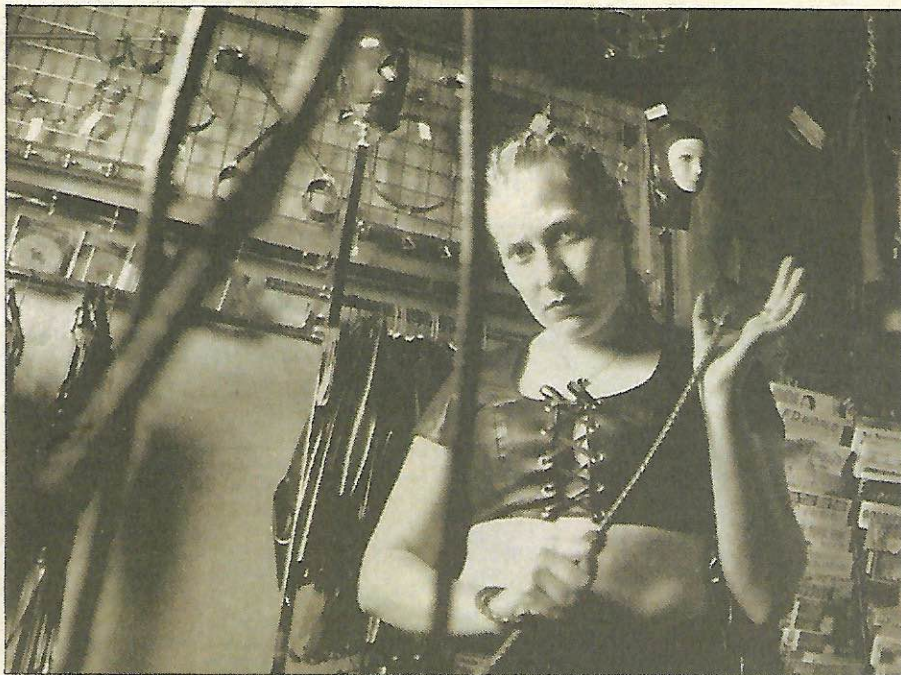
It is unclear how many are in business in Philadelphia. They advertise over the Internet, in alternative publications, in the city's weekly newspapers and through word of mouth.

Only a small part of the S&M community pays for services. Most enthusiasts have a consensual relationship with someone who is into the scene, experts say.

Because of the recent raids on sex dungeons in Tacony and South Philadelphia, anxiety is rippling through the Behind the Scenes

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DO THESE CLUBS DELIVER A SERVICE OR IS IT PROSTITUTION? NEXT PAGE



DAVID MAIALETTI/Daily News

Kali Morgan, owner of Fetishes Boutique on South Street, said sales have doubled in five years.

S&M

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members. The Queen said she thinks the crackdown is ridiculous.

"It's OK to beat someone up in a ring, but it's not OK to give someone a spanking," she scoffed. "I don't understand it."

She said she has been assured by the city Department of Licenses and Inspections that she has all the proper licenses for her club.

"My fear is that someone will put political pressure on them, and if L&I wants to close you down they'll find some way to do it," she said.

Lt. Sean Carr, of the Philadelphia Police Vice Unit, said complaints about torture chambers have come to the attention of the police within the last couple of months.

"They may have been there for years and years, but we weren't aware of it," he said. "I want to nip this in the bud."

Behind the Scenes, however, is breaking no law that he knows of, he said.

"We checked it out," he said. "It's legal. We haven't found any prostitution there. It appears it's activity among consenting adults."

S&M, or sadomasochism, is defined as receiving pleasure from

sadism or masochism or both.

Sadists, or dominants as they are known among S&M enthusiasts, find the psychological or physical suffering—including humiliation—of the victim sexually exciting, according to the American Psychiatric Association.

Sadistic fantasies might involve forcing the victim to crawl or keeping the victim in a cage.

Masochists, or submissives, get turned on sexually by having sadistic acts performed upon them. These are the people who usually go to a professional dominatrix, or prodomme.

Lewis Chiu, a 25-year-old computer programmer, said he has been paying a dominatrix for three years.

"I love the things she does to me," he said. "She ties me up. She spans me, whips me and paddles me . . . I like the pain."

Chiu said he pays his dominatrix \$450 a month from his \$51,000-a-year salary for one to three visits.

"The goal is to be turned on and to climax at one point during the session," he said. "I love the helplessness of being forced to do things. I love being helpless and having the dominatrix inflict pain on me, being totally at her mercy and having fear it will get too much for me."

Right now, he's paying her to do her dishes, clean her kitchen

and help her move. He also helped build her dungeon.

"I enjoy taking orders," he said.

Other people get turned on by medical procedures.

"Medical role-playing is fairly popular," said Wiseman, the author. "The nurse is sort of a classic female erotic figure. Others like electricity play. Dominatrices will also pee or defecate on clients. Some people like that."

In 1994, the American Psychiatric Association relaxed its view of S&M. What the association once viewed as a mental disorder is now merely an aberration unless it causes "clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning."

Dr. James Pedigo, medical director of the Joseph J. Peters Institute in Center City, which treats sexual offenders and victims of sexual offenders, has treated a few dozen patients with sadism disorder or masochism disorder in the last 37 years.

"If they don't get in trouble with the law and they've got an understanding partner and they do it once or twice a year, it seems to me it's hard to say that's abnormal," he said.

Pedigo said some people find sadomasochism sexually arous-

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Cops cracking the whip on the torture business

Debate arises on whether it's prostitution

By NICOLE WEISENSEE EGAN
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A court battle is brewing over whether dominatrices wielding whips and paddles to arouse their paying customers can be prosecuted as prostitutes.

Philadelphia cops think so. Last month they arrested Michelene Nelson, 47, and Amanda Kelly, 18, and accused them of operating a Tacony torture chamber.

Nelson is charged with promoting prostitution, a felony. Kelly is charged with prostitution, a misdemeanor. A preliminary hearing date has not been set.

Nelson pleaded guilty to similar charges in Bucks County in 1998. She was sentenced to one year probation and fined \$2,500.

Lt. Sean Carr, of the Philadelphia Police Vice Unit, said the law defines prostitution as someone who engages in sexual activity as a business.

He believes dominatrices perform sexual activity, even if it doesn't involve traditional intercourse or oral sex.

"If someone is paying for that service, then it's prostitution," he said, adding that the district attorney's office shares his view.

Andrew Park, a lawyer and founder of the Center for Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights here, disagrees.

"It would apply to dominatrices who provide sex, but where the dominatrix does not provide services that are considered traditional sex it does not," he said.

The problem is, he said, that neither Pennsylvania law nor the Pennsylvania courts have defined what "sexual activity" is. That leaves it open to interpretation by both sides.

Park believes it's dangerous to expand the definition of sexual activity to nontraditional sex acts.

"You wonder then — is a bookstore that shows adult movies engaging in sexual activity because people go in there for sexual gratification?" he asked.

"What they're saying is any activity that results in sexual gratification — regardless of genital contact — is considered sex," he said. "And if you pay for that activity, that's considered prostitution."

He said it would take a case such as the Nelson-Kelly one to define what sexual activity is in Pennsylvania. ★



DAVID MAIALETTI/Daily News

For the sexually adventurous, condoms and cleaning supplies are readily available on a coffee table at Behind the Scenes S&M club.

ing.

"In our culture there's an expression of 'It hurts so good,'" Pedigo pointed out.

Susan Wright, policy director for the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, said S&M is normal.

"It's not mainstream, but I think it is increasingly understood that there are certain individuals for whom this is their sexual orientation," she said. "This is how they express their sexuality. You can't change that."

So how do people develop a taste for pain? Pedigo said people he has seen have had very strict upbringings, but not abusive.

Practitioners, though, report normal childhoods.

Lewis Chiu, who regularly pays the dominatrix to beat him, said he was never spanked or disciplined as a child.

He said he first got the urge to be spanked when he was in second grade.

Most dominatrices don't sell sex.

"It's a very small minority that will do sexual favors because it's not about sex," said one area dominatrix, who didn't want her name used. "It's more about liberating fantasies and exploring tolerance and taking people places they've never been before."

She has about 50 regular clients who come as frequently as once a week or as infrequently as twice a year. She charges between \$150 and \$250 for sessions that last from 50 to 90 minutes. She earns about \$60,000 a year.

She counts lawyers, doctors, CEOs and surgeons among her clients. All have high-stress jobs, she said.

"As a profession, we take care of people who are mainly very happy in their lives. They love their kids, their wives, their job, their Knights of Columbus membership or whatever. But they have this one little kink — I call it a hole in their soul — where they can exercise this kink," she said.

They come to a dominatrix to give up control.

"Spending time with me is a time when there's no cell phone ringing, their beepers aren't coming on and they don't have to make any decisions because I'm making them for you," she said. "It's such a total power exchange. With a masseuse they have to say, 'Rub here. Do this.'"

"This is one time when they have no power and that's liberating for them." ★

WHERE'S CHANDRA?

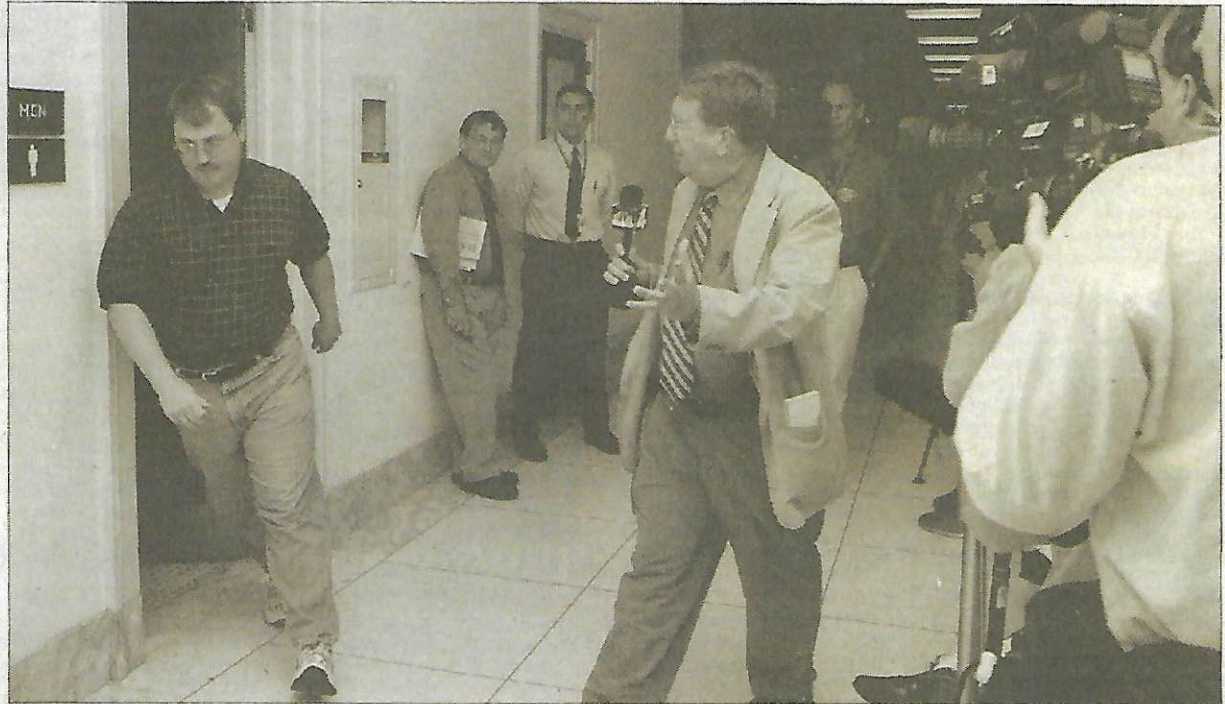
Condit vows to cooperate in intern probe



U.S. Rep. Gary Condit



Intern Chandra Ann Levy



Photos: Associated Press

Rep. Condit's legislative director, Randy Groves, is accosted by NBC TV reporter as he leaves men's room on Capitol Hill.

Says he'll provide a DNA sample if cops ask for it

Reuters

WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. Gary Condit, D-Calif., will cooperate fully with police in their efforts to find missing intern Chandra Levy, including providing DNA samples, if necessary, Condit's attorney said yesterday.

Washington lawyer Abbe Lowell said Condit would give investigators access to his apartment, phone and cellular phone records, and ask his congressional aides to cooperate fully with investigators.

Condit has been the subject of mounting media scrutiny since Levy disappeared on April 30 because of speculation that the two may have been intimately involved.

Condit's staff denied for weeks that the lawmaker had been engaged in a sexual relationship with Levy, but in a third interview with police Friday, Condit confirmed he had been having an affair with Levy, according to published reports.

Lowell said Condit would comply if asked by police to submit to

DNA testing, although he noted that police officials had reiterated that Condit was not a suspect in the case.

He did not rule out the possibility that Condit could agree to a lie detector test, which Levy's family has reportedly requested, but noted that polygraph examinations were often not reliable.

"Let me say today that the congressman is going to make available what the police ask for, [what] they think is helpful," Lowell told reporters at a hastily arranged news conference out-

side his Washington office.

"The congressman will provide what additional information or material he can to the police. This includes access to his apartment, telephone or cell phone records, a request that his entire staff make themselves available, and whatever else I can arrange with the police," Lowell said.

"Let me say again that I hope that any or all of this will be useful in finding Chandra Levy," he added.

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