

# CONTEXTUAL INTERPRETATIONS OF SEXUAL FANTASY

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## Abstract

A combination of written and interview protocols were collected from 4 participants, two men aged 27 and 29, and two women, 24 and 28. The participants responded to questions about their understanding and use of sexual fantasy, giving concrete examples. The data were analysed qualitatively using the phenomenological themes of *Space*, *Time* and *Being*. These themes demonstrated the value of examining sexual fantasy experience as a unique lived experience. The data were then discussed in light of this and also with reference to previous research. The data collected for this study demonstrate the unique way in which fantasy exists in interaction with its fantasiser. It also highlights the change between the fantasy and the retrospective experience of fantasy.

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The aim of this project is to explore, that is: to examine together with the owner of the experience, sexual fantasy as it occurs within people's lives as well as how they make sense of their fantasy experience.

Sexual fantasy, as part of sexuality, has been understood in many different ways from various psychological and social perspectives. This research provides a synopsis of the modern history of sexual fantasy and explores, qualitatively, personal understandings and interpretations of sexual fantasy as lived-experience. Gil (1990) indicates the lack of information about sexual fantasy specifically in the area of personal evaluation of fantasy experience.

The research explores the questions relating to this, namely those around the actual fantasy experience and what it means to those who experience it.

The tendency of our culture to devalue inner experience and defer the study of inner events, together with Freud's tendency to identify daydreams with neurosis, have discredited fantasy as a healthy activity for adults.

- Collins, 1979, p. 4

Sexual fantasy needs to be understood as part of sexual identity as it is through sexual fantasy that we can gain better insight into how people see their private sexuality developing and constructing barriers and gateways into different avenues of erotic life.

Examining sexual fantasies in a qualitative manner by allowing anomalies, personalities and emotions to occur and be investigated will potentially tap into an aspect of the phenomenon which has previously been unexplored. After all, who is better equipped to relate the function and experience of sexual fantasies than the person to whom they belong?

This exploration of sexual fantasies hopefully demonstrates the unique quality of each individual's fantasy life as well as the deeper understanding of sexual fantasy through interpretation. In previous research, the aim has been to extract a "truth" about sexual fantasy, rather than allowing the varying ways that people experience their fantasies to unfold.

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## *Literature Review*

*Every night in my dreams I see you, I feel you  
That is how I know you go on.  
Far across the distance and spaces between us  
You have come to show you go on*

*-Will Jennings*

### 2.1. What do we mean when we Speak about Sexual Fantasy?

Sexual fantasies are generally understood in psychological literature as being creative uses of the imagination. They may be used to relax or to create or enhance sexual arousal (Rokach, 1989; Renshaw, 1983; Freeman, 1978; Collins, 1979). They may function as rehearsals for future sexual situations or to increase our sexual confidence (Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1994; Collins, 1979). Sexual fantasies can also be purely pleasurable escapism and they may be used as wish fulfillment (Renshaw, 1983; Freud, 1977; Deutch, 1991; Chick & Gold, 1987; Hardin & Gold, 1988; Shanor, 1977) or to escape from unpleasant situations (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995).

Previous research has determined that sexual fantasies may be long and elaborate or they may be fleeting (Rokach, 1989; Masters, Johnson & Kolodny, 1984). People may deliberately decide to fantasise, may spontaneously think of a fantasy, or something around them may act as a trigger (Renshaw, 1983). Fantasies may be about things that are completely foreign and fantastical or they may be about things that people deal with everyday (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995).

Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1994) explicate the five great attractions of sexual fantasies. They occur in a safe and protected environment. They are private and cannot be discovered. They are pretend situations in which we are not responsible or accountable. We have full

control over their content. We can choose to terminate them should they become uncomfortable or threatening.

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## 2.2. What have Researchers found out about Sexual Fantasies thus far?

Since the 1960's many studies have been conducted to explore the realm of sexual fantasy in greater depth. A wide variety of populations have been involved, although the results are almost definitely skewed by the continual use of college students (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995).

The questions that have been put to these populations include the following:

- What is the content of people's sexual fantasies?  
(Wilson & Lang, 1981; Shanor, 1977; Leitenberg & Jennings, 1995; Harriton & Singer, 1974)
  
- Is there a relationship between gender and sexual fantasy content, frequency and occurrence? (Hsu, Kling, Kessler, Knapke, Diffenbach, & Elias, 1994; Lentz & Zeiss, 1984; Rokach, 1989; Ellis & Symons, 1990; Gold & Gold, 1991; Chick & Gold, 1987; Kelley, 1984; Wilson & Lang, 1981; Briere, Smiljanich & Henschel, 1994; Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin & Gebhard, 1953)

- Is there a relationship between sexual guilt and occurrence and frequency of fantasy?  
(Gil, 1990; Bond & Mosher, 1986, Chick & Gold, 1987; Pelletier & Herold, 1988; Kinsey, Martin, Pomeroy & Gebhard, 1953; Brody, Rau, Fuhrer, Hillebrand, Rudiger & Braun, 1995)
  
- Is there a relationship between sexual fantasy and sexual satisfaction?  
(Davidson & Hoffman, 1986; Hurlbert, & Apt, 1994)
  
- At what age to people begin to fantasise?  
(Deutch, 1991; Singer, 1975; Boyd, Knoth & Singer, 1988; Gold & Gold, 1991)
  
- Is there a relationship between early sexual abuse and sexual fantasy content and occurrence?  
(Briere, Smiljanich & Henschel, 1994)
  
- Do sexual fantasies predict behaviour?  
(Billingham & Hockenberry, 1986; Chick & Gold, 1987)

Comparisons have also been performed on the content of 'homosexual' and 'heterosexual' people's sexual fantasies (Price, Allensworth & Hillman, 1985) and on the content of black and white people's fantasies (Price & Miller, 1984). The influence of media and advertising on fantasy construction was examined by Kelley (1984).

These studies of sexual fantasy have been used to form a cache of normative data as well as to develop a strategy to help those who are unable to achieve orgasm or arousal. They are also useful in attempting to 'normalise' or 'rehabilitate' those who have attached their sexual desires to something that is perceived as inappropriate, for example in fetishism and paedophilia (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995; Kaplan & Sadock, 1991; Masters, Burish, Hollon & Rimm, 1987; Leonard & Hayes, 1983).

There have also been some studies that attempt to link the imaginal process to the formation of sexual and gender identity by trying to identify differences between the early sexual fantasies of heterosexual and homosexual people (Billingham & Hockenberry, 1986; Chick & Gold, 1987). Similarly differences have been sought between the sexual fantasies of paedophiles and sex offenders and a 'normal' population in an attempt to find information that would help in the 'diagnosis' of potential sex offenders (Briere & Runtz, 1989; Barbaree & Marshall, 1991).

### 2.2.i. What do People Fantasise About?

The range of content of erotic fantasy is very broad. Partner specification, location, sexual orientation, "perversity", costume, exhibitionism, humiliation and pain are all possible fantasy themes according to Person (1995).

The content of sexual dreams or fantasies varies, but can be broken down into general categories that include:

- romantic kissing and touching
- having an orgasm
- the genitals or eroticised body areas
- sex with a stranger or loved one (family or other)
- homosexual or heterosexual sex with any age partner (usually a peer)
- group sex
- forced sexual encounters that are pleasurable
- sex with pain, humiliation, shame, a struggle or
- violence

(Renshaw, 1983; p. 7)

Harriton and Singer (1974) found that the most common fantasy of a group of married women was that of having an "imaginary, romantic lover". This fantasy was followed by (1) imagining that one is forced to submit, (2) being in different places, (3) pretending that one is doing something that is wicked or forbidden and (4) reliving a past sexual encounter.

Shanor's (1977) findings of the 5 most frequently occurring fantasies in her female sample were: having sex with a new partner, reliving a past sexual experience, having sex with a celebrity, seducing a younger man and having sex with an older man. Shanor lists imagining a naked or semi-naked woman, sex with a new partner, reliving a previous sexual experience, sex with more than one woman and the power to drive a woman wild with excitement as the top 5 fantasies of a sample of 4062 men (Shanor, 1978 in Leitenberg & Henning, 1995).

Wilson and Lang (1981) found that of the 40 possible fantasies that they presented to their sample of 90 men and women, the fantasy of having sex with a loved partner was chosen most

by both the men and women. Rokach's (1989) reports her results as similar to those of Wilson and Lang. Of her five categories of fantasy, the most common chosen was the traditional heterosexual category, which included themes of sex with one partner, foreplay and courtship.

Leitenberg and Henning (1995) offer a summary of the information that has been found in this area.

It is clear that by far the most common sexual fantasies for both men and women are (a) reliving an exciting sexual experience, (b) imagining having sex with one's current partner, and (c) imagining having sex with another partner (p. 481).

#### 2.2.ii. Gender Differences in Sexual Fantasy Content, Frequency and Occurrence

In 1953 Kinsey, Pomeroy, Martin and Gebhard discussed Fantasy and Masturbation in Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female. Their findings, after studying a large population, were that while men often had fantasies involving situations that they had not experienced, women were inclined to fantasise about things within their range of experiences. Further Kinsey et al. reported that while men are dependent on fantasy during masturbation women are not, relying more heavily on physical sources of arousal. Kinsey et al. concluded that these differences in the use of fantasy were the "prime source of the difficulty which so many men and women have in understanding each other sexually" (p. 165).

Wilson and Lang (1981) found that men fantasised more frequently than women. They found women were likely to be passive and men active and this was corroborated by the further

research conducted by Iwawaki and Wilson (1983). Finally, Wilson and Lang found that a high frequency of fantasy resulted in sexual satisfaction for women but dissatisfaction for men.

Wilson and Lang offer two possible explanations for this difference saying "female fantasies are stimulated by, and to some extent dependant upon an intimate relationship with a man (most of their fantasies are of the intimate variety). Whereas the sex drive of men is a fairly steady imperative, demanding some kind of outlet quite regularly..." (p. 346). That is that women fantasise in the situations in which they can expect to have sexual contact while men fantasise regardless and are therefore more frequently left unsatisfied.

Alternatively, they hypothesise, sexual pleasure is demanded by men and supplied by women. Socio-biologically men are more promiscuous, and therefore men have greater difficulty finding sexual satisfaction as they have greater difficulty than women do in finding partners to assist in their sexual adventures. In other words even if women do engage in fantasy outside of relationships where they have continuous access to sexual contact it is much easier for them to find a willing partner (Wilson & Lang, 1981).

In agreement with the findings of Wilson and Lang, Gold and Gold (1991) found that men have their first fantasy at an earlier age than women, have fantasies more frequently than women, have more explicit fantasies than women and have shorter fantasies than women. Men were also found to rate their first sexual fantasy experience more positively than women. The prelude to women's first fantasies was most often a relationship while men's more frequently involved visual cues.



Gold and Gold's conclusions were also similar to those of Briere, Smiljanich and Henschel's (1994) study of 318 students from a state university and a community college. They reported results supporting "the possibility that sexual fantasies may, to some extent, mirror male and female sex role expectations in our culture" (p. 135).

In a ten-year follow up survey originally conducted by Person, Terestman, Wayne, Goldberg and Salvadori (1989, in Hsu et al., 1994) of sexual behaviour in a college population Hsu et al. (1994) found that although men continued to fantasise more frequently than women this difference had reduced over the ten-year period indicating the possibility that, as societal attitudes to sexuality change, so will the patterns of sexual fantasy.

### 2.2.iii. What Feelings do People Experience when Engaging in Sexual Fantasy?

Researchers believe that the underlying beliefs of individuals affect their reactions to their sexual fantasies. Some people feel guilty about their sexual fantasies because they believe that their fantasies are immoral, abnormal, socially unacceptable and uncommon as well as that it reflects negatively on them as people (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995).

Friday (1973) quotes a correspondent who writes:

I have always been ashamed of them [my sexual fantasies], feeling that other people would think them unnatural and consider me a nymphomaniac or pervert (p. 16).

Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1994) tell us "not all sexual fantasies are willfully conjured up or pleasing" (p. 1). These fantasies bring with them feelings of guilt, conflict and inner turmoil. Nevertheless the effect of these fantasies may still be arousing. However they may cause a 'shut down' of sexual feelings.

Gil (1990) defined fantasy guilt as "the affective state of culpability generated by a fantasy episode" (p. 630). Thus it seems that guilt associated with fantasy attaches itself to feelings of personal responsibility for fantasent.

Most of the research into reasons behind sexual guilt has been conducted on samples that engage in fantasies during sexual intercourse with a partner. Under these circumstances a feeling that engaging in fantasy damages relationships was common whether or not the partner knew that the fantasy was occurring. The guilt that was associated was, to some extent, attached to the perception that they were being unfaithful (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995; de Silva, 1993).

Harriton and Singer (1974) suggest that "guilt and anxiety reported by clinicians to be associated with coital fantasy [in women] may be the consequence of disapproval of women of their own fantasies because they seem to contradict cultural and popularised psychoanalytic ideals" (p. 314) in their paper on women's fantasies during intercourse.

Hardin and Gold (1988) found a correlation between sexual experience and the guilt that is attached to sexual fantasies. The more sexual experience that one has the less guilt he or she will feel about his/her fantasies. Interesting, Hardin and Gold also found that, although they

had predicted that high sex guilt would produce shorter and less explicit fantasies, this was not actually found to be the case. Gil (1990) found paradoxically, that although guilt was frequently experienced with regard to sexual fantasies within a Christian sample, the length and content of the sample group's fantasies were normative.

People who fantasise frequently, and who do not feel guilty about fantasising in general, may nevertheless experience conflict between a particular fantasy and their way of understanding themselves (Person, 1995). Examples may be feminists who have fantasies of submission, 'heterosexual' men who have homosexual fantasies, people who fantasise about being raped or of raping someone or engaging in sex with minors or animals or relatives which they may experience as forbidden because of legal, moral or religious implications. Two specific examples given by Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1994) are of a conservatively religious woman who thinks of having sex with a large group of men, and that of a homophobic man imagining having oral sex with another man.

#### 2.2.iv. Sexual Fantasy and Sexual Satisfaction

There is a positive correlation between sexual satisfaction and sexual fantasy. In a study by Nutter and Condron (1983) it was found that where inhibited sexual desire was experienced there was little occurrence of sexual fantasy while where subjects were sexually satisfied sexual fantasy occurred frequently.

Davidson and Hoffman (1986) conclude that contrary to arguments suggesting that fantasising is "undesirable from a mental health perspective" (p. 202) fantasies occur frequently and do not

correlate with a person's experienced sexual satisfaction. That is, having sexual fantasies does not indicate dissatisfaction with current sexual relations with another.

#### 2.2.v. At what Age do People begin to Fantasise?

Deutch (1991), in reference to women's sexual fantasy, said that there were certain typical fantasies that began at the time of puberty. These types of fantasies were parthenogenic, prostitution and rape and were an attempt to deal with the age related Oedipal issues.

Children make believed begins to become private imagery between the ages of six and thirteen and by the age of thirteen or fourteen most fantasies involve romance and sex (Singer, 1975). In another study by Boyd, Knoth and Singer (1988) it was found that the first sexual feelings of males and females differed. Boys experiencing arousal at around age eleven/twelve usually in relation to visual stimuli and girls first experiencing arousal around age thirteen to fifteen in relation to romantic stimuli (Gold & Gold, 1991). Gold and Gold's research findings were similar to those of Boyd, Knoth and Singer with the average age of first fantasy for females and males being 12.9 and 11.5 respectively.

#### 2.2.vi. Is there a Relationship between Sexual Fantasy and Molestation History?

In their paper Sexual Fantasies, Gender and Molestation History, Briere, Smiljanich and Henschel (1994) write that former sexual abuse victims show a greater tendency towards daydreaming and fantasy. Further they report Finkelhorn and Brown's (1985) suggestion that

victims of sexual abuse undergo “traumatic sexualisation” because of the abuse and become prone to above average frequency of sexual behaviour and preoccupation with sex.

Their study showed that both men and women who had been sexually abused demonstrated higher frequency than average of sexual fantasies. They found a correlation between fantasies of involvement in an orgy and sex with a stranger and total duration of sexual abuse history. “Female abuse survivors were especially likely to have fantasies of being forced into sex” (Briere, Smiljanich & Henschel, 1994; p. 135).

#### 2.2.vii. Are fantasies predictors of behaviour?

Researchers are divided on the question of whether sexual fantasies are predictors of our behaviour or whether they are purely imaginative.

Chick and Gold (1987) propose that it is sexual fantasy that drives human sexuality; “Sexual fantasy is hypothesised to have links to the cognitive, affective, and behavioural systems as erotic fantasies can contain factual information, affective reactions, and lead to overt responses...” (p. 62). Gold and Gold (1991) make the link between sexual fantasy and sexually ‘deviant’ and aggressive behaviour.

There are others, however, who feel that this connection does not exist. Rather, they hypothesise, fantasies are separate from actual desired sexual encounters. In other words the thought does not equate to the deed. Sexuality, rather than being a slave to fantasy, is enhanced by it (Klinger, 1987; Renshaw, 1983; Friday, 1973).

It seems that most researchers agree, however, that in some cases sexual fantasy can be harmful to the fantasiser or to others in contact with him or her, while in other cases they can be used to assist peoples' sexual functioning (Chick & Gold, 1987).

Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1994) summarise this position saying that "in some cases sexual fantasy expresses sexual desire, while in others it provokes sexual desire that does not necessarily require the fantasised act for fulfillment" (p. 1).

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### 2.3. What is the Function of Fantasy?

It was Freud who first highlighted the importance of fantasy in human existence. He theorised that fantasy acts, as a wish fulfillment for human beings' unmet needs. Food, drink and sex are, for Freud, the biological drives that spur us to action. However, as new born babies we begin to realise that these needs cannot always be immediately satisfied, thus we imagine these needs being fulfilled and these needs are then, at least in part, gratified. We therefore escape the damaging distress and anxiety that might have occurred in the absence of our imaginings. Our fantasies are cathartic and act to reduce the pressure of our instinctive, biological drives protecting us from pathology (Freud, 1962; Singer, 1975).

More recently social studies have demonstrated that rather than being cathartic, fantasies increase arousal. This is demonstrated in the sexual instance of pornography as an enhancer of

physical sexual arousal and the aggressive instance of television violence that appears to fuel rather than reduce violent behaviour (Singer, 1975).

Learning theorists have also indicated that sexual fantasy is a learning adaptation with origins in childhood where play is a method of assimilating and accommodating the world. This is internalised and adaptive in adulthood (Singer, 1975). It is thus considered a normal natural, functional and productive part of sexuality. Renshaw (1983) saying "to accept and understand one's dreams and fantasies...as both natural and productive is to allow new learning to occur for a child, teen, or adult" (p. 8) reinforces this idea.

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#### 2.4. Interlude - Aims

Thus far the literature review has aimed to provide an overview of the findings within the field of sexual fantasy. These studies have used a quantitative method and have produced relevant and interesting results; however all but a few (for example Friday, 1973 and 1991 and Shanor, 1977) have explored each fantasy in its entirety as it reveals itself to the fantasiser.

This study then aims to add to the field by examining the sexual fantasies of the subjects in a qualitative way using a hermeneutic-phenomenological methodology and philosophical perspective. By understanding people in this way, rather than through the dualistic medium of quantitative science, the author hopes to demonstrate the depth and meaning of sexual fantasy

as it occurs in people's lives. Each experience is unique and demonstrates our way of being in the world.

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## *Methodology*

*I am, therefore I think.*

*- Dreyer Kruger*

#### 3.1. The Phenomenological Imagination

“Sexual fantasy is a unique mode of being-towards-another as the other is not real yet is, essentially, alive” (Evans, 1993, p. 6).

When an image is experienced we do not experience that image as such, rather our experience of that image is as an object. We interact with that object or other in such a way that it becomes a part of our life-world and affects our experience as such (Sartre, 1966).

This contrasts with the psychoanalytic interpretation of fantasy as “the term used to denote the imagination, and is not so much the faculty of the imagination...as the imaginal world and its contents...” (Laplanche and Pontalis; 1986). Ontologically people, in a psychoanalytic sense, are embodied instincts (Freud, 1962).

The human-being that we see in this way can exist without interaction; without the world as all events occur within the individual rather than in conversation with the world and its contents.

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### 3.2. The Phenomenological and Hermeneutic Method

Human experience is in a continual state of flux; one cannot place limits on it, as natural science would have us do. Phenomenological and Hermeneutic methods offer us a method of reflecting the uniqueness of the human-being-in-the-world experience by examining the way in which people report their life-experiences (Robinson & Hawpe in Sarbin, 1986) and by believing them (Kruger, 1988).

Our experiences occur in time and space, our history and memories influence our actions and beliefs (Boss in Kruger, 1988); human-beings do not live in a vacuum, they live in constant relationship with their world and objects and others there-in.

Natural scientific methods forced us to focus on certain types of questions, and finally, through phenomenology and hermeneutics, we are given tools to explore other things that are of interest about human existence and experience. Fischer and Wertz (1979) pointed this out saying, "We are becoming ready in many circumstances to forego mathematical precision for a more complete, if always somewhat ambiguous, comprehension of non-laboratory life" (p. 135).

Expansion, exposure and interpretation are the driving forces behind hermeneutic investigation, rather than an attempt to reduce human experience to measurement and boundary which, in the end, is meaningless anyway (Packer, 1989).

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### 3.3. Being, Time and Space

Human beings, phenomenologically and hermeneutically, are beings in time and space that cannot be extracted from the world in which they exist. Their experiences are holistic. Experiences, objects and others occur in constant dialogue with one another and themselves.

#### 3.3.i. *Our Sense of Movement through Time*

Time is in [hu]man[s]; it characterises his [their] existence  
(Kruger, 1988; p. 65)

Without people time does not exist. Lived time, however, is not a measurement; it is not linear time. It is a way of existing, of being. Thus time can occur simultaneously and resonate within itself back and forward. The past changes the future and the future the past (Kruger, 1988).

Miller (1984) explains Husserl's understanding of human-being's relationship with time as being:

...our awareness of our own changing temporal-perspective of experienced events which produces the sense of temporal passage, and not an awareness of a variation in the temporal location of those events (p. 161)

#### 3.3.ii. *Dwelling-in-Space*

Spatial qualities or physiognomies of the world cannot be quantitatively assessed neither can they be adequately comprehended by an objective description of colours, forms etc. (Cruse, 1974; p61 in Kruger, 1988)

Space is not a measured set of specifications, it is not an objective location, rather it is the interlocking of bodiliness and the world between a person and his or her personal landscapes that are coloured by mood and perception and are unique in their application.

Human-beings inhabit the world. We do not exist in the world as other objects, such as trees, rocks and television sets, do. We are distinguished from the world by the way in which we are able to reflect on and interpret the world. With this comes the capacity to question our own existence. Human-beings are not encapsulated objects but are in the world. We have a unique cohesion with our world and this cohesion cannot be dissolved.

Existing means that we are in the world with others and objects (Kruger, 1988).

### 3.3.iii. *Body, Being and Being-Free*

Human-beings are free to make choices about their existence and must live their existence as their own. Being brings with it the task of having to be.

"The body shapes itself according to its task in the world" (Kruger, 1988; p. 40). The human body has developed in accordance with the unique qualities of being human. Our upright posture has opened the world to us and separated us from others and things in the world. Our primary senses are those of sight and sound which broaden our horizons. It is also part of the development of "I" (Kruger, 1988).

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### 3.4. Conducting the Research

#### 3.4.i. The Sample

The study involved 4 volunteers. Two women, Lisa and Carrie, aged 24 and 29 respectively, and two men, Ben and Jim, aged 27 and 29 respectively. The volunteers do not come from similar environments and took part in the study for reasons of personal interest. These volunteers were selected for their willingness and ability to share their fantasies.

The volunteers were given details of the study and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. They were assured that, if at any time during the process of being a volunteer in the study they became uncomfortable or were for any reason unwilling to continue, they were free to end their involvement with the study immediately. This is in keeping with the APA Guidelines (1982) quoted in Kimmel (1996) stating "The investigator respects the individual's freedom to decline to participate in or to withdraw from the research at any time" (p. 201). Three of the original group of people interested in being volunteers on the project chose not to complete the project.

Volunteers were requested to sign a letter of consent prior to their taking part in the study (sample letter attached: Appendix 1). The volunteers' names have been changed to ensure that they remain anonymous.

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### 3.4.ii. Data Collection

Two subjects were interviewed in semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Lisa's, the first, lasted about 75 minutes while Jim's lasted approximately 45 minutes. They were recorded and then transcribed. Once the interviews had been transcribed the tapes were destroyed. The interviews consisted of questions about the fantasies that occur in the volunteers' lives, how they understood them to operate and to have developed in their lives.

When and where each fantasised and the feelings that each attach to his or her fantasies were also explored. The transcriptions of these interviews may be located in Appendix 2.

The other two volunteers responded in writing to the following:

Please:

- Describe a sexual fantasy/fantasies that you have or have had (You need only describe your fantasy in as much detail as is necessary to explain its effect on your life and to help to explain what you think its/their origins is/are).
- Explain in as much detail as possible why you think that you have this fantasy
- Explain how having this fantasy makes you feel about yourself, i.e. how your fantasy/ies "fit" into your picture of yourself and your sexuality.
  - Please also include details such as where and under what circumstances you most often employ your fantasies.

For the purpose of the research please also note down your age, sex and sexual orientation

**Please remember that this will remain in the strictest confidence, and will only be used for the purposes of this research**

These written protocols can be located in Appendix 3.

The researcher chose to move from interviewing to the written protocol as a method of gathering data, as the interview was experienced as intrusive. It did not seem to provide an environment for contemplative emergence into fantasy life; rather it demanded immediate responses. This was not because of the nature of the questions but through the nature of the method, especially in combination with the subject matter. The researcher also felt that the volunteers were able to think more contemplatively about their fantasies when writing them down rather than being put on the spot for the information. The volunteers also responded more favorably toward supplying a written protocol when offered a choice between the two methods. Nevertheless, both information-gathering techniques produced interesting results and were thus both included.

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#### 3.4.iii. Analysis of the Data

The interviews were transcribed from tape and the researcher made some notes about the nonverbal behavior that occurred during the interviews. The written protocols were typed up. Synopses were developed for the two interviews as well as for the written protocols. This was done to give the data a more narrative structure although, during the analysis of the data, the raw interview material has been referred to. Another reason for the development of the narrative synopses was to offer the reader a point of access into the data.



These narratives and the original interviews were then read and re-read in order for the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the data in its entirety.

Following this situated structures were developed for three phenomenological themes; space, time and being. These themes were then taken further to draw hermeneutic conclusions. It is at this stage that the researcher took her first overt steps towards interpretation.

These structures were then drawn together in an attempt to illustrate the commonalties and contrasts within the protocols of the volunteers and draw a more generally interpreted understanding of sexual fantasy and the role that these individuals found it playing in their lives. These results are discussed in dialogue with other literature in this field.

The researcher also examines possible fore-structures of understanding existing in her interpretation that may have lead her to conclusions that others may not necessarily agree with. This type of investigation holds it imperative that the researcher clearly exposes the way in which she understands that both she and her participants come into the study with ways of understanding the subject. Further she should describe not only these but the dynamics of interaction with the participants as well (Packer, 1989; Perrott, 1979).

Finally suggestions have been made with indications for future research highlighting areas that require deeper exploration.

# *Analysis of Data*

*Space, Time, Being*

## 4.1. Narrative Structures

### 4.1.i. NARRATIVE SYNOPSIS - LISA

One of Lisa's fantasies was of being with her partner and two other girls. Lisa wasn't able to give a reason for having the fantasy except that she felt it may be due to feeling of the time of being completely disillusioned with men after the complicated breaking up with a boyfriend. This boyfriend had told Lisa this fantasy before she started to consider it her own. The lesbians who lived next door and whom Lisa's sister had overheard having sex also influenced Lisa's fantasy. Lisa said that she felt that the fantasy made her feel, for a large part, sick but that it also felt exciting. The part of her that felt sick and the part that felt excited seemed to be located in different parts of Lisa and the former part seems to be larger than the latter part. The sick part, Lisa felt, came from knowing that having sex with a man and two women was not the kind of thing that she would do as she is heterosexual. The excitement was associated with the unknown of gay life. Lisa believes that it is her attraction to danger that gets her into bad relationships and this attraction is reflected in her fantasies.

Lisa understands sexual fantasies as being things that keep people on their toes and to some extent alive. She thinks that 90% of the time fantasies are not played out because people are scared and do not act them out because they lack the confidence to do so. Still Lisa believes that people would like to live out their fantasies but lack courage but even when not acted upon they are still stimulating. Lisa personally only really thinks about her fantasies when she is relaxed or half-asleep and her mind is not functioning. Lisa experiences her "mind ticking

over” when she thinks about someone in her fantasies while she relaxes. Sometimes Lisa has spontaneous fantasies is busy doing other things, for example watching her boyfriend ski.

Lisa believes that she is not a sexual person and this has resulted in her not having very frequent fantasies. However, currently her circumstances with her new boyfriend have her very sexually charged and so she has been having quite a lot of fantasies. The more Lisa thinks about her fantasies the bigger they get.

Fantasies are very private for Lisa, she feels that each person has the prerogative to share and act out his/her fantasy but she would not like to be put under pressure to share her fantasy-experience.

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#### 4.1.ii. NARRATIVE SYNOPSIS - BEN, FANTASY #1

Ben's first fantasy is a favourite one of his. It incorporates all aspects of what he considers to be his ideal woman. The fantasy takes place in a familiar concert hall that, although big, remains intimate. Ben is seated about 20 rows from the stage where a lone performer plays the cello. She is Hispanic and has long dark hair and is wearing a long, loose fitting black dress that is not flattering to the slim body that is concealed beneath.

The passion of the music exudes through her performance. Her movement is in tune with her playing. She keeps her eyes closed. The length of the piece varies. Ben sits, listening to and

concentrating on the music. Ben is excited not by the music but of the thought of what is to follow. Ben moves to the stage and touches the performer. She is excited but demure. Ben engages her roughly and sexually. They make love.

The length of the fantasy is determined by Ben's location and time constraints. These constraints impact on the action included in the fantasy. The fantasy always ends with Ben and the performer orgasming and sprawled together.

Ben explains that he has this fantasy because he has been involved with music since the age of four and his favourite instrument is the cello. He became fascinated with Spanish when learning it at school and this was reinforced through a relationship with a Spanish woman. The connection of sex and music is an important part of Ben's continued enjoyment of this fantasy.

Ben feels liberated when he has this fantasy, he does not feel guilty or dirty. It reaffirms his love of music, the cello and Hispanic women. It inspires him to learn and makes him feel good when he is single. Ben's fantasy helps him to feel that he is the type of man who gets more out of sex than sex itself.

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#### 4.1.iii. NARRATIVE SYNOPSIS - BEN, FANTASY #2

Ben is not sure that this is a fantasy as both the circumstances and actors of the fantasy vary from fantasy to fantasy. The fantasy is based on a past situation that Ben would like to change.

In the fantasy a past 'date' is relived exactly as it was at the time. The end of the date, which ends in Ben and his partner going their separate ways, changes in Ben's fantasy. The new events take one of two routes. Either the end of the date ends with Ben and his partner going home together for a passionate sexual encounter or the partner is met again some time in the future, the past regret of having no physical contact discussed, and the fantasy again ends in the two having sex.

The recurring theme is either to change the past or to have a meeting in the future that will make up for the regrets of the past. The events that occur in the fantasies all involve women who Ben believes were important. The regret that he experiences occurs because he felt too shy to act in the way that he would have liked to.

The fantasy always progresses with the same feelings; initially with self-blame at not acting at the time, the fantasy then becomes more comfortable until it starts being an exciting prospect for the future.

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#### 4.1.iv. NARRATIVE SYNOPSIS - CARRIE, FANTASY #1

Carrie is having sex in the missionary position with someone who she desires but is not involved with. This man is loving and affectionate. An ex-boyfriend/lover is then forced to

watch Carrie having sex with this other man against his will. Nevertheless he watches and is aroused and attempts to have sex with Carrie. Carrie experiences this as very arousing.

The origins of the fantasy are vague but began with Carrie having sex with a boy who her boyfriend did not want her to see. Carrie believes that it was her way of having what she wanted and punishing her boyfriend at the same time. The fantasy also gives Carrie control over her sexual experiences and makes her feel desirable and aroused.

Carrie believes that she has this fantasy because she is insecure and needs more than one person to desire her at a time. The fantasy seems to assist Carrie in feeling that she is 'good enough' in herself.

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#### 4.1.v. NARRATIVE SYNOPSIS - CARRIE, FANTASY #2

This fantasy is about a person that Carrie desires and feels she could have a relationship with. In the fantasy they are working together and they know each other well. The man suddenly begins to kiss Carrie and she responds out of desire for him. He tells her how he feels about her. They discuss their feelings and make love. After making love they talk about their wonderful future prospects. Sometimes they have to first solve a problem that is preventing them from being together before they can be together.

Carrie can be sure of the other person's feelings for her which she does not experience in relationships with others. The communication in the fantasy is very important and is the tool that is used to solve the problem that keeps them apart.

This fantasy makes Carrie feel happy and positive that a situation like this can occur. At the same time the fantasy may set up unreal expectations for relationships. The fantasy feels like a dress rehearsal, as well as a good omen for the future.

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#### 4.1.vi NARRATIVE SYNOPSIS - JIM

Jim's most common fantasies tend to be one's involving sexual encounters and oral sex. Sometimes Jim adds different locations to his fantasies to make them more interesting. These fantasies of Jim are of the type, that he believes, fit into one's lived sexual experience.

In what Jim describes as his most dramatic fantasy he is passive where in his other fantasies he is more dominant and controlling. Jim considers his passiveness in this fantasy to verge on the idea of rape, where he has no control, but it actually stops just before this, as he is always consenting. Although not physically restrained in this fantasy, Jim has very limited movement. A group of girls occur in this fantasy. The girls are either part of a group of people that Jim knows or are alternatively, almost faceless human beings who embody sexuality. These girls play with the restrained Jim: kissing him, having sex with him and engaging in lesbian sex with one another. This fantasy has no beginning or end, it is based on images rather than on a



narrative. Because of this Jim feels that the fantasy is not realistic. It is more like a collage of all the images that Jim finds exciting.

Jim feels very aroused by this fantasy at the time of having it. When the fantasy is over Jim is left feeling slightly down and unsure of this feeling. The lack of emotion in the fantasy leaves Jim feeling empty and hollow. He believes that the hollowness, in part, is experienced because he feels slightly guilty at the idea of having pornographic images and because he wouldn't really like to behave as his fantasy suggests. His fantasy transgresses the boundary of what he would consider acceptable. As he has grown older, Jim's guilt at this fantasy has waned as he becomes more confident that he is 'normal' sexually, i.e. that he can accept his own sexuality without having to compare it to what he had been taught was 'right'.

Jim understands sexual fantasy as being a daydream type of experience that results in mental arousal regardless of the physicality of the experience. Any arousing thought if arousing is a sexual fantasy regardless of how explicit it is.

Jim fantasizes when he is in bed or when he is bored and alone. Sometimes Jim's fantasies occur in that time between sleep and wakefulness when he is cocooned in his own world. Jim currently fantasizes infrequently as he is in a stable relationship and is having sex more frequently. When single for extended periods of time and as an adolescent Jim would fantasize much more frequently and would often combine fantasy and masturbation. At these times this would be his only sexual outlet. Jim would be slightly embarrassed to have other people knowing his fantasies but he wouldn't be horrified.

## 4.2. Space

### 4.2.i. LISA

Lisa's fantasy space is filled with a number of people: her lover and two lesbians. She feels that the women may compensate for her disillusionment with men. Next door to Lisa's lived-space are two lesbians who encroached on Lisa's space through the sounds of their love making? The fantasy was first suggested to Lisa by an ex-boyfriend who had the fantasy and who allowed Lisa into his fantasy space. The fantasy remained with Lisa and developed as a rift began to separate her and her ex-boyfriend and which finally lead to her disillusionment with all men.

This fantasy is exciting for Lisa as it gives her the opportunity to explore unknown and dangerous territory. Lisa invites danger into her life and connects this desire with the problems that she experiences in her relationships.

Lisa's chosen fantasy space is when she is relaxed, half asleep or when her mind is not working. In other words when her attention is not required by others in the world or even by her body to keep her standing. Lisa can also engage in fantasy in other landscapes where something in that landscape grabs her attention in a sexual way.

With a new relationship on the horizon, Lisa is highly sexually charged. Lisa's fantasies increase in size filling her sexual space the more she thinks about them.

#### 4.2.ii BEN, FANTASY #1

Ben is seated in the space of a theater to which he ascribes the characteristics of age, grandiosity and intimacy. He occupies the space alone approximately 20 rows from the stage where the only other person in the room is situated. He faces the stage and that, initially, is where his visual and aural attention are focused.

The space in which he sits is divided by the 'aloneness' of its occupants into stage and auditorium or performer and audience. Ben's awareness, however, is of the performer and he is almost unaware of himself as he experiences her in detail, her dress, her hair, and the movements that she makes. Her awareness, on the other hand, is only of the music that she plays.

Ben's perception of her dress is that of an invisible material covering something that he can experience and does have access to. Ben "knows" what the dress hides and therefore it hides nothing.

The performer's eyes are closed and thus Ben is unseen by her. The space between them is unidirectional. She is the focus of his senses of hearing and seeing, the senses strongest in the human-being.

When Ben closes his eyes the focus shifts from the performer to the music that she plays. He becomes merged with the music. As the music draws to an end, however, Ben's thoughts become more focused on the space of his body and the arousal that he begins to feel in

anticipation of what is to come. The awareness of his arousal spurs him to move towards the stage and the performer. Thus the space becomes one of activity forward yet remains around him.

Ben occupies the space behind the performer taking his position seemingly without her knowledge. In this space it seems as if he has power over her, that she is at his mercy as he looks down on her. As he grabs her he closes the last space between them and, at last, her awareness of him as he fills the space now in front of her. His spatial awareness of only her is interrupted as the cello begins falling, and that controls his attention until it is safely on the ground.

He refocuses his attention once more as she looks at him, acknowledging him visually for the first time but this acknowledgment demonstrates the relationship between them, she is demure and deferential. The space of their interaction demonstrates the power relationship existing between them.

As their lovemaking begins he is again merged into her space, she is kissed and her dress is removed. Finally their experiences merges together and they are naked, making love and end sprawled together, almost physically occupying the same space that seems more expansive than it did initially.

Ben's awareness of the space in which he engages in his fantasy impinges on the flow of the fantasy. It impacts on the duration of the fantasy as well as what sexual positions form the fantasy.

#### 4.2.iii. BEN, FANTASY #2

Space is focused forward into the possibilities of the future. The thought of Sonia, a girl from college, most frequently occupies the space when Ben has this fantasy. Others, however, can also occupy it. The space is recalled in every detail and relived as such. These occasions where Ben experiences regret over the past are important to him and thus continue to be a part of his world.

The space contains Ben's anger at himself, as the fantasy progresses the fantasy space becomes more comfortable, and with the opening up of possibilities that can alter the "real life" experience the mood becomes quite exciting.

For Ben the ideal space for fantasy is sleep. Ben drifts into the fantasy space, becoming gradually less aware of himself and his surroundings and merged into the fantasy.

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#### 4.2.iv. CARRIE, FANTASY #1

Carrie is in an intimate space, having sex in the missionary position, which is one of the most personally interactive sexual positions as eye contact can be made. It also involves the man being positioned above the woman; here it seems to be quite protective.

Although her lover is communicating with her, Carrie seems to be much closer to the ex-boyfriend, who is forced to watch her in this intimate way with another. Her description focuses on him, on his predicament, there against his will but aroused and wanting to touch her. Being watched takes her attention as does his suffering. The space also registers the absence of those who should be seen, those who force the ex-boyfriend to watch and who prevent him from touching her.

Her focus on his arousal moves toward herself as she realizes that she is aroused by his situation.

Space works in Carrie's fantasy giving her power over her ex-boyfriend and putting her in control of her sexual experiences. She is, quite literally, given the space to do what she wants when she enters her fantasy world. It also provides her with a space where she knows beyond doubt that what her lover is saying to her is true.

Carrie has this fantasy when she is in bed going to sleep and when she is bored. In other words when she is not in the space of her body and required to be present.

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#### 4.2.v. CARRIE, FANTASY #2

Carrie creates a space that extends from her life-experience. The relationship with another is enhanced through a Carrie's strong desire to change a relationship with another from being

friends or acquaintances to being intimate lovers. In this fantasy Carrie portrays this desire through spatial relations.

The fantasy space is intimate containing just Carrie and the other. They are physically close to one another so that when the other kisses Carrie there seems to be no movement.

Their lovemaking replicates the intimacy of their situation. Carrie describes them as being intense and close. The space seems to be a romantic one where kissing and talking take center stage and sex being quite unimportant.

The intimate space is threatened by others and/or by circumstances. The shadow that is cast over the romance is quite tangible but rather than being destructive seems to bring Carrie and her lover closer together and reinforcing their intimacy and isolation with one another.

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#### 4.2.vi. JIM

Space adds variety to Jim's common sexual fantasies making them more interesting for him. They occupy the space that Jim's lived-sexual-experience also occupies. These fantasies, where Jim plays a dominant role, are comfortable for Jim.

In Jim's most dramatic fantasy, he relinquishes control, giving himself up to be sexually used by others. These others have the ability to do anything to Jim as he is restrained. The spatial

awareness for Jim is himself and his arousal. Each image is chosen to enhance that arousal, thus even when thinking of some of the women having sex with each other Jim's focus is still within his own physical being. The space is sometimes filled with the image of sexuality rather than with specific others.

All the arousing images that Jim thinks of are almost superimposed on one another.

Jim experiences emptiness as a result of his fantasy and slightly lost because he has not made emotional connections within his sexual fantasy experience. The hollow and empty feeling reflect lack, space for something else. These feelings seem to be brought on also by guilt as he was taught to believe that there should be emotions in his sexual life and because he has also been taught that pornography is wrong.

For Jim sexual fantasy is a thing that occurs in the head, a mental arousal that is not connected to physical actions. His fantasies most occur when he is alone in bed or in some situation that doesn't involve much concentration. They occur in his own little world that exists between wakefulness and sleep.



### 4.3. Time

#### 4.3.i. LISA

Although Lisa situates her fantasy in the past and says that it no longer occurs, the fantasy remains with her. It is not part of her current fantasy life but it is a part of her experience and it impacts on her lived-relationship with the world. Lisa's fantasy has made her consider her sexual orientation for example, and to consider the differences between her sexual life style and those of others. Her fantasy makes her realize that she does not have access into the lives of gay people because she has not lived in their world. Lisa says, "if you're not in it you don't understand it. If you've never done it you'll never understand it" reflecting the idea that experience does not disappear once its been had but that if you've done it even once, i.e. been connect with another world, then that experience is yours forever. Things do not occur in isolation of life, they become a part of life-experience.

Lisa offers a retrospective explanation for her fantasy. She examines the circumstances in which she found herself and understands her fantasy in this context.

Lisa's fantasy developed over time. Initially it was planted by her then-lover but it began to grow as she considered it and as things around her fueled it, for example the lesbians next door having audible sex, and then it finally reached maximum capacity when she was let down by her lover and felt disillusioned by all men.

The unknown future possibilities hold excitement for Lisa. However, through the medium of the fantasy that excitement has already been experienced, there is a continual to-and-fro of the unknown and the acknowledgment of the excitement of the unknown. Currently this particular fantasy relationship with the unknown does not hold that excitement as the life-world of Lisa is experiencing other exciting relationships with others-in-the-world.

Fantasies offer stimulation for the future. Lisa believes they are what helps us keep alive, keep our humanity and our hope. We keep striving towards something and our fantasies are there to keep us moving forward.

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#### 4.3.ii. BEN, FANTASY #1

As Ben describes his fantasy he brings it into current time. It begins to exist again and brings back elements of the past and elements from his memories of the world, for example Wyndham Theatre. His use of present tense confirms this: "I am...", "She is...". Each moment becomes now then fades into the instant past, each moment holds anticipation for what is about to happen. None of these things can exist without reference to the others.

Ben anticipates what is to come, he is invited by what time holds although he already has access to the ending, and so past and future exist together to motivate the fantasies ability to arouse. The music passes from current time after having been the focus for some varied length.

Ben approaches the performer and grabs her and spins her around, his actions are fast but this doesn't necessarily reflect the passage of time as is illustrated by the intrusion of the cello. As the cello falls time slows for Ben to catch it and lower it gently to the ground. There is a distinct contrast between his perception of the temporal interaction with the performer and the cello.

The progression of the fantasy depends on the measured, objective time available for it. The fantasy is a narrative, following the narrative premise of beginning, middle and end. But although on the surface this is true, underlying this is the notion that as a fantasy that has been engaged in on more than one occasion the experience is already known and thus these elements exist and operate simultaneously under these circumstances.

Elements of the fantasy are important parts of Ben's life and are things that he has a strong attachment too, things that have been a part of his world most of his life. In describing why he has this fantasy Ben draws our attention to the fact that music has been a part of his life since the age of four, and that Spanish became important at around 12 and was then reinforced by his longest relationship. But these things are not only a part of the past; they constitute the present and his anticipation of the future. In fact the fantasy strengthens the relationship that Ben has with these things, for example his wanting to learn to play the cello. The length that this has been a fantasy in Ben's life is part of the inseparable nature of his sexual identity and his identification with music.

He describes the fantasy as "re-affirming" and this indicates that the past and present and future are directly influencing and interacting with one another.

#### 4.2.iii. BEN, FANTASY #2

The contents of this fantasy are not stable over time. It is a shell that attaches itself to memories, although it primarily focuses on four memories and of these four most often one specific one. Ben either "returns" to the past to change the ending of the situation as it occurs or "goes into" the future to meet up with the person in his fantasy and add a new chapter and by so doing remedy something in the past. Actually Ben brings both the past and the future into the present in order to act on them. The three seemingly separate time entities merge in his fantasy experience.

Each and every detail of the situation is not just remembered, rather it is re-lived in order that it might actually be altered. This is captured in the range of Ben's emotions from cursing himself, to comfort and then to relishing the idea that things can, indeed, be different.

Time is very clear in Ben's own words: "if I could go back in time what would I like to change" and "what if there was a reunion and I confronted her with it".

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#### 4.3.iv. CARRIE, FANTASY #1

There is a muddling of time in Carrie's fantasy. Although the relationship that she has with her lover is not current ("someone I'm not currently involved with") in her fantasy he is very much present. He is making love with her. Her ex-lover wants, against his will, the sexual

relationship to be resumed in this situation. Carrie desires to alter the past through her present fantasy, and also have someone that she wants thereby anticipating the future. The past and future meet in this situation.

The characters within Carrie's fantasy vary initially relating to a specific triangle of relations and are then generalized to meet Carrie's needs in various ways.

The fantasy assists Carrie to alter the past feelings of inadequacy; it helps her to regain control. It also helps her to master the future, in getting what she wants. It offers Carrie hope for the future, hope that she will find someone who loves her.

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#### 4.3.v. CARRIE, FANTASY #2

Carrie's second fantasy involves someone who is currently in her life and someone who is currently often present. In the fantasy however there is a closer relationship between one another than in their 'real' relationship. The anticipation of getting to know the other better comes forward into the present in Carrie's fantasy.

The actual sexual intimacy is fleetingly represented in the fantasy with the focus and most time spent on the development of the relationship. They discuss the future and make plans for it; they make plans to overcome the barriers of the world and of time. The fantasy is anticipation for the future it is the hope that in the future, when it happens Carrie will be ready for it.

The fantasy is an omen for the future, it gives Carrie not only access to the possible future of the fulfillment of dreams but also offers a spiritual sign of things that will come to pass. It transcends the possibilities with definites.

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#### 4.3.vi. JIM

Jim's fantasy does not begin or end; rather it exists in time. It consists of a number of images occurring together seemingly simultaneously, like a collage of different sexual activities. This lack of time within Jim's fantasy makes him experience this fantasy as unreal.

There are two time periods existing around Jim's fantasy. The first is the time during which he has the fantasy. During this time he is present in the fantasy and experiencing the unrealness of this. It is a period of excitement and arousal for Jim. This contrasts dramatically with the second time period. In this time, when the fantasy has just passed into his already-lived-experience, Jim reflects on the fantasy and experiences some discomfort at what he has just experienced.

As Jim has grown older his experiences of this fantasy and with the world and others has taught him that he can be free of the ideas that his invitation to fantasy were associated with making that invitation seem bad.

Jim experiences fantasy occurring in an 'undefined' time between wakefulness and sleep that seems to reflect a pre-scientific time, also reflected in his experience of his fantasy.

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#### 4.4. Being-in-the-World

##### 4.4.i. LISA

Lisa considers her fantasies trifle; unimportant events. She calls them “silly little things”. Although the fantasy has not “crossed her mind” recently it has not vanished and still exists as she has access to it while discussing it.

In Lisa’s description of how the fantasy makes her feel she describes herself as being constituted of conflicting parts. A part, more than a part, thus something beyond just a portion of her feels one way while another part, seemingly then smaller than the first, feels differently. Nevertheless the seemingly smaller part seems to be stronger, as the excitement seems to be more than the sickness that she experiences. These two feelings co-exist. Lisa experiences the unknown as dangerous and exciting. She keeps “asking” for it. She feels that she thrives and grows on the danger.

Lisa says that she believes that fantasies “keep people on their toes”. Balancing on one's toes is something that takes concentration and awareness. Thus Lisa refers to an action that is a human one by nature of our relationship to the world.

Lisa feels that people are afraid to act out their fantasies and lack the confidence to do so, they lack courage. She believes that the fantasies are in some way dangerous or frightening or linked to some risk taking in one’s interactions in the world.



She says that perhaps they have something to do with the subconscious mind, again alluding to the pieces that we exist as.

There is an ontological understanding implicit in Lisa's fantasy that things 'happen' within her that she is unaware of, and that are beyond her control.

This 'unconscious' mode of being is reflected as Lisa says: "too highly charged", "blown away" and "explode". These connect with the idea that Lisa cannot contain these feelings within her and if she doesn't find an outlet for them they could be harmful to her. These overwhelming sexual feelings contrast with her understanding of herself as being "not a sexual person".

Lisa has ownership over her fantasy. It belongs to her and to no-one else. It is something that she can withhold and it exists within her.

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#### 4.4.ii. BEN, FANTASY #1

Ben's fantasy woman is his ideal woman, a woman embodying the things-in-the-world that he merges with most strongly. Ben has access to her and knows her reaction to him thus he acts confidently. He has access to what she is like underneath her clothes because she is a part of him; she is his ideal woman.

Ben sits and watches and listens to her performance. Sitting Ben is comfortable and can allow his focus to drift into merging with the performer and the music. By sitting Ben's senses can focus and not be occupied with the requirements of movement. Instead they are free to uniquely human experiences, the reflection on and enjoyment of music.

The relationship of things to Ben's world is how Ben describes the pertinent features of his fantasy. His interpretation of the fantasy is that it amalgamates music, Spanish and the cello. Ben describes his relationship to each of these things in terms of time and of his love for them.

Ben's fantasy liberates him; it strengthens the love that Ben has for these objects- and others-in-the-world. It makes Ben feel romantic, as if there is more to him than just a man interested in sex. It contrasts with the guilt and smuttiness that Ben may experience with other fantasies.

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#### 4.4.iii. BEN, FANTASY #2

Curiosity about what alternative endings could have occurred keeps Ben interested in this fantasy. His wanting to reflect on the past highlights the human-being's unique relationship with the world.

The others in Ben's fantasy were special in their own right, as people and also because they are an important feature in Ben's life-experience. Ben has two understandings of the existence of

others in his fantasy. Each woman was unique and worthwhile in her own relationship with the world and each was also important in their relationship with Ben, he felt that they made a difference to his lived-experience of the world.

Ben's own inability to act was attributed by him to shyness. His shyness is a manifestation of fear of his existence in the world and the balance of being in the world, things that he should have been invited toward were things that he felt prevented from doing.

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#### 4.4.iv. CARRIE, FANTASY #1

In Carrie's fantasy she is having sex in the missionary position. The traditional 'proper'/'correct' way of having sex in Western culture. Carrie's sexual role is seemingly one of submission. In this position Carrie's movement is also curtailed. It is Carrie's choice to have sex and, as it is her fantasy, it is also her choice to have sex in this position. She has sex with another who is engaging with her but she does not seem to be equally engaged. She describes her lover as someone that she has "fallen for". This language demonstrates the experience that Carrie has, she falls for someone, and she is at his or her mercy.

Carrie's audience watching her makes her self-aware and excited. She is seen by another in an intimate way. Two people acknowledging each other in the world and acknowledging their arousal at being seen. In trying to prevent Carrie from "seeing" another man her ex-boyfriend is forced to "see" her intimately with him.

Carrie says that "in her mind" she gets what she wants this is a clear example of the impact of dualism on our world. Carrie sees her mind as being a separate entity from her body and from the world.

Fantasy makes Carrie strong and in control. This experience changes her relationship to the world. If she can change it in her fantasy then she has at least a chance of changing things in her relationships with others. Her fantasy does not occur in isolation from the world but is demonstrated to be in relationship with it.

Carrie's insecurity in relationships and the feeling that she wasn't enough is her explanation for her fantasy. Her fantasy spans the gap left by a problem that Carrie has with her being in the world. Feeling "not enough" implies that she did not have what others have.

Carrie is looking for someone who will love her. She seems to see herself as an entity needing something from the world and others. She needs to feel that people care for her and that that care is separated from sex. In other words Carrie is experiencing relationships as bodily interactions where she would like something that encompasses the whole, so again we see the dualism of the world reflected.

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#### 4.4.v. CARRIE, FANTASY #2

Carrie and her lover make intense love but then talk about being together, separating the physical and the emotional realms of their experience. In talking they reflect on the problems and the hurdles that exist in their shared world that prevent them from being together. It is this discussing how they will be together that bonds them to each other. It is their reflecting human nature that cements the bond rather than their physical act of passion.

Within the fantasy all problems are overcome but in reality Carrie is less confident. In her fantasy Carrie has access to the emotions of the other and can know for sure that the result is, as she desires it. In reality however, Carrie cannot be sure that the situation's outcome will be the one that she wants. Even if Carrie does get the man that she wants in reality, and does often happen, the communication is lacking in reality and thus Carrie can never achieve in reality what she does in her fantasy – successful communication that ensures that the relationship will be a lasting one.

The fantasy makes Carrie feel happy, it gives her hope. It is a good omen, in other words a sign from the 'world-out-there' that a relationship will proceed in the way of the fantasy and that communication will be the pivotal point in the bonding of a relationship. Carrie is, however, afraid that having this hope will create 'unreal' expectations of the man that she may want to be involved with and thus is a negative thing. In other words the fantasy may change her understanding of the world in such a way that she will have expectations for the world that she will be unable to find.

Carrie's regular contact with the people in her fantasy and her inability to have them makes her want them. The fantasy, for Carrie is a rehearsal now for the future event that will happen in relation with the fantasy figure.

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#### 4.4.vi. JIM

Jim commonly fantasizes about sexual encounters where oral sex occurs and considers the body and its actions and interactions with others. He replays encounters that have occurred before with others. Location, the space in which the fantasy occurs, constitutes a centre to these fantasies adding excitement for Jim.

In the fantasy that Jim describes as "most dramatic", perhaps the one with most impact and effect on him, he is passive and the others in the world act on him. Jim relinquishes control to others. Jim becomes an object that is acted on rather than a being with freedom to choose, but he does choose this situation, as it is his fantasy.

The others to whom Jim gives control are sometimes the idea of people he knows and sometimes-faceless sexuality. The unemotional interaction leaves Jim feeling "hollow" and "empty". He experiences a lack of something; something is not fulfilled by the fantasy when he is not aroused. Jim cannot identify the root of this lack of something and that also leaves him unsure. He believes that it is actually beyond what he wants, what he finds meaningful and also what the world has taught him is right. This relationship of Jim and the world seems to

result in Jim feeling guilty because the world imposed ideas on Jim and Jim experienced a lack of freedom to react. As he has grown older, however, Jim has been able to resist the world's invitation to control him.

Jim's understanding of fantasy reflects the idea of dualism within his world. The mind and body experience arousal separately and distinctly. Fantasy can occur in the head without occurring in the body and vice versa. For Jim, however, it is the connection of fantasy (mind) and masturbation (body) equals sexual outlet.

The fantasy world is one's "own little world" according to Jim and this occurs when nothing in the world 'outside' holds his attention. Again this reflects a distinction between Jim and the world.

#### 4.5 General Synopses

Fantasy remains in the horizon of experience and is still accessible even if the fantasy is no longer currently indulged in. The experience of fantasy and the reflection on fantasy are two separate modes of being-with-fantasy. When fantasy is currently experienced, it maintains these two qualities. Often fantasy is something remembered and embellished by the imagination. Working in conjunction "modes of past and future" operate in a way that escapes the convention of linear time.

Fantasies offer anticipation for the future, for things to come. They are exciting and they prepare for the lived-experience-with-another. Fantasy can involve a striving towards. Time can be brought forward to be present again through the reliving of situations.

Time is related to circumstances of the nature of being in the world. It is not uniform across all situations but adjusts and flows back and forward. Past, present and future meet each other in fantasy existing simultaneously. Past, present and future are altered through the experience of fantasy; fantasies presents possibilities as well as anxieties. Fantasy experiences may offer love and hope, reaffirming openness-in-being but may also offer feelings of guilt and discomfort, inhibiting our being-open-in-the-world.

The content of fantasy mutates over time, changing with existential events and interactions. The time of natural science, measured time interacts with fantasy as it can impact on the time that is spent in fantasy.



In reliving the fantasy and in relating it, it becomes a narrative with structure; a communicated narrative. Fantasy reaffirms the important relationships that beings have with others and objects in the world.

Fantasy occurs in relationship to the world and to others. Even though the fantasy seems to occur in isolation, it begins in the world with others and continues in the world with others. Events in the shared world influence fantasy ideas that grow as we interact-in-the-world-with-others.

The fantasy space gives full access with the other's experience. Fantasy provides a range of choices; power and relinquished control are two examples. In fantasy there is space to act as one wants to with the fantasy world. Different fantasy spaces offer different feelings and experiences, and different opportunities.

There seems to be a world between waking and sleep that is a fantasy world.

Fantasy occurs in the space of relaxation, sleep and boredom. The space of the world-with-others interacts with the process of fantasy. All space has mood and is not merely geometrical nor can it be explained in these terms alone. Position in space is always in relation to others and objects even if the object is one's own body. Space has momentum forward due to the visual relationship that human-beings have with the world. When moving in the world motion is forward towards others and objects. The space of mood brings things closer when they are focused on even if, in measurement they are further away.

Being in fantasy relates to being free and being free in relatedness with others. One is seen in openness and acknowledged by the other. What the fantasising being wants the others respond in the expected way that is freedom.

There is a dualistic understanding of the body and the mind, the fantasy as it is a thought and the fantasy as it occurs as sexuality. Fantasy invites one to power and control, to hope and love. Fantasy changes a being's relationship with the world, fantasy is understood in relation to the world. Beings offer explanations and understandings of their own fantasies; these are not hidden from them.

Fantasy gives access into other's worlds, it assists in problem solving. Fantasies can create unreal expectations of life in relation with others. A fantasy world belongs to one. It is an owned experience.

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## *Discussion*

*Not only true things,  
but also trifles and fancies may be useful*

*- Spinoza*

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. The Value of Space, Time and Being

Examining Carrie, Jim, Ben and Lisa's fantasies through the phenomenological themes of Space, Time and Being allows us to reevaluate what it means for individuals to have fantasy experiences. One is given the opportunity to step away from the 'scientific' paradigms governing psychological research and look at experience without trying to locate a causal relationship and rules that can be generalised to all human-beings. Time, Space and Being give us insight into the very personal and seemingly unique sexual fantasy experience, reaffirming that human-beings are not all the same and do not all act and react in the same way or even for the same reasons.

It is through these themes that a holistic picture is constructed about each person's sexual fantasy as well as its immutable link to the individual's life experience. This has direct impact on sexual fantasies and the research thereof, specifically in clinical application.

For the researcher the use of the themes seem the only logical route to avoid the trap of perpetuating empirical research.

## 5.2. What do Carrie, Jim, Ben and Lisa mean when they talk about Sexual Fantasies?

A problem with the use of the written answer is that one cannot go back for greater clarity or to ask additional questions. The researcher omitted to ask Carrie and Ben to define their understanding of sexual fantasy. This proved problematic, as it was something that she asked Jim and Lisa. Thus the researcher can only jump to conclusions about what Ben and Carrie might think and since that is contrary to the practice of phenomenology she will not.

Lisa and Jim did tell the researcher what they believe a sexual fantasy is. Jim said:

Any sort of daydream type experience, which causes some sort of mental arousal in a way however sexual it was. If the thing in its own right doesn't have to be explicit but if it leaves arousal I'd classify it as a sexual fantasy.

Lisa said:

...I think its 90% of the time people have them they never play them out and part of it is because its like...like what keeps them alive is their fantasies. Its not the only thing but its something that keeps them on their toes, adds excitement to their lives and a lot of people don't act them out because they are scared to, they do. have the confidence to do it, you know, so its, a lot of it is like...I don't know maybe your subconscious mind or...I don't know cause I really only think about fantasy when I relax...Fantasies are like things that you would like to do but most people have never had the courage to do them, but it keeps you sort of there, you know, like it stimulates you.

Lisa's description of sexual fantasy emphasises the importance of fantasy for her. Fantasy impacts on lived experience, and this is confirmed in the examination of the example of a fantasy that Lisa has provided. In contrast, Jim's description of a sexual fantasy has a far more solitary substance. He understands the experience of fantasy as broken out from the body.

### 5.3. What do Carrie, Jim, Lisa and Ben fantasise about?

The contents of the fantasies are diverse. Lisa and Jim's fantasies can involve unknown others and multiple partners. Carrie and Ben's fantasies are more romantic or personal even though Carrie's involve more than one person the context impacts on the demographics changing the "feel" of the fantasy experience. Content is a mutating part of fantasy, it does not appear to be a stable entity. The many studies merely concentrating on content may not, therefore, be that informative or reliable except for a particular moment in linear time with a particular group. Carrie and Ben, for example, each gave two very diverse fantasies and Ben alluded to others as well. Also, inquiring about fantasy using a list of fantasies which people check on their fantasy list may not perform merely a counting task but might also impact on the future fantasies of that group of people as we saw with Lisa when others shared their fantasy content with her.

### 5.4. Do Ben, Carrie, Lisa and Jim Attribute any part of their Fantasy Experience to their Gender?

Lisa talks about sexual orientation and the excitement of the danger of an unknown life-experience of same-sex-sex. But none of the participants discuss their role neither as male or female nor, from what they say, do they think that their experiences differ from or are the same as that of the opposite gender. In any case this group is too small to draw conclusions along these lines.

Jim's fantasy could be classed as 'typical' for males but so could Ben's be classed as 'typically' female. Each person's fantasy experiences are unique to them.

#### 5.5. How do Jim, Carrie, Lisa and Ben Feel about their Sexual Fantasies?

Jim's fantasy makes him uncomfortable as does Lisa's while Ben finds his first fantasy liberating and his second exciting in terms of the possibilities that it offers. Carrie's first fantasy makes her feel powerful and in control of her life-world while her second makes her feel happy and bodes well for the future. From this it seems that fantasies do not conform to standardized rules. Rather fantasies occur for a variety of reasons and with numerous, positive and/or negative effects.

#### 5.6. A comment on how the Participants Described their Sexual Orientation.

Both women in the study overtly commented on their sexual identity. Carrie wrote that her sexual orientation was for the most part heterosexual. While Lisa said "...I'm heterosexual...is that the word (laughs)? Like I like men you know (laughs)!"

Although one cannot determine much from these brief references to sexual identity, it is interesting to note their lived understanding of their own sexual identity. Eliason (1995), who examined sexual identity formation of heterosexual students, found that many accepted the societal norm of being heterosexual rather than consciously choosing it as a sexual identity. Carrie's description does convey a sense of careful consideration as well as an understanding that it is not a fixed certainty but rather a construct open to change with her interactions in the

world. Lisa, on the other hand, seemed uncomfortable to use the word heterosexual although she seemed sure of her own orientation, the researcher seemed to react to Lisa's lesbian fantasy which also appeared to impact on her description of herself.

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The findings of this study can be located within the findings of other studies in the field broadly discussed in the review of literature.

#### 5.7. How do These Findings Differ from Previous Research?

The fantasy experiences within this study are not disembodied from their owners. The fantasies incorporate many of the findings of quantitative research but the findings are located within the fantasy experience. Furthermore it is the lived-understanding that fantasies have, that is focused on. These people use their fantasies to interpret their experiences of their own worlds and to convey the relationships that they have with their worlds. An example of this is that it is not that useful for us to understand that people use fantasy as rehearsal unless we understand why they feel that they need to rehearse or why they feel anxious about the possible outcomes of living their fantasies and so on.

Let us then discuss the fantasy worlds of this study's participants in relation to some previous findings that reveal themselves in the participants' fantasies and also in relation to how the phenomenological lenses of body, time and space allow for the expansion of these previous findings.



### 5.7.i. *Rehearsal*

In her second reported fantasy Carrie reports using fantasy as a dress rehearsal for the future. This correspond with Chick and Gold (1988) who say, "sexual daydreams can also be a way of rehearsing future sexual behaviour..." (p. 61), however the fantasy extends beyond being just a rehearsal for the future. It is a living of the future in the present and thus impacts directly on Carrie's lived-world. It changes Carrie's expectations of the future as well as the way that Carrie intends dealing with the future.

### 5.7.ii. *Power*

Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1994) suggest that sexual fantasies "...let us triumph over the forces that prove troublesome in our everyday world..." (p. 2). However, as fantasies are part of lived-experience, the power that fantasy provides does not exist isolated within a 'fantasy-world', Carrie uses her fantasy to gain power over her life-world. Carrie gets something from her first written fantasy which she carries into her life-experience, she regains control of her life-world by experiencing power and control over others within her fantasy.

In her fantasy experience, and engaging with others in this realm, she is strengthened and her perceptions of her life-world are adjusted accordingly.

### 5.7.iii. *Guilt*

A "significant minority" of people feel guilty about their sexual fantasies (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995). Jim talks about his feelings of guilt but, importantly, these feelings do not occur at the time of the fantasy but are rather attributed in retrospect. This is made clear through the examination of his fantasy using the phenomenological theme of time.

### 5.7.iv. *Experience and Reflection*

Jim used his fantasy for sexual gratification in combination with masturbation. Nevertheless once that physical gratification has been achieved Jim is left feeling a lack of something and believes that this can be attributed to feelings of guilt about the content of the fantasy. Although pleasurable, Jim's fantasy is not 'purely' pleasurable.

Previous research has not accounted for the difference between living one's fantasy and reflecting on one's fantasy. This is a pivotal difference in one's fantasy experience. Hardin and Gold (1989) suggest a possible reason for their failure to obtain a significant difference between high guilt and explicitness of fantasy may be attributed to sample size. In Jim's fantasy, however, one can clearly observe a change in relation with the fantasy which may account for Jim still engaging in the fantasy although it causes negative feelings including guilt.

Sartre (1966) suggests a solution to this conflict when he says that we can only "determine the properties of image as image" if we reflect on the image as it first appeared, in its unaffected

form (p. 3). This is obviously idealistic, however, and thus all one can do is acknowledge that no-one has access to the 'pure fantasy experience'.

#### 5.7.v. *Love*

Ben uses fantasy to celebrate the things that he loves in his world. This is something that does not appear to have previously emerged from sexual fantasy research. Love, says Kruger (1988), is a passion that gathers our being in the world. When we love we consider, and we are perceptive. It is when we love that things become clear, revealing themselves to us in the world. It is through this state of love that human-beings achieve happiness. Ben's fantasy experience therefore does not seem to be a rehearsal or a catharsis of excess sexual feelings; it is a path to an experience of happiness.

#### 5.7.vi. *Influences from the Lived-World*

Things that she experiences with others in her life-world help to formulate this fantasy of Lisa's. "Alteration of sexual fantasies occurs, intentionally or not, through exposure to erotic images in both entertainment and advertising" (Kelley, 1985; p. 339). In Lisa's experience we see an extension of Kelley's findings in that talking with another about her fantasy experience alters the content of Lisa's fantasy. The fantasy is also strengthened by the knowledge that there are people nearby with whom she could, theoretically, enact the fantasy.

### 5.7.vii. *Who Acts on Their Fantasies/Do Fantasies Predict Behaviour?*

Lisa believes that people are afraid to act on their fantasies. She prefers to keep her fantasies to herself and experiences the fantasy that she related as going beyond what she would physically wish to experience with others-in-the-shared-world even though she found the thought of it exciting. Ben's second fantasy, on the other hand, would be acted out if he had the opportunity. Ben has already experienced the sexual experience in his first fantasy with others-in-the-shared-world. For Carrie fantasy is about something that she is anticipating will happen with another. Whereas for Jim the fantasy goes beyond what he would actually want to experience with others, although, like Lisa, he does find the fantasy sexually arousing. It is not possible to tell whether or not Carrie would like to enact her first fantasy from what she tells us about it nevertheless it appears to be a powerful experience within itself.

Jim and Lisa's understanding of sexual fantasy emerges more theoretically as it constituted part of their interviews whereas for Carrie and Ben the understanding is implicit in the particular fantasies that they relate. This seems to indicate that the idea of fantasy not only differs among those that fantasise but also differs according to the way that it is discussed. Furthermore the content of fantasy may act as a predictor of whether or not fantasy should or will be acted out. Masters, Johnson and Kolodny (1994) draw much the same conclusion on the issue of fantasy as a predictor of behaviour. Over time attitudes may change towards particular fantasies, Jim's and Lisa's for example, leading to different relationships with those fantasies.

Whether or not fantasies are acted on or not does not truly seem that significant in that the experience is valuable in and of itself.

### 5.8. Where do fantasies occur?

Fantasies occur when Lisa, Jim, Carrie and Ben feel relaxed, often as they are falling asleep or when they feel very bored and nothing around them holds their attention. Pelletier and Herold (1988) found that sexual fantasy most often occurs in non-sexual situations is consistent with what the participants report in this study. Jim also used his fantasy when masturbating.

This time of fantasy seems to be an interesting place. A space that is private and a world that the fantasiser can call their own. It is not a place that other people can visit without invitation but it is a place that other people exist on will of the fantasiser. It has no material dimensions but can be filled with all types of locations and people, near and far. It takes linear time that has little impact on the time that exists within the fantasy world. The body engages with others and things yet may not move at all.

### 5.9. Reflections

The fantasies reported are obviously not the only fantasies that the participants have, thus sexual fantasy studies only ever deal with what is reported and never tap the fantasies that the participants do not wish to reveal. Ben, for example, alludes to other fantasies that arouse feeling of guilt and smuttiness. At different times in their lives the fantasies fulfill different roles and purposes as can be seen from Lisa's fantasy which was a method of dealing with the disillusionment of her relations with men. Now, as Lisa's lived-circumstances have changed the fantasy no longer plays a role. It does remain however and could potentially be used again

in the future. Fantasies also appear to be unstable, changing over time, incorporating different people in similar sequences depending on relations in the person's lived-world. The fantasies of Ben, Carrie and Jim do not have a consistent other although the fantasy is structurally the same each time. Carrie's and Ben's, in particular, deal with a number of different others who still impact on their life-experience.

It must also be taken into account that the fantasy experience and relating the fantasy are different events with different contexts. The fantasy takes place in a different space to the relating of the fantasy. The fantasy is roused through different means. It is partly for this reason that the researcher found benefit in requesting some of the participants to write down their fantasy experiences as the circumstances in which they could do this more closely represent the actual circumstances in which they report having fantasy.

The experience of reflecting on one's fantasy also is a different experience from that of engaging in the fantasy. Reflecting on a fantasy means that the fantasy is remembered as a past event, and this can be seen in the fantasies of Lisa and Jim as they report them. Having a fantasy may also at first seem to be about remembering (at least in some cases) but on examination reveals itself as a reliving rather than as remembering. This "bring-into-presentness" of fantasies is reflected in the protocols of Carrie and Ben whose circumstances were more true to "normal" fantasy circumstances.

Interestingly, a number of people with whom the researcher discussed this research reported that they do not have sexual fantasies. This may indicate that a number of theorists claiming that almost everyone engages in fantasy are mistaken or, alternatively, may point to the fact that

when approaching people for their experiences that their experiences are not what they understand as sexual fantasies even if 'scientists' refer to them as such. These points also to the fact that people may have varied understandings of what sexual fantasy is and of what it means to engage in a sexual fantasy. Thus an indication for future research should be to consider what sexual fantasy may be defined as by those engaging or not engaging in sexual fantasy.

#### 5.10. The Researcher

It is essential to mention that I as a researcher have an impact on the data that has been collected. My interactions with those taking part in the study influenced the information that I was given access too. Moreover, my interaction with the participants influenced their relationship with their fantasies as well as they were required to either talk about their fantasies or to commit them to paper for an audience that extends beyond me to unknown others who have access now and in the future to this research. It must also be acknowledged, and has been demonstrated, that interactions with others in the shared-world influence what is fantasised about, thus discussing fantasy may alter a person's perception of it.

Furthermore my questions influenced the data that has been collected and thus begins as a skewed collection of data. As everything in the shared-world is negotiated in this way nothing can be done about it except to honestly acknowledge it. This also applies to my analysis which some may agree with and others object to.

## *Conclusion*



## 6. Conclusion

Sexual fantasy is a living thing that has a relationship with the world and with others that is interactive. It is not an experience in isolation although it most often occurs when the fantasiser is alone. Fantasy consists of two time structures: the present experience and the reflective experience. In part it is the interface of these two structures that fuels the life-impact of fantasy.

It would seem that sexual fantasy, explored in this way, is no different from what one might expect from a study of daydreaming or even of subjects more removed than this from sexual fantasy. This is a valuable acknowledgement as it re-enforces the notion that sexual fantasy is no different from any other lived-experience.

Although it is clear that the findings of this study correspond to the findings of others in the area of sexual fantasy, sexual fantasy also emerges as a unique experience for those who fantasise. Sexual fantasy should not, indeed cannot, be divided into statements about content or about frequency; rather it is a multi-layered experience and is valuable as such.

This study was explorative opening up areas for future examination as well as placing the subject of sexual fantasy within the boundaries of phenomenology and hermeneutics. From this research the researcher recommends that research be conducted around the change in experience of fantasy from original experience to reflection on the experience. Each phenomenological theme could also be explored in greater detail.

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## *Appendices*

## 8. Appendices

### 8.1. Appendix 1 - Letter of Informed Consent

#### *Informed Consent Form (Modified from Kimmel, 1996)*

This portion is to be reviewed and signed by the subject:

I understand that the purpose of this study is:

I understand that the following is a description of the procedure I will be undergoing in this project:

I understand that the following is an explanation of foreseeable attendant discomfort and/or risks:

I understand that the following is an explanation of the benefits I may expect or that may be expected for others as a result of this project:

I have been informed of and understand the purpose of the above-described project and its procedures. I also have been informed of and understand the foreseeable discomfort, risks and benefits. I have further been advised that unforeseen effects may occur. I volunteer and agree to assume responsibility for any medical care required as a result of any injury sustained as a result of this study. Nevertheless, I wish to participate in this investigation.

I have been informed of and understand the data collected in this study may be published or otherwise disseminated for scientific purposes. However, I understand that my name will not be published and that every effort will be made to protect my confidentiality.

I further understand that I may withdraw from the project at any time without prejudice to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

8.2. Appendix 2 - Interview Protocols

**Subject 1**

*Lisa, 24, heterosexual female*

INTERVIEW

- Researcher** The best place to start is, um, if you could tell me, um, what your most  
**(R)** common fantasies are, or your main fantasy...
- Lisa (L)** Um, well like silly things, little silly things like not know but I used to have  
this fantasy of being with my partner and two other girls, I don't know why  
(laughs). I think maybe also that could have been attributed to my complete  
disillusionment with men, I think that's where it came from, (thinks)...Ja.  
Because now the thought doesn't even cross my mind but a couple of months  
ago...[I was thinking about a lot]. There [are] two lesbians living next door to  
us and my sister heard them together one night and she told me about it and...
- R** But you had the fantasy first and then your sister...
- L** Ja, ja. My ex mentioned it to me once when I asked him what he fantasized  
about and he said this [two other girls] and then I thought about it a bit more  
and then all these problems started between us and led to me being  
disillusioned with the male species.
- R** How do you feel about that, I mean you look a bit nervous to tell me... like "Oh  
God, she's going to think I'm a lesbian", I mean how do you feel about that  
fantasy?
- L** [Pause]...I don't... [pause]...like a part of me feels sick about it - more than a



part of me. But another part of me feels its exciting.

R You say feels sick? Are you embarrassed, or like “its really gross”?

L Ja, not the kind of thing that I would ever do. I wouldn't do that kind of thing. But, like there is some excitement to it because it's the unknown. Ja, I mean like I'm heterosexual...is that the word (laughs)? Like I *like* men you know (laughs)! So like the gay thing is like...if you're not in it you don't understand it. If you've never done it you'll never understand it. So maybe it's like a danger zone?

R And some curiosity maybe?

L Ja. I think my main problem is that I like too much danger. Ja, I thrive on danger and that's why I've been attracted to such crap – you know. 'Cause its like this guy that I was involved with at work – you know emotionally its like asking for trouble and my ex as well – asking for trouble!

R You pick the difficult relationships and your fantasies as well are situations where you're going to get yourself into trouble, having lesbian fantasies, you're going to get into water that's

L Ja – too hot!

R Um, just tell me as well, to go back a bit, what would you define as sexual fantasy?

L Um, I think its 90% of the time people have them they never play them out and part of it is because its like...its what keeps people alive is their fantasies. Its not the only thing but its something that keeps them on their toes, adds excitement to their lives and a lot of people don't act them out because they are

scared to, they don't have the confidence to do it, you know, so its, a lot of it is like...I don't know maybe your subconscious mind or...I don't know cause I really only think about my fantasy when I relax or when I'm half asleep and my minds not working. Fantasies are like things that you would like to do but most people have never had the courage to do them, but it keeps you sort of there you know, like it stimulates you.

R You said that you fantasize when you are relaxing...

L Well I think mostly its when I'm by myself and I'm thinking about someone and I'm relaxing – my mind ticks over. But it can also be like yesterday for example, when I was watching my boyfriend ski you know. Then I just knew that if I didn't have this man right now I'd explode virtually – but he knew what I wanted and that in itself is exciting. The whole thing was brought on yesterday because I looked at his legs and the muscles in his legs were like tense, very defined and I was blown away!

R Perhaps you can tell me how often you fantasize in general?

L Well, just lately a lot but I think its because I'm too highly charged at the moment with this new guy, but beforehand not a lot I've never really been a sexual person so not a lot at all.

R Would you say that if you're not sort of involved in a relationship with the potential for sex that it becomes less of a priority?

L Ja, definitely, the more I think about them (my fantasies) the bigger they get and what about this, ja so it definitely depends on the situation.

R How do you feel about other people knowing what you fantasize about?

- L** I don't want them to know because, like, its in here, its me, you know, and its private, its my fantasy. I mean if somebody tells me there's you know, that's cool but they mustn't expect me to tell them mine because its something special that you share with a particular person and if you want to play it our then its your prerogative you know that's the use of it.
- R** Ja, I think that that's about all, you okay?
- L** Just a bit excited now I have to go back to work thank you very much (both laugh).

---

**Subject 4**

*Jim, 29, Heterosexual Male*

**INTERVIEW**

- Researcher (R)** The best place to start is, um, if you could tell me, um, what your most common fantasies are, or your main fantasy...
- Jim (J)** My most common fantasies tend to be one on one sexual encounters with oral sex. Sometimes with a locational build up to add interest e.g. a yacht you know. The basic fairly straightforward type that are generally in the range of one's sexual experience.
- R** Can you tell me what you'd consider your strongest fantasy?
- J** You mean my most dramatic fantasy?
- R** Okay.
- J** This fantasy would involve a much more passive element from myself where

in the more general fantasies I'm usually more dominant, controlling it. In these types of fantasies I would take a passive role verging on a slightly rape oriented role but not because I'm always consenting, if that makes sense. Within these fantasies I'd tend to be not necessarily tied down but very passive have very limited movement. Then more than one girl possibly known...

R Possibly known?

J Like a group of people I know or almost faceless human beings – just pure sexuality.

R And what are they doing?

J Generally playing with me in a variety of different ways. Kissing you, having intercourse with me, on top. The others will be playing around with possible lesbian activity between them as well. It doesn't particularly go anywhere or come from anywhere, its not story based more image based and not particularly realistic.

R What do you mean about realistic?

J Time based with a story, rather this would be glimpses of images like a homemade picture, like all the sexual things you find exciting being put together by having all the people there – that's the idea.

R How does this fantasy make you feel?

J At the time, very aroused. Once it's over a feeling of being slightly down slightly unsure of where the feeling should leave me. Empty and hollow at the thought of the lack of emotion attached to the fantasy. If that sort of makes sense. Part of that hollowness comes from a slight element of guilt because

some of those images and the pornographic bit is slightly counter to how I'd like to behave. The fantasy is more than I would want to actually do in a personal way – it conflicts with my measure of what is acceptable. The level of guilt has dissipated, as I've become more confident in the normality of my sexuality as I've grown older.

**R** What do mean by normality?

**J** In a way its accepting the level that normality isn't a thing to strive for where when I was young there was a narrow stereotype that I was persuaded was absolute.

**R** Um, what would you define as sexual fantasy?

**J** Any sort of daydream type experience, which cause some sort of mental arousal in a way however physically sexual it was. If the thing in its own right doesn't have to be as explicit but if it leaves arousal I'd classify it as a sexual fantasy.

**R** When do you most often have sexual fantasies?

**J** Pause ... normally while lying in bed. Sometimes maybe driving when you have a lot of fairly inactive things around. Generally alone when I have nothing much to hold my interest. Sometimes the fantasy occurs somewhere between awake and asleep, in that undefined time, when you're in your own little world is quite a strong time for fantasy.

**R** Perhaps you can tell me how often you fantasize in general?

**J** Increasingly less. Whilst I'm in a stable relationship the level of fantasy is much much lower. When I've been single for extended periods of time, or

when I was an adolescent, I used to fantasize a lot more and the combination of fantasy with masturbation would be my only sexual outlet.

**R** So the more sex you have the less you fantasize?

**J** Yes.

**R** How would you feel about other people knowing what you fantasize?

**J** Depending on who... slightly embarrassed and shy but not horrified.

### 8.3. Appendix 3 - Written Protocols

#### Subject 2

*Ben, 27, Heterosexual Male*

#### FANTASY #1

DESCRIPTION: The first fantasy (my favorite) incorporates all aspects of what I consider to be my ideal woman. I am sitting in a theatre/concert hall. The hall reminds me of Wyndham Theatre (in London), old, grandiose, but intimate. I am on my own but seated about 20 rows from the front. On the stage is a lone performer. She is playing the cello. She is Hispanic, has long dark hair and is wearing a long black dress. The dress is a loose, 'summer' style dress, with shoulder straps and a very wide and unrestrained bottom half. The dress does not accentuate the slim figure that I know is hiding underneath.

She is playing Elgar's Cello Concerto, but obviously unaccompanied. The passion of the piece exudes itself through her playing. Her hair cascades over the top of the cello when she plays the low notes. Her legs remain static, spread apart by the cello, only moving when the music becomes so intense, the cello cannot stand still. The only times she looks her eyes are closed. In my fantasy the length of the piece varies, sometimes the whole thing, other times just excerpts. I just sit and listen, I close my eyes sometimes, I do not get sexually excited by the playing, only by the thought of what happens next.

Towards the end of the piece I stand up and walk to the stage, so that by the final note, I am standing directly behind her. When she finishes I grab her shoulders roughly and spin her round, she drops her cello and I catch it and lower it slowly before it hits the ground. She is

panting and looking up at me with her head bowed. I kiss her and roughly remove her dress. We make love on the stage frantically, both naked. Depending on where or for how long I am thinking about this fantasy determines how many positions we do it in or how long it lasts. Sometimes there is a grand piano towards the back of the stage and we move onto that during our lovemaking (like in "Pretty Woman"). The fantasy always ends with us coming and lying, panting, sprawled across each other. Obviously sometimes my thoughts are interrupted, but if not, that's how it finishes.

#### WHY

Music (h)as been a part of my life since I was four and although I've always played the piano, my favorite instrument is the cello. I adore the performances/recordings of Jacqueline du Pré. My fascination with Spanish began when I studied the language at secondary school (aged 12-14), and continued with my longest relationship to a Spanish girl when I was 19 (on and off until I was 25), who was also musical (only piano). I've always gone for Hispanic types since then. The scene in "Pretty Woman" struck a chord and has always been a fantasy of mine – connecting music and sex, and it happened once and has featured a lot more strongly since!

#### FEEL

I feel extremely liberated when I have this fantasy. I don't have any feelings of guilt or smuttiness that I may have with some erotic fantasies. It makes me re-affirm my love of Hispanic women and the cello, and music. In effect it gives me the drive to learn the cello, it makes me feel good if I'm single. How does it fit into my picture of myself and my sexuality? I think it makes me think I'm more of a romantic than just a "wham-bam thank you mam" man!



## FANTASY #2

DESCRIPTION: The female and circumstances in this fantasy vary. (I'm not sure if it is really a fantasy). It's always based on a situation in the past in which I wonder what would have happened if...? The most common one is with a girl called Sonia, from college. I replay the entire evening when I took her out. Every single detail is exactly as I remember it. Clothes, conversation, food, weather, everything is as though it's actually happening again. In reality, at the end of the night, I say goodnight and she goes to her dorm to bed. In my fantasy, one of two things happen. Either I invite her back to mine and a wild night of sex results, or I'm recalling to her the whole night and it is years later and we have bumped into each other at a reunion. I tell her what I would have liked to happen and then she smiles and we go back to my place for a wild night of sex. This scenario occurs with at least four women, two of whom I only knew fleetingly, the other two I became quite close to but 'nothing' happened. Again, either the fantasy is sort of '*if I could go back in time what would I like to change*' scenario, or a '*what if there was a reunion and I confronted her with it*' scenario.

## WHY

I think its simply because I regret those occasions when I didn't do something and I'd secretly like to change those moments. Those women were special, I feel as though I really liked them, but I was too shy to do anything, not bashful enough.

## FEEL

When I start the fantasy, I know where it is heading and I'm almost cursing myself because of my stupidity in not doing something at the time. As the fantasy progresses I gradually become more comfortable with the situation and relish in the idea of attending a reunion and actually

living out my fantasy. In terms of how it fits into my picture, I'm well aware that sometimes I don't take risks and too often look back and regret moments when I didn't do something I was thinking of at the time (not just in sex and romance). For this reason I think I dwell occasionally on altering the past.

#### WHERE AND UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES

Ideally the fantasies occur when I'm sleeping. I do take ½ hour siestas in the afternoon and these times are often great for drifting into the start of a fantasy with the promise of continuing it at night. The first one does not occur too regularly ~ mainly when I'm daydreaming or listening to cello music or at a cello concert (but the setting has to be close to the one in the fantasy, i.e. solo cellist, female etc.). I have indulged in music/sex fantasies (i.e. in reality) on two occasions; one in a music practice room, sitting on a piano stool at an upright piano; the second on a grand piano, o. stage, exactly as in "Pretty Woman", it wasn't sexual intercourse (it was cunnilingus and 'dry' fucking). In the first occasion it was my first 'move' on a girl who I had fancied for some time who, subsequently, became my girlfriend for 6 months. The second occasion was with my Spanish girlfriend after we had been going out for 2 months. The second fantasy has not occurred in reality yet, it occurs in my thoughts a lot more regularly than the first, but only in sleep, and sometimes in boring lectures!

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### Subject 3

*Carrie, 29, (For the most part) Heterosexual Female*

#### FANTASY #1

I am having sex with a man (usually someone I am not currently involved with but find desirable) in the missionary position. This man is very loving and is involved in having sex with me, kissing me, telling me he loves me etc. Then an ex-boyfriend/lover (the actual person varies) is forced into watching us have sex. I am not sure who forces them (him) but they (he) are not wanting to be there. They (rather 'he', using 'they' because the person isn't the same each time) is watching and he is naked and very aroused\*. This excites me and it also excites me that he can't touch me and he isn't the person having sex with me.

\* he is making desperate attempts to become involved in the sex I am having but isn't allowed.

#### WHY THIS FANTASY

I can't remember for sure when it started but initially involved me having sex with a boy I had fallen for but my current boyfriend didn't want me to see (Stuart and Brent). And I think in my mind it let me have what I wanted and it also punished my boyfriend (Stuart), who I still wanted to desire me but I wanted someone else. I have a strong need to be found sexually desirable but I still want to control who I have. I also find it arousing to generally think of other people watching me have sex.

## HOW THIS FANTASY MAKES ME FEEL

Strong, in control, getting what I want – I think it plays a more significant roll than just sexual not to undermine the sexual impact of having sex with someone who loves you and still being desired by someone else.

This fantasy is also very arousing because it brings together

- Having sex with someone I want and who wants me
- Someone is watching us have sex
- That person is being punished for not having done me right (not necessarily done in the sexual sense) but they are still sexually aroused and want me back

I think it “fits” because I feel very insecure in relationships and so I need more than one person to want me at once, I always feel like the initial boyfriend left me because I wasn’t enough and I want that proved wrong and because all I want is someone who’ll be loving towards me – really want me for me I guess rather than sex (but I think that isn’t real but it is a 3am panic that I have about relationships).

## WHERE AND WHEN

Most often just before I go to sleep, when I am in bed. Sometimes when I am really bored like on a bus or something.

I use it quite often either to reassure myself I am desirable or as some punishment for an ex- or to help me feel back in control of my life or my relationships.

## FANTASY #2

This fantasy is about someone I desire, who I possibly could have a relationship with. We are doing something together, some work maybe, we know each other quite well (better than we do in real life) and all of a sudden this guy starts to kiss me and I respond because I really fancy him. Then he tells me how he has always fancied me and how he feels about me. We talk about how much we mean to each other and end up making love. This is usually quite intense and close, with loads of kissing and then after sex we talk about how we want to be together and how great that will be.

[Sometimes this fantasy is overshadowed by some problem -- he is involved, I am or we work for the same company and there could be complications but we always work this out some how usually in the chat after sex]

## WHY THIS FANTASY

Usually because I find the person in the fantasy very attractive and want a relationship with them but they are involved or there is something that would prevent us being together, I like it because I get what I want -- the person I desire. And they are as keen on me (which in reality I never am, sure is true). And we sort out a major problem together which I feel I am not that good at doing in reality.

## HOW IT "FITS" WITH THE PICTURE OF MYSELF

Well as I already mentioned I get the guy I want (this does happen quite often in reality) but in my fantasy they are able to communicate their feelings for me, to me and we are able to overcome a major hurdle (which doesn't usually happen with the men that I am involved with).

### HOW THIS FANTASY MAKES ME FEEL

This fantasy makes me feel really happy – like I can actually have this in my life. But I also think in some ways it sets up an unreal expectation of the particular man, which may not be good in the long run.

### WHERE AND WHEN

In bed at night usually when I fancy someone I can't have, but I have a fair amount of regular contact with them. It sometimes feels like the dress rehearsal for when I actually get it together with them. I sometimes feel like this is a good omen to have this fantasy.

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