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Women's attitudes and perceptions about sexual fantasy and how it relates to sexual satisfaction in a committed relationship

Jillian Marie Weis
Smith College

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Although Freud is often criticized for the theories that he created surrounding sexuality and development, it is an undeniable reality that his theoretical perspectives have shaped the creation of psychological pursuits in Western culture. Much of human understanding about human sexuality derives from Freud's theories that acknowledge infants and children as sexual beings. Thus, his theories regarding the topic of sexuality have formed our basic understanding of male and female gender identity, in which sexuality is incorporated. Based on his theoretical perspective, Freud concluded that for a woman to be considered truly feminine, she must accept sexual passivity, and renounce any sexual agency or desire (Benjamin, 1988, p. 87). While Freud has been criticized for his theories on women and sexuality, his powerful theoretical explanation of female sexuality continues to dominate Western culture's thinking and how the modern American female understands her own sexuality. For example the modern woman is expected to be sexy as an object, not a subject. If the larger culture appears to conceptualize the idea of "sexiness" as an object, then what are the implications for women in intimate relationships surrounding their individual sexualities? For example, if women do allow themselves to have subjective fantasies and desires, then there may be no space for them in their sexual intimate relationships with their partners, potentially affecting intimate relations between women and their partners.

The purpose of this study is to examine how women's attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual fantasy are related to sexual satisfaction in committed relationships. Since approximately forty percent of marriages end in divorce in America, and sexual satisfaction is a valuable aspect of marital satisfaction, this is an important area of focus for many couples that may seek help from sex therapists in the field of social work. While there are a number of factors that contribute to sexual satisfaction, sexual fantasy is one of the least understood. A clear source for this confusion within the clinical profession can be linked to Freud's 1908 comment: "a happy person never fantasizes only a dissatisfied one." Although research has been done in the past thirty years to negate this viewpoint, in all likelihood clients and clinicians still believe that the use and frequency of sexual fantasy is something to be ashamed of, and equals sexual inadequacy (especially for women). There is a lack of research done on how women feel about the sexual contents of their imagination, and how it is related to sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, there has actually been a good amount of research done on the sexual fantasies of both men and women, and the gender implications that these fantasies represent. The research typically focuses on topics such as the existence of personal sexual fantasies in relationships; themes of both men and women's sexual fantasies and how they differ; how guilt affects sexual fantasy and why; if pornography is considered sexual fantasy and how it can be utilized for sexual intimacy; and the satisfaction of sexuality in a long term relationship. In relation to this topic what appears to be missing in the research is if, and how, the use of sexual fantasies may contribute to the frequency of intercourse and thus, enhance sexual intimacy? For the purpose of this study, sexual

intimacy in a committed relationship is defined as having open communication with a sexual partner regarding sexual desires and pleasure.

The method is comprised of a quantitative survey, which includes some demographic questions, some fixed questions, and some open-ended narrative questions, designed to test the study hypothesis that women's attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual fantasy are positively related to sexual satisfaction in committed relationships. The survey utilized the Internet Survey Monkey for data collection. This approach captured personal perspectives while assuring total anonymity of the responses and thus, hopefully increased respondent comfort level in terms of the personal material that is being shared. Also, this type of method was chosen to assure greater diversity in the respondent pool.

The proposed audiences for this study are clinicians working with female clients that are having difficulties being comfortable with their own sexuality, which may be affecting the level of sexual intimacy they share with their partner. It is hoped that this study assists clinicians in normalizing their female client's sexual insecurities, with hopes of eventually empowering them sexually.

With regards to the field of social work, it is believed that the study could be used as a tool to help social workers in a clinical setting, who are working with women or couples who present issues having to do with intimacy and sexuality. Additionally, it could be useful to social workers that are working with women who have experienced sexual trauma, and are having difficulty incorporating their subjective sexuality into their current sexual relationship with a partner. If women could be educated about how the use

of sexual fantasies could have a positive affect on the quality of their sex lives with their partners, then they may be more empowered to incorporate fantasies in a safe place.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study focused on the relationship between women's perceptions and attitudes towards sexual fantasy and the level of sexual satisfaction and intimacy that is present in a committed relationship. In order to understand the relationship between sexual fantasy and sexual satisfaction it is necessary to explore how sexual fantasy has been historically conceptualized and defined. Although specialists have been trying to change the general population's attitudes towards sexual fantasy since Freud first spoke of it as confusion with memories of early sexual trauma, it is still greatly misunderstood in our current culture. This makes it difficult for women to use their fantasies as tools that symbolize their wants, needs, and desires on a deeper psychological level, rather than something to be ashamed of. This literature review focused on the various factors that may create discrepancies in how women view sexual fantasy and if they incorporate it into their relationships.

The literature review for this study focuses on scientific and theoretical literature about sexual fantasy, particularly in the last twenty years. The beginning clarifies how sexual fantasy has been defined. In addition, the historical view of sexual fantasy is explored which establishes past and current perceptions from varying points of reference to provide context, and the evolution of its meaning from a theoretical perspective. From the theoretical perspective this review explores how sexual fantasy can contribute to

sexual satisfaction in committed relationships. In addition, the way in which sexual fantasy can be utilized to empower women in sexual relationships is discussed. Also, the reality of culturally based gender roles that are incorporated into fantasy to further understand how women conceptualize fantasy is addressed. The concepts are clarified by affirming the types of fantasies that women have, why women have certain types of fantasies, if and how guilt affects sexual fantasies, and if pornography is considered fantasy for women. The final categories address how sexual fantasies can be useful in intimate relationships. This includes a measurement of sexual satisfaction for couples in committed relationships, defined both by the couple and the individuals who create the couple. How women define sexual fantasy is examined from both scientific and theoretical literature. Through the literature emerges an understanding that sexual fantasy enhances and contributes to healthy relationships. Also, how this topic is relevant to clinical work is examined.

Fantasy

As presented in Silverman and Gruenthal's work about the evolution of fantasy, they suggest there is a lack of literary research on the concept of fantasy from a psychological and psychoanalytic perspective. In their research they concluded "fantasy and imaginative play have their roots in biology of hormones affecting the brain and behavior" (Silverman & Gruenthal, 1993, p. 49). This was based on a study completed by Money in 1974 where female fetuses in nature were sprayed by androgens. When these girls were young their fantasy life included acting out they were fathers, going off to work, and acting vigorously while playing with cars, trains, etc.. Also, Money claimed

that these behaviors were discovered cross-culturally when previous natural accidents occurred, and in animals. It was concluded by the researchers that there is some gender-specific influence on sexuality in play and fantasy” (Silverman & Gruenthal, 1993, p. 50). While this lends to a focus of how to understand and make meaning of fantasies, it is only through the narrow lens of gender. In addition, these researchers describe fantasy from a more classical view through the work of Arlow. They discuss that there is a constant id pressure for the expression of wishes and fantasy, a vehicle for this type of expression, and quote Arlow stating, “Fantasy activity is a constant feature of mental life” (Silverman & Gruenthal, 1993, p. 46). Although the researchers are explaining fantasy through the Freudian theoretical model of Drive theory (the Id, Ego and Superego) they are equating fantasy as a positive outlet to express constant wishes.

Sexual Fantasy

From a psychological framework the understanding of sexual fantasy has greatly evolved over the last century (Doskoch, 1995). The clinical foundation for understanding sexual fantasy can be traced back to the father of psychology himself, Sigmund Freud. Freud believed that sexual fantasies were created from repressed memories (especially related to the opposite sex parent), which came directly out of his Oedipal theory, and psychosexual stages of development. In fact Freud went as far as to say that “hysteria” (which he associated with his female patients) was caused by these repressed sexual fantasies. This theory remains one of Freud’s most controversial, because originally Freud acknowledged that these “hysterical” patients were actually victims of sexual abuse (often from members of their family) and then refuted this claim and clarified his theory by stating that these memories of sexual abuse were simply just sexual fantasies.

In his article “The Safest Sex” Peter Daskoch stated that the misunderstandings regarding sexual fantasy began with Freud in 1908, when he made the claim that “ a happy person never fantasizes, only a dissatisfied one.” Although Freud deserves credit for inspiring Western culture to think about their sexuality and sexual fantasies in a different way, he also laid the foundation for a narrow view of sexual fantasy. While the topic of sexual fantasy was largely ignored in the first half of the century, recent literature suggests that sexual fantasy can be present in a “healthy” sex life. Daskoch goes further by suggesting that the absence of fantasies may be indicative of an unhealthy psyche. Current research studying sexual fantasy concluded that almost everyone (five percent of participants claimed they didn’t have sexual fantasies) has fantasies of sexual nature beginning in adolescence. In additional research conducted by Leitenberg and Henning, people who fantasize more frequently have sex more often, and masturbate more often than those who don’t (Daskoch, 1995). These findings “normalize” sexual fantasy as something that occurs in the majority of people and may be of assistance in a more frequent sex life.

Literature in recent years suggests a better understanding of what happens to the imagination when erotically motivated, the value that sexual fantasy can have in a long-term committed sexual relationship has also emerged. This research was clinically exemplified through the work of Ester Perel (2006) a couples and family therapist who describes her discovery of the significance that sexual fantasy can have:

Fantasies-sexual and other-also have nearly magical powers to heal and renew. They return the breasts confiscated by mastectomy, or let us walk as we did before the crippling accident. They reverse time, making us young again, and briefly allow us to be as we no longer are and maybe never were: flawless, strong,

beautiful. They put us in the presence of the beloved who has died, or bring back memories of passionate lovemaking with the partner we now struggle to eroticize. Through fantasy we repair, compensate, and transform. For a few moments, we rise above the reality of life, and subsequently, the reality of death. (p.156).

Perel so eloquently suggests the positive effects of fantasy in one's life. She describes fantasy as a creative tool that humans can mobilize in the face of frustration, loss, or disappointment. Perel relates fantasies to drawings, in the sense that they are definitively unique to each person. While some fantasies have similar themes there aren't any two fantasies that are exactly alike.

Yet in literature as recently as the 1980's some scholars continue to describe sexual fantasy as a precursor to criminal behavior or pathology. Zurbriggen and Yost (2004) analyzed this literature and found that while sex offenders do often fantasize about their crime both before and after they commit it, a significant percentage of men (and the studies only focused on men) in the community control, had fantasies about rape and never committed a crime. In their work, Zubriggen and Yost suggest that, "aggressive fantasies do not necessarily lead to aggressive behavior because only a subset of men who have aggressive fantasies have committed sexual crimes" (2004, p. 1). Since this is simply one interpretation it is also necessary to include another possibility, that fantasies with aggressive themes do lead to sex crimes such as rape, and these crimes simply go unreported.

In her work, Maltz rebuts this point of view on the subjective experience of women's fantasies. Through her work in sexual fantasy Maltz examined how fantasies help to acquire clarity about the human psyche. Maltz states, "sexual fantasies can help

us enjoy better sex lives, better relationships, and improved self-esteem. Knowing more about how fantasies work can leave us feeling freer and less inhibited in our own imagination. Note only do we have the power to create fantasies of infinite variety, but we can be empowered by them” (1997, p. 4). Like Perel, Maltz recognizes the potential that fantasies have to explore the possibilities of our sexuality and our selves.

The Correlation Between Sexual Fantasy and “Healthy” Sexual Relationships

Historically both psychology and Christianity considered sexual fantasy to be a weakness or “in the eyes of modern psychology, a perversion or a sin (Perel, 2006, p. 155). While there are many people in today’s culture who still subscribe to this notion, the research actually shows people who fantasize, have more frequent and enjoyable sex than people who do not (Doskoch, 1995). Regardless of this information, it is still considered taboo by many for people in a relationship to fantasize about having a sexual experience with someone other than their partner. According to a New York Times poll (2000), “48% of respondents did not think it was “okay” to fantasize about having sex with someone else even if they were faithful to their partner” (Hicks, & Leitenberg, 2001, p. 47-48). People are often so fearful of their own sexuality that they do not acknowledge the healthy outlet that sexual fantasy provides when in a relationship. Unfortunately many people avoid discussing sexual fantasies with their partner because “they believe that what we fantasize about sexually is what we want to have happen in reality” (Perel, 2006, p. 154). The beauty behind the creativity of fantasies, is they not only provide new material for sexual intimacy with a partner, they also guarantee a safe space for imaginings that would not be appropriate to act out in reality.

Commonality exists across men and women in sexual fantasy. In a study done by Hicks & Leitenberg (2001) they found that out of their sample of 349 students and university employees who were at a mid-sized New England University and in committed heterosexual relationships, 95% men, and 80% women, admitted to having sexual fantasies about someone other than their partner in the past two months. Although this was a rather narrow sample of the larger population (since 95% of the sample was white and affiliated with a university) it is a good example of the commonality that exists regarding the prevalence of sexual fantasy in both men and women who are in committed relationships. Furthermore while the women in this study seemed to have a slightly lower percentage of sexual fantasy than the men, it has been shown that “women who experience more frequent orgasms during both intercourse and masturbation fantasize more often” (Leitenberg & Henning, 1995, p. 477). When one allows them self to have an active fantasy life it can be beneficial to their sexual pleasure.

While sexual fantasies have proven to increase pleasure and frequency of orgasm, this finding may be too simplistic when relating to sexual intimacy with a partner. According to David Schnarch, a renowned couples therapist, a lot of women don't want to rely on “trigger fantasies” they have used to climax when masturbating, or in isolation. Although fantasies can be used to tune out a partner as a means of compensating for their emotional disappearance, you can also use fantasies to increase intimacy and connection. Rather than simply sharing the fantasy used during masturbation with one's partner, couples can create a fantasy together. The creation of a shared fantasy can develop a connection between partners, aid in helping couples to relax with humor and stay in the moment, as well as raise the stimulation level and reach orgasm. When a couple takes

the risk of collaborating to create fantasies together, they are escaping the isolation of their own sexuality and uniting as a means of connecting to each other for the purpose of both their own pleasure as well as their partners (Schnarch, 2002).

Clinical Implications for Exploration of Women's Fantasies

Although the psychodynamic world's perspective of sexuality have dramatically evolved in the last century, there is still a great deal of apprehension and historical influence that effects the way that therapists work with female clients regarding their sexual experiences. Gina Ogden, a renowned sex therapist, discusses her insights when working with female clients regarding their sexual issues without including a women's point of view. This led her away from the "standard sex therapy, which focuses on specific goals in the bedroom" (p. 58). Ogden claimed that this is especially helpful for women who have been sexually traumatized, because work around issues having to do with sexuality is often necessary in their healing process. When Ogden began to conceptualize sex and relationships through a women's point of view, she realized that this doesn't always include "goals, norms, and measurements" (p.59). Ogden describes this experience as she "began to see a picture of sexuality that is uniquely women's. Not a glossy centerfold or a diagram of disembodied genitalia, but more a map of the dynamics. How sex connects with the rest of women's lives" (Ogden, 1995, p. 60).

One way to understand this "picture of sexuality that is uniquely women's" as Ogden describes it, is by exploring with women what they are fantasizing about and how they in turn feel about their fantasies (p.60). In her work, psychotherapist Wendy Maltz recognized the importance of helping women understand their sexual fantasies. Maltz discovered that most of the research done on fantasies excluded a women's individual

history and how they felt about their sexual imaginations. This was frustrating to Maltz because many of the clients whom she did sexuality work with wanted to understand where their fantasies came from and why they had certain fantasies. As a result of her lack of clinical understanding of sexual fantasies, she did a lot of her own research. Eventually Maltz began working with clients (some with sexual trauma) to use their sexual fantasies to heal, and/or empower themselves in their current sex lives (Maltz, 1997).

Exploring sexual fantasy with couples can be a profound tool in understanding their sexual frustrations or complications with one another. In her work with couples Esther Perel (2006) found that “sexual fantasy also provides a well-spring of information about the individuals’ internal life and the relational dynamics of the couple. Fantasies can provide a way for people to overcome all sorts of conflicts around desire and intimacy” (p. 156). Perel shares an example of her clinical use of fantasy with a couple she calls “Joni and Ray”. Most commonly in Joni’s sexual fantasies she is submissive to “cowboy’s” who in her fantasy, are extremely dominating and clear regarding what they want sexually from Joni. Although Joni is worried about her passive role in her fantasies, Perel understands it from a different perspective. Consequently, when Joni discusses her relationship with her husband (both sexual and otherwise) she explains that she often has to ask Ray over and over again to do things, or meet her needs. With the content of Joni’s fantasies and the patterns of behavior in their relationship, Perel details how she is able to have deeper insight into the purpose that Joni’s fantasies serve for her, and Joni and Ray’s relationship. She states:

Over the course of therapy, I am repeatedly struck by the focus of Joni's aversion to any expression of need. There's something extreme about how humiliated and subjugated the need for care leaves her feeling, and I can see how her fantasies of cowboys tap right into this core emotional issue. In her colorful erotic tales, she's able to be at the mercy of others with none of the debilitating powerlessness she dreads. This particular script (and indeed each of her other fantasies) allows her to circumvent the dangers of dependence: the helplessness, the fury, the humiliations. Moreover-and this is important-she is desired for the very qualities that she most loathes about herself in reality. In the refuge of her mind she transforms passivity into erotic delight; power becomes an expression of care, and risk is reunited with safety (Perel, 2006, p. 165).

By Joni sharing her perception of her sexual fantasy with Perel she opened up a clinical opportunity for Perel to understand the deeper psychological underpinnings of Joni and Ray's relationship. Joni is frustrated because she doesn't feel like she is getting what she needs from Ray, but is ashamed to present or ask for what she needs from him. Perel was able to comb out the latent, symbolic content that Joni was presenting in her fantasy and assist Joni to better understand this content. Perel goes on to clarify her work with Joni regarding this process:

Together, Joni and I use the text of her fantasies to address critical issues between her and Ray. Dependency and passivity, aggression, and control were all feelings that she disavowed for years, they had been allowed only in the privacy of her mind. By reclaiming them in therapy she was one step closer to liberating them at home.

Once Joni was no longer held captive by the shame of her fantasies, she became more relaxed and self-accepting. To her surprise, she was able to approach Ray with all sorts of requests and only a modest amount of trepidation. Conversations ensued in which formidable obstacles were revealed to be nothing more than awkward misunderstandings that, through neglect, had snowballed out of control. For years Ray had assumed that his gentle approach was what Joni wanted. In fact, he thought that was what all women wanted, and he couldn't figure out why asking "What can I do for you?" warranted such an irritated reply: "Nothing!" He had no way of knowing that, for Joni being taken care of sexually meant abdicating all responsibility and luxuriating in passive dependency, guilt-free (Perel 2006 p. 169).

Sexual fantasies can serve many purposes within the clinical relationship. First, since sex is often difficult to discuss (even in a clinical setting) it slightly eases this difficulty to have something like a story, or a fantasy to use as a bridge. In addition, the latent content of a fantasy, *and* how a client feels about this content can be useful information for a clinician regarding what the client's feelings and ideas about sexuality are, and where they came from. Most people create a trigger fantasy (meaning one that is used to assist them in reaching orgasm) in adolescence that they tend to keep as a foundation for life-long fantasy. Furthermore, exposing this sexual fantasy can give clinician's information about the psychological messages that were passed down from one generation to the next regarding sexuality, and how this message is being played out within an intimate partnership. In Joni's case she was brought up in a household where the distribution of emotional needs was not equal and she was often left out. In reaction

to this Joni fled in the opposite direction from her family, became extremely independent, and has never been comfortable asking anyone else to meet her needs. But deep down in her secret world of fantasy Joni just wanted someone to take control sometimes and meet her needs without her having to ask. Similarly, this is what Joni was searching for sexually as well. She wanted her husband to be sexually aggressive with her (not in an abusive way, but in a passionate way) and this never would have been conveyed to either Joni, or Ray without clinically exploring Joni's fantasies and perceptions of her fantasies (Perel, 2006).

The Differences in Sexual Fantasies of Men and Women

Clear distinctions are found in gender based sexual fantasies, which reflect the typical cultural stereotypes that often polarize men and women. In their study about the sexual fantasies of men and women, Zurbriggen & Yost (2004), found some similar and differential themes in the fantasies of men and women. More specifically, the study determined that men were equally likely to fantasize about dominance and submission, and women were more likely to fantasize only about submission. Also, it was more common for men to have explicit fantasies, and women to have fantasies that were emotional and romantic in nature. Most interestingly men's fantasies were equally likely to include both the desire of themselves and their partner, while the women's mostly included their own desires (Zurbriggen & Yost, 2004). The idea that men's fantasies were typically more dominant, and women's more submissive, was a recurrent theme that I observed in numerous studies on gender and sexual fantasy. It is unfortunate that culturally constructed traits of men and women, can have consistent prevalence in personalized sexual fantasies. Similarly, Hicks & Leitenberg (2001) found that when they

surveyed men and women in committed relationships regarding their sexual fantasies, men had a greater number of fantasies about an “other” person, but when women fantasized about an “other” it was typically a prior partner. They attributed this difference to women wanting to fantasize more about someone that they had a past emotional connection with (Hicks & Leitenberg, 2001). Again this research correlates a trait that is considered typically feminine (a greater sense of emotionality) with women’s sexual fantasies. I would be interested in the specific questions that the researchers asked in this study, and if they were influenced by the bias that women must have an emotional connection to their sexual partners.

The Affects of Guilt on Sexual Fantasy

Interestingly enough, the bulk of the research found regarding guilt was done with women only samples. For example, Morokoff (1985) orchestrated a study on the effects of guilt and “arousability” during erotica and fantasy. The women were asked to view an erotic, or non-erotic video, and then write a narrative sexual fantasy after viewing the video. The study incorporated two forms measurements of sexual arousal after watching the videos. The first was based on a predetermined scale that measured subjective arousal. The next was a vaginal pulse amplitude that measured physiological arousal. The women who reported higher sex guilt were more physiologically aroused by the erotic material, but did not report this subjectively. On the contrary women who reported low sex guilt, had the highest sexual arousal when fantasizing after watching the non-erotic video. Although the women who had the highest sex guilt were more physically aroused after watching the erotic video, their guilt regarding sex may have contributed to them scoring lower on the subjective arousal scale when creating their sexual fantasies. Due to

the cultural stigma surrounding women actually having sexual thoughts and feelings all their own, it is considered “normal” for women to have more sexual guilt than men.

When the idea of guilt was researched on a broader spectrum with both men and women, results suggested that one in four people feel guilty about their sexual fantasies. More specifically, the one in four typically felt guilt due to fantasizing about another person while they were making love to their partners. In addition, this guilt can also be correlated with conservative religious and political views (Doskoch, 1995).

Sexual Fantasy and Pornography

Since a number of fantasy based studies suggest that women’s sexual fantasies usually involve some sort of emotional connection, it is questionable if the typical erotic pornography could be an appropriate outlet for *both* men and women. In a 2003 study conducted by Ana Bridges she found that many women actually feel threatened by their partner’s use of pornography for sexual fantasy (as cited in Featherstone, 2005). Many partners never discuss their sexual fantasies with one another, and therefore simply do not understand their partner's sexual wants or desires. Michelle Weiner-Davis (as cited in Featherstone, 2005) a nationally known therapist and marriage counselor, believes that erotic images can be healthy for a couple's sex life, she explains that “fantasy is normal and that a lot of people enjoy sexually explicit images—especially men, who tend to be more visually oriented” (Featherstone, 2005, p. 83). While it may in fact be true that men are more visually oriented than women, and that pornography can enhance fantasy, it seems that the importance of women’s pleasure is not as emphasized as men’s in this medium. This relates back to the Freudian concept that for women to be truly “feminine” they must renounce their sexuality. It is more acceptable for men to openly seek pleasure

from sex or sexually explicit images, than it is for women. Although women may be able to enjoy a Harlequin romance, it may be more beneficial for a women's individual sexuality, as well as her sexual pleasure with her partner, to be exposed to erotic images geared towards women.

The Importance of Sexual Satisfaction in Committed Relationships

In her work, Trudel notes it is difficult to understand how critical sexual satisfaction is in determining a couples overall satisfaction, in a committed relationship. Typically if both partners in a relationship are fulfilled sexually, the sex does not seem to be an issue. On the contrary, if a couple's sexual desires are not being met, or something is not "working" correctly, then sexual satisfaction could become *the* issue to be considered in a relationship. Specifically in terms of marital functioning, various clinicians have determined that a lack of sexual desire can be correlated with a decrease in the overall satisfaction level within a couple's marriage (Trudel, 2002). This indicates that sexual pleasure within a marriage is a determinant for how successful the marriage might be.

The Function of Personal Fantasies

Since an amount of sexual pleasure within a relationship may carry a lot of weight in the overall satisfaction of a relationship, it may be beneficial to consider how the individuals within the relationship can assist in achieving continued sexual pleasure. In a study done by Wilson (as cited in Arndt & Foehl, 1985) it was reported that there was "a positive correlation between sexual fantasy and orgasm frequency for both sexes" (Arndt & Foehl, 1985, p. 472). If sexual fantasy can be a helpful tool in assisting with the achievement of orgasm, on a more regular basis, then it would seem rational to assist

both men *and* women equally in using their sexual fantasy to empower themselves sexually. Moreover because sexual fantasies are not unidimensional, they include characteristics such as culturally constructed ideas of gender, personal experience, and temperament, it is important to consider all of these factors when equating meaning with sexual fantasy.

The Use of Measurement When Defining Intimacy Through a Gender Lens

While the concept of sexual fantasy, and men and women's perception of their own sexuality, seems somewhat tangible, the idea of having a concrete understanding of the way that the sexes experience intimacy presents as being more challenging. It seems almost impossible to measure what intimacy means to different people, since most of us experience intimacy with our partners in relation to how intimacy was understood and played out within our families or origin. Regardless of the individualistic quality that intimacy possesses, there are culturally constructed ideas of what creates intimacy in committed relationships. This point is illustrated in Hook and Gerstein's work done on intimacy with committed couples, the researchers decided to measure if four components could be witnessed in a relationship. The components were personal validation, trust, self-disclosure, love and affection. In their findings the authors discovered that women scored higher than men in two out of the four categories. This suggests that men and women experience intimacy differently, which could be useful for couples in helping them understand where their partner is coming from or what they need (Hook & Gerstein, 2003). Although this study expands our perception about the context of intimacy in a committed relationship, this researcher believed that the categories could be helpful in contemplating sexual intimacy as well.

Challenges in Today's Committed Relationships

Although women and men place different value and understanding on their sexuality due to their experience of socialization, as illustrated in Basson's work, they do have distinct biological differences that define their sexual interactions as well. Regardless of a woman's participation in a heterosexual or homosexual relationship, due to her biological makeup, sexual intimacy and functioning will always be a little more abstract for one's partner to grasp. While it is typically understood that men and women feel a physical sense of desire before arousal strictly from a biological standpoint, biology is only one factor. The complexity of sexual arousal and desire is slightly less complicated for men, because unless they have a sexual dysfunction (such as erectile dysfunction) it is visibly evident when they are physically aroused. Due to this physical distinction, some researchers believe that women may not experience sexual arousal in a linear construction (biological desire before arousal) but they may observe their sexual responsiveness in a cyclical cycle. This cycle not only includes a biological response, but emotional satisfaction and intimacy, sexual neutrality, sexual stimuli, sexual arousal, and sexual desire (Basson, 2002). Since a women's capacity for sexual satisfaction could be impacted if there are difficulties in one or more of the areas of the cycle, this may create sexual challenges for a woman and her partner, which ultimately could inhibit sexual intimacy. Moreover, a woman (or women) in a committed relationship, is often blamed by her partner for the lack of sexual intimacy, since she may not even understand this cycle herself. This is why it is absolutely necessary to have emotional intimacy and sexual awareness present in a committed relationship, so that partners can be educated about their needs and comfortable enough to share them with one another.

Ogden speaks of a more clinical definition of sexual intimacy, which includes the level of safety that couples need to have to reach this place with one another. To elaborate on this concept Ogden references a phrase that Masters and Johnson coined “exchanging vulnerabilities”, equivalent to letting down your guard. In her research Ogden spoke with women about their understanding of sexual intimacy. After asking “Rosa” how her and her partner “broke through to sexual intimacy” Rosa replied, “We started to listen to each other.” Ogden understood this willingness as “listening to one another-body, mind, heart, and soul-...they were able to appreciate each other’s *sexual differences*” (Ogden, 1994, p. 209). Although Rosa, and Ogden seem to speak of this as a natural progression that happens between couples, it is extremely difficult. Ogden goes on to say that Rosa and her husband were able to learn this piece of appreciating each other’s differences by themselves, “what some other couples can learn only through months of intensive therapy-if ever” (Ogden, p. 210). Appreciating the other’s sexual differences requires a couple that is truly attuned to one another and gives each other the space to feel safe sharing their sexual truths. These truths often include feelings of shame and guilt since they are our most personal possessions. Typically people don’t share their personal sexual fantasies with their closest friends or families. This means that if a person is to share their fantasies or sexual needs with their partner they need to know that it is going to be accepted. Although each separate person in a couple will come to the table with different sexual fantasies, it is the acceptance of and sometimes incorporation in a couples sex life that acknowledges sexual intimacy in a partnership.

Summary

The literature assisted in clarifying the influencing implications of women's sexual fantasies, and ultimately the satisfaction of sexual intimacy. Also, the literature helped to illustrate how the use of sexual fantasy in a clinical setting can be extremely relevant to both the clinician and the client. More specifically, the literature highlights studies that addressed how gender influences themes in sexual fantasies. Through the review it is evident that women appear to be less empowered than men to use their fantasies, and that social constructions may influence their possibility for sexual empowerment. It is equally important for women to use sexual fantasies to augment their own sexual pleasure, as well as the sexual satisfaction of their partner, and create a deeper sense of sexual intimacy with their partner. Limitations in the literature reviewed were particularly noted in the homogeneous sampling. For the most part, sampling accessed mostly Caucasian, heterosexual, middle class people (usually undergraduate college students). The narrowness of sampling affects generalization because of the absence of diversity and cultural representation. Thus, a void exists in our cross-cultural understanding of sexuality. The proposed study seeks to fill that void. In addition, another deficiency that the research hopes to address is the lack of voice or presence of women within previous studies that have been done on fantasies. It is necessary and useful to understand what women feel about their fantasies and that the possible richness and complexity of fantasy life has the opportunity to be fully conveyed.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the proposed methods for research, which includes sampling strategy, mechanisms for protection of the rights of Human Subjects, sampling and data collection are described. This study examines how women's attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual fantasy are related to sexual satisfaction in committed relationships. The study hypothesis is that sexual fantasy has a positive effect in committed relationships. The proposed method is comprised of a quantitative survey, in three distinct sections, designed to test the study hypothesis. The first section is composed of demographic questions. The next section of the survey includes questions about the subject's use, attitudes, and perceptions toward sexual fantasy. Finally, the last section features open ended questions designed to elicit more intimate, qualitative information about the subject's sexual fantasy life. The survey utilized the Internet resource of Survey Monkey for data collection. This method was selected to highlight the nature of the idea that first and foremost the nature of the question has to be considered, and which methods will benefit the research the most. Furthermore, as stated by Anastas "designing research often involves making a series of compromises, but none of them need, and should, not be compromising the question to fit a method" (Anastas, 1999, p. 28). Since sexuality is a topic that is often viewed as private "an advantage of the self-administered questionnaire is that it is sometimes easier for people to answer threatening questions privately on paper than so speak the answers aloud to someone else"

(Anastas, 1999, p. 375). The open-ended questions gave the participants some comfort, while providing rich data for this study. Fixed questions provided participant demographics data, and identified both inclusion and exclusion subgroups from the data, such as lesbians versus heterosexual women. Furthermore, these questions gave the participants some opportunity to assist them in reflecting on how they may or may not incorporate their sexual fantasy lives into their current relationships with partners.

In choosing this type of method, and the application of this method (Survey Monkey) the study acquired data from a more diverse population that wouldn't otherwise be comfortable discussing topics related to their sexuality.

Sample

The sampling was conducted over a period of sixty days; one hundred and twenty nine subjects were recruited for this project through a sample of convenience and a snowball sampling method. The subjects in this study were females who were 21 years of age and older. Inclusion criteria for the subjects included heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual females. In addition, the subjects needed to be twenty-one years of age, acknowledge having a positive perception about sexual fantasies, and should be married or in a committed relationship defined as being in an exclusive relationship that is understood and acknowledged by both partners in the relationship for a minimum of two years, and be expected to read at a high school grade level. The exclusion criteria for subjects were people with sexual trauma history, don't acknowledge having sexual fantasies, are male, under the age of twenty-one, and/or haven't been in a committed relationship for at least two years or more. People who were currently in treatment for

sexual satisfaction issues were excluded as well. To encourage recruitment, a survey of convenience was available. An e-mail was sent to possible contacts that may or may not have fit the inclusion criteria (See Appendix A: Recruitment E-mail). This method was utilized to encourage maximum participation by asking the sample of convenience to forward the e-mail to others who may have been willing to participate, which created a snowball sampling method.

Additionally, in accord with the snowball method an electronic posting of a recruitment flier was posted from accounts created on websites such as: myspace.com, salon.com, and friendster.com. Since these sites can be accessed nationally and internationally this strategy for recruitment was necessary in accessing a diverse population. This posting also included the e-mail listed above which encouraged possible participants to share the survey with others (see Appendix B).

Instruments

The instrument chosen for data collection was an anonymous survey with structured questions divided into three sections. The survey was based on a structured model, and the last section included three open-ended questions. The survey questions were chosen in order to correlate questions regarding demographics, with the fixed questions which were trying to elicit how women perceive and understand sexual fantasy and if they feel comfortable sharing fantasies with their partners. In addition, the instrument was created to measure the demographics of the subjects (such as age, race, religious orientation), the subject's use, attitudes, and perceptions of fantasy, and if and how it is used as a means to create further sexual satisfaction or intimacy with a

committed partner. While the instrument was created with the intention of reliability, the validity may be somewhat in question due to the survey being accessed on the Internet. To analyze the data a statistical analysis was completed regarding the structured questions, and a content analysis was conducted to analyze the open-ended questions. While organizing the project the only changes made in the course of design was the decision to make the survey accessible on the Internet. The purpose of this change was to have the opportunity to access more diverse subjects and to present the survey as being completely anonymous.

Data Collection

Due to the anonymous nature of the data collection, there were few risks to the subjects in the study. Although the topic of sexual fantasy and its relation to sexual satisfaction is sensitive, inclusion criteria were subject's who self-identified that they were comfortable and had a positive experience with sexual fantasy. While it may have been slightly embarrassing for them to share this information, it is unlikely that completing the survey triggered any trauma in the subjects. In anticipation of any risks that may have been presented throughout the study, the subjects were routed to a web page (the NASW website) that provided resources through which to locate specific mental health agencies in the community.

In order to access the survey the subjects had to read the informed consent header located at the start of the survey, then they had the option to click on next to continue to the survey, or exit to opt out of the survey. The informed consent educated the subjects that their responses were anonymous, and the data from the survey will be maintained and in a locked, secured condition to eventually be destroyed. No personal identifying

information was available once the survey was completed, so anonymity was guaranteed. The data collected from this study will be kept in a secure place for three years as required by Federal regulations. After this time has passed the data will be destroyed or continue to be kept secured as long as needed (see Appendix H).

The method of design was a quantitative survey, which included some demographic questions, some fixed questions, and some open-ended narrative questions. The survey was presented on the Internet site Survey Monkey for data collection. The survey began with demographic items including age, ethnicity, religion, and preferred gender definition. Following the general demographic questions were more specific questions regarding the existence of sexual fantasies within the participant's lives, how they felt about these fantasies (i.e. guilty, or comfortable) and if these fantasies were ever extended into their sexual lives with their partners. The purpose of these fixed questions was to get a sense of the comfort level that the participants had with the idea of sexual fantasy and their own sexual identity. The initial questions regarding the participant's sexuality were meant to ease the participants into honestly answering some of the further narrative questions. The last section included open-ended questions with the purpose of gaining more intimate information about the subject's fantasy life (see Appendix C).

The reliability of the instrument was tested, by piloting the survey before asking all of the participants to complete it.

Ethics and Safeguards

Since the subjects were only required to read the informed consent disclosure and not sign it, so they were guaranteed anonymity. Although Survey Monkey includes a privacy disclaimer explaining their process for collecting IP addresses, they

explain it is only for recording means, and the user's personal information isn't connected to their IP address. This is explained on their website which states,

SurveyMonkey.com collects IP addresses for system administration and record keeping. Your IP address is automatically assigned to your computer when you use the World Wide Web. Our servers record incoming IP addresses. The IP addresses are analyzed only in aggregate; no connection is made between you and your computer's IP address. By tracking IP addresses, we can determine which sites refer the most people to SurveyMonkey.com. (Think of an IP address like your zip code; it tells us in general terms where you're from).

The only people able to access the results of the survey were the research advisor and the data analyst. The subject's responses were anonymous, and they were informed that the data from the survey will be maintained in a locked, secured condition, and eventually destroyed.

Because of the anonymous nature of data collection, there were few risks to subjects in the study. Although the topic of sexual fantasy and its relation to sexual satisfaction is sensitive, inclusion criteria indicated the study was seeking subject's who identified they were comfortable and had a positive experience with sexual fantasy. While it may have been embarrassing for them to share this information, it is unlikely that completing the survey triggered trauma in the subjects. In anticipation of any risks that may be present throughout the study, the subjects were routed to a web page (such as the NASW website) to locate mental health agencies in specific locations.

Data Analysis

The data collected through Survey Monkey was evaluated using descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistics were applied to the demographics to help find groups and subgroups within the subjects. To make meaning of the numerical categories there were a few different approaches that could have been taken which include: bar graphs, tables, and strength of correlation. Statistical tests were run to compare independent and dependent variables in order to find groupings within the sample and make associations between perceptions and attitudes. Correlative statistics were used to see significance and differences among the groups and associate different perceptions with demographics, to see if groups think differently regarding sexual fantasy. Since the hypothesis of this study states that women's perceptions and attitudes about fantasy are related to the level of sexual satisfaction and intimacy with a partner, it was befitting to use correlative statistics and cross tabulations to see the possible different perceptions associated with subgroups and how these perceptions are related to levels of sexual intimacy and satisfaction in relationships.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The objective of this quantitative study was to explore the attitudes and perceptions that women have about sexual fantasy and if they are related to sexual satisfaction in a committed relationship. For the purpose of the study, subjects were only asked to participate if they reported having positive experiences with sexual fantasy. The findings are based on a survey that was presented on Survey Monkey and 129 subjects responded to. The primary factor examined was how women who reported having positive experiences with sexual fantasy feel about these fantasies and if they are related to the level of sexual satisfaction within a committed relationship. The studies working hypothesis was that sexual fantasy contributes to overall satisfaction in committed relationships.

There are several different sections that emphasize the findings of this study. The findings are presented in three major sections. The first section details the demographics of the subjects, the next section focuses on the findings from the statistical analysis, and the final section presents themes that were found from the narrative questions.

Demographics

The demographics component of this chapter included the subject's demographic information. This segment includes sub-sections on age, religious affiliation and the importance of religion, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Age

The 129 subjects in the study ranged in age from 18 to over 55. The majority of the subjects, 62.8%, fell in the age range of 26-30; followed by aged 18-25 who made up 12.4% of the subjects. Both the 31-35, and 36-40 ranges were equivalent at 7%. Next, subjects who aged 41-45 made up 4.7%, followed by 55-60 at 3.9%, 46-50 with 1.6%, 51-55 at .8% (Appendix J, Figure 1).

Religious Affiliation and Importance

According to the demographic survey, 17 different religious affiliations were recognized. The majority of the subjects (29.7%) identified as having no religious affiliation. Next, were the Catholics at 25%, the Protestants at 19.5%, and the subject's who identified as Jewish at 5.5%. The rest of the subjects (21.9%) choose the "Other" category and identified as Christian, Spiritual/non-denominational, Spiritual, Agnostic, Baptist, Congregationalist, Unitarian Universalist, Earth/Goddess honoring, Buddhist, Methodist, Quaker, Universal hippy mojo, Ex-Mormon, and Eastern Philosophy (Appendix K, Figure 2).

When the subjects were asked to rank "How important is Religion in your Life" on a scale of 1-7, the majority of them (28%) choose 1 (Not Important). Next was number 2 at 17%, followed by 6 and 7 tied at 13%. Finally was 4 at 10%, preceded by 3 and 5 both at 9%.

Race/Ethnicity

The vast majority of the subjects classified themselves as Caucasian at 79.5%. Followed by Hispanic/Latino at 11%, and African American/Black at 8.7%. In the categories of American Indian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander only .8%

identified. Also 3.9% of the subjects choose “Other” and specified themselves as Bi-Racial, Filipino, Middle-Eastern, European, and White (Appendix L, Figure 3).

Sexual Orientation

Most of the subjects (80.5%) identified their sexual orientation as being heterosexual (n=103). This was followed by an equal amount of subjects identifying as bi-sexual and lesbian at 8.6%. In addition 3.9% of the women choose to classify themselves as gay (Appendix M, Figure 4).

Statistical Analysis

This portion reveals the statistical findings of the survey using the subject’s responses from the demographic information and fixed questions. The first sub-section explains crosstabulations that were run, and the second sub-section features additional information.

Crosstabulations With Dependent and Independent Variables

Crosstabulations were used to ascertain if demographic subgroups have different perceptions or uses for fantasy. The demographics that were run consisted of age, religion, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation. They were crosstabulated with questions regarding sexual fantasy such as; if it is a healthy outlet, if they share with their partners, if sharing enhances intimacy, if it helps to feel more open with a partner, and the themes present in fantasy, i.e. dominance, submission, romance etc.. Within the demographic of religion a significant difference was found when a crosstabulation was utilized to examine the themes in sexual fantasy by religious affiliation. It was found that 90.6% of Catholics and 92.3% of women who choose Other (such as Spiritual, Agnostic, Christian/Nondenominational), were more likely to include their current partners in their

sexual fantasies, compared to 57.1% of Jewish women, 80% of Protestant women, and 81.6% of women with No religious affiliation. When combined the percentages were that 84.4% of women included their current partner and 15.6% did not. Another significant finding within this crosstabulation was that 73.1% of Other women and 71.1% of women with No religious affiliation acknowledged that they have sexual fantasies about strangers, compared to 46.9% of Catholics, 52% of Protestants, and 57.1% of Jewish women. In a combination 60.9% of women admitted to having fantasies about strangers and 39.1% did not (Appendix N, Table 1).

The significant findings that occurred within race and ethnicity appeared in a crosstabulation of race and the question if sharing fantasy increases intimacy. The findings were 100% of Hispanics answered yes, along with 80% of African Americans, 78% of Caucasians, 75% of Multi-racial, and 33.3% of others. When combined it appears that 79.2% of women determined that sharing fantasy enhances intimacy and 20.8% think it does not. Also, there was another compelling finding present in the crosstabulation regarding the question if a positive experience with fantasy helped to feel more open and comfortable sexually with a partner. The findings were that 100% of women who choose Other (Bi-racial, Middle-Eastern, Filipino, European, and White) answered yes, along with 91.7 Hispanics, 75% Multi-racial, 71% Caucasian, and 70% African Americans. When combined the percentages were 73.6% answered yes, and 26.4% answered no. The final significant finding was present in the crosstabulation between race and if sexual fantasy is a healthy outlet. It was found that 90% of African American women and 83.3% of Hispanic women said yes, compared to 75% of

Caucasian and Multi-racial, and 33.3% of Other women. In combining all of the answers 76% said yes, and 23.2% said no (Appendix O, Table 2).

When examining the age demographic there was a common trend apparent in the crosstabulation. The trend emerged in the 46 and older category where women in this category were less likely to share their fantasies with their partners, believe that sharing enhances intimacy, acknowledge that they have no themes in their fantasies, and that sexual fantasy is not a healthy outlet. In the crosstabulation of age and sharing fantasies with your partner, 71.4% of 46 and above said no, compared with 50% of 33-55, and 33% of 18-30. In addition, in the analysis of age and if sharing fantasies enhances intimacy with a partner, 66.7% of 46 and above answered no, while only 20.8% of 31-45 answered no, and 17.6% of 18-30 answered no. This trend continued with the previous crosstabulations that were mentioned above and the 46 and over subcategory (Appendix P, Table 3).

Within the crosstabulations that were done with sexual orientation and the fixed questions, there tended to be a significant difference in the percentages between the gay/lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual categories. For example when examining sexual orientation and willingness to share fantasy with a partner 78.6% of gays and lesbians said yes, compared with 60% of heterosexuals, and 54.5% of bisexuals. This difference was also apparent in the crosstabulation of if sharing fantasy enhances sexual intimacy. It was found that 92.3% of gay/lesbian choose yes, compared to 80% of bisexual, and 77.6% of heterosexuals. Combined the percentages were 79.3% of women said yes, and 20.7% answered no (Appendix Q, Table 4).

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative segment focused on three narrative questions that were presented at the end of the survey. The first question asked the subject to describe sexual fantasy from their perspective, the next inquired about the role that sexual fantasy plays currently in their sex life, and the last question asked the subjects to explain how sexual fantasy and sexual intimacy were related in their minds. This segment identifies the themes that were discovered in the subject's answers to these questions.

Perspective on Sexual Fantasy

According to the subjects written responses the majority described sexual fantasy as being an image or idea that was influenced by their imagination. Other interpretations of sexual fantasy were a dream, role-play, story, wish, or something that deviated from the norm or was usually kept secret. It should also be noted that this question and the last qualitative question had the most missing subjects in the entire survey (n=89).

Role of Fantasy in Sex Life

When asked to describe the role that fantasy plays in their sex life, about half of the subjects admitted that it did consistently play a role when they were sexually with their partner. The way that the fantasy manifested itself was either by being shared and incorporated verbally, through role-play, or interpersonally to assist in achieving orgasm. The rest of the subjects were divided fairly evenly between occasionally incorporating fantasy into their sex lives, and not incorporating it at all.

Relationship Between Fantasy and Intimacy

The vast majority of the subjects acknowledged that fantasy and intimacy are related in the context of a relationship. Within this sub-category most of the subjects

concluded that sharing fantasies increased intimacy, and/or intimacy first has to be present to feel comfortable sharing fantasies with a partner. Many of the subjects who did not think that fantasy and intimacy are related described fantasy as being something that is done interpersonally and intimacy was something that is created intrapersonally.

Summary

This quantitative study hypothesized that women's perceptions and attitudes about fantasy are related to the level of sexual satisfaction and intimacy with a partner, and that there are different perceptions associated with subgroups and how they are related to levels of sexual intimacy and satisfaction in relationships. Both age and sexual preference seem to have a significant impact on the way that women think about sexual fantasy and its relationship to intimacy and satisfaction in a relationship. The next section compares and contrasts these results with the literature that was presented in Chapter II.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore how women's attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual fantasy are related to sexual satisfaction in committed relationships. The hypothesis for this study was that sexual fantasy contributes to overall satisfaction in committed relationships. Although research shows that women tend to be more prohibited in their sexuality, it is also likely that women are just as creative in their fantasy life as men, but may not feel comfortable disclosing this information.

As referenced and analyzed in Chapter II, many different perspectives regarding sexual fantasy were included such as: the definition of fantasy, the evolution of fantasy from a psychological perspective, research on correlation between sexual fantasy and healthy sexual relationships, clinical implications of sexual fantasy, studies about attitudes and content of fantasies, and the challenge of relationships. To acquire a deeper level of knowledge regarding the relationship between women's attitudes towards sexual fantasy and the affects this has on sexual satisfaction in a committed relationship, it is important to explore sexual fantasy from a number of avenues. For this purpose the analysis of this study will be compared to previous research that has been done which was highlighted in the literature.

Although there have been previous studies done on sexual fantasies and sexual satisfaction within a relationship, there are a lack of studies done on fantasy that allow women to have their own voice within the study. This creates difficulty in correlating

women's personal attitudes toward fantasy and its relationship to sexual satisfaction from a female perspective. While correlations between the use of fantasy and the level of sexual satisfaction have been made in previous studies, there hasn't been an opportunity to understand how women utilize this within their relationships. Also much of the research done on fantasy and sexuality utilizes subjects who are in college, which limits the demographics of the studies. This probably occurred due to the nature of the study and the difficulty people have in openly discussing their sexuality. Since data collection for this study was conducted through the Internet, anonymity helped to increase responses and expanded diversity.

My inspiration for this study came from general interest in the topic, and my hope is to specialize in issues pertaining to sexuality in the future. The topic of sexuality and more specifically sexual fantasy is one that may affect a broad range of people. Since many of students in this country learn about sexuality in a wide variety of ways, I was curious about how and if people learn to discuss their sexuality or fantasies with their partners. Furthermore, while there were a number of separate studies regarding women and measurement of sexual fantasy (such as frequency, theme, etc) I found few studies that actually evaluated if and how women felt about incorporating fantasy into their sex lives. In a study done in 1995, Henning and Leitenburg discovered that women who fantasize more frequently have a greater amount of orgasms during sexual intercourse and masturbation. Although the study found that when women incorporate sexual fantasy into their sexual life they experience more pleasure, I am inquisitive about how the women felt incorporating fantasy and if it was simply on an intrapersonal level, or an interpersonal level with their partners.

According to the study 79.3% of women acknowledged that sharing fantasy with their partners increases intimacy, and 20.7% claimed that sharing did not increase intimacy. Additionally, the study found that 73.8% of women concluded that their positive experience with sexual fantasy assisted them in feeling more comfortable and sexually open with their partner, compared to 26.2% who said it did not help. The findings follow the conclusions of Wendy Maltz's studies with women regarding sexual fantasy. Maltz (1997) induced that sexual fantasies can assist in bettering sex lives, relationships, self-esteem, and leave people feeling empowered. If women feel comfortable to use their fantasies in the context of their sex lives, and share them with partners, both sexual satisfaction and level of intimacy can be affected in a positive way. Schnarch (2002) recognized that when couples have the ability to share their fantasies this creates the opportunity for partners to create a fantasy together instead of separately in isolation. The study's results illustrate the concept that there is a connection between sharing fantasies with one's partner to create intimacy or enhance intimacy that already exists.

In deviating from the presented literature, the study did not find a discrepancy in the themes of women's fantasies in regard to dominance and submission. Zurbriggen and Yost (2004) concluded that men were more likely to fantasize equally with themes of dominance and submission, where women were more likely to include submission in their fantasies. These results were found frequently in studies done on the fantasies of men and women. The study found that 61.7% of the women fantasized equally about fantasy and submission. Additionally, previous research presented that women fantasized more about past sexual partners, which was hypothesized due to a need for emotional

connection. The results of the study reflected the opposite of this conclusion with 60.9% of women acknowledging they included strangers in their fantasies, and only 41.4% acknowledging the inclusion of past partners.

Many of the samples from previous studies included in the previous literature, were recruited through university students enrolled in college counseling or psychology courses (Hicks & Leitenberg, 2001; Hooks & Gernstein, 2003; Snell & Fisher, 1992; Snell & Papini, 1989). Similarly, since these samples were taken from a population that had a lot of commonalities, diversity of age, race, and/or sexual orientation wasn't often taken into account. In Hicks & Leitenberg's study (2001) on issues related to sexual fantasy their sample was 95% white, and only included people in heterosexual relationships. In contrast to these former studies, this study included women of differing sexual orientations and attempted to recruit a diverse population through use of the Internet. The findings from this study illustrated some of the differences that were found relating to the diversity in the demographics of the sample. For example, when examining cross-tabulations in the demographic of sexual orientation, regarding the willingness to share fantasy with a partner, 78.6% of gays affirmed their willingness, compared to 60% of heterosexuals, and 54.5% of bisexuals. Also, in reference to the question if sharing fantasy increases intimacy, 92.3% of gays agreed, compared with 80% bisexual, and 77.6% percent heterosexual. These findings along with additional cross-tabulations affirm that there is still a lot to analyze in regards to sexuality and diversity (including age, race, religious affiliation, and sexual orientation).

Although some of this study's findings were conclusive with the former literature, there were also some divergences. The findings suggest that further research and

awareness regarding sexual fantasy and its role with sexual satisfaction in committed relationships is indicated. Furthermore, it would be critical to understand how difference affects the way that women perceive sexual fantasy, and to understand the relationship between empowerment, intimacy, and women's willingness to share their fantasies with their partners. This will be explored further in the next section, which describes the implications of this study's findings for social work practice.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The objective of this study was to examine attitudes that women have about sexual fantasy and if they relate to the level of sexual satisfaction in a committed relationship. The study created an opportunity to explore the importance and value of sexual fantasy in a women's sex life with herself and her partner. As previously illustrated in Chapter IV, the findings presented that women of different ages, races, and sexual preferences may have slightly differing views on sexual fantasy. Also, the findings showed that the majority of women believed fantasy and intimacy are related within the context of a relationship. The findings from this study could be useful on a larger scale. The analyzed data could be applicable in many different realms including individual therapy, couples therapy, and further research on sexual health and fantasy.

Individual therapists may be more willing to discuss a client's sexual fantasies with them once they have access to information that assists in clarifying how helpful sharing fantasies can be with a partner. The therapist may be more comfortable and prepared in leading conversations that have to do with the client's sexual desires and the level of satisfaction she has with her current partner. Clients may be able to be more self-reflective about their own roles in their sexual relationships and become empowered to

make changes that will enhance their current level of satisfaction or intimacy with their partners.

The process of couples therapy could also be affected by the study's findings. When a couple is having sexual difficulties it can be a huge strain on their relationship. A couples therapist could help couples discuss their desires and fantasies it may assist them in having a better idea what the other needs sexually. Also, the couples therapist could encourage the couple to use their fantasies with one another to induce greater sexually intimacy, or suggest couples create a fantasy together.

Since some of the findings in the study have differed from previous studies, it may be useful to consider the research when conducting studies on sexuality or sexual fantasy in the future. Due to the study's focus on women, it may encourage others to delve deeper into the findings that go against previous research, such as the diversity found in the themes of women's fantasy. In addition, since the women confirmed the link between sharing fantasies and intimacy in a relational context, it may aid researchers in doing a study featuring couples and sexual communication styles.

Limitations

While this study attempted to cover as much information as possible, there were a number of limitations to consider. The limitations of the study are the homogeneity of the study sample, lack of Internet access, and respondent's sexual education history.

Homogeneity of the Study Sample

Although extra effort was made to put the survey on the Internet with the hope that the sample would be more diverse, the majority of the respondents were Caucasian, heterosexual females between the ages of 26-30. In order to have a more representative

study, it would have been useful to have a sample pool with more racial diversity, sexual orientation diversity, and age diversity. Since the sample was not more diverse only a portion of the population of women who had positive experiences with sexual fantasy was represented.

Lack of Internet Access

Due to the availability of the Internet through many different means such as place of employment, Internet cafes, and people's homes there were a number of options which made it possible to access the survey. Despite the widespread use of the Internet, there are a lot of women who do not have Internet access. This may have limited the survey's availability to women who are older, not financially sound, or have no access to transportation.

Respondents' Sexual Education History

The study's demographic section did not include a question regarding the type of sexual education the sample was exposed to. This would have been useful information to include in the analysis, because it may influence the way that women understand their sexuality. The study should have asked women if they learned about sexuality and sexual fantasy through school, their parents, the media or friends.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study may inspire continued research on female sexuality and female sexual fantasy. As noted previously, since there were some new findings regarding themes in sexual fantasy this may be something to expand on, such as an extensive comparison of sexual fantasy between men and women. In addition, since the limited diversity in this study seemed to illustrate differences in the way that different groups view or think about

fantasy this would also be an area that would require further research. Finally, one of the hopes for this study was to augment the range of sample since previous samples were largely homogeneous. That goal was not achieved in this study, and future studies will need to develop stratified sampling methods that assure a diverse sample, and thus, diverse findings.

Concluding Thoughts

Sexual fantasy is an area that has only recently begun to be studied and understood. In order to recognize the role our sexual fantasies play in our sexual relationship with our sexual partners, it needs to be analyzed from many divergent perspectives. A better understanding of our sexual selves could empower people to communicate with their partners and have a higher level of sexual satisfaction. The findings of this study have illustrated that women do have many varying levels of sexual fantasies and feel that sharing these fantasies with their partners is related to obtaining a higher level of intimacy. It is my hope that more studies will be completed to aid therapists in discussing sexuality with their clients.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Hello, I am in need of your assistance!! I'm Jill a student at Smith College School for Social Work. I'm doing a research project about women's attitudes and perceptions of sexual fantasy and how it relates to sexual satisfaction in a committed relationship. If you are female, at least twenty-one years of age, English speaking/reading, have had a positive experience with sexual fantasy, and have been involved in a significant committed intimate relationship with a partner for two years or more, [and you are not male, under the age of twenty-one, do not speak/read English, have not been involved with a partner for two years or more, have been involved in treatment for sexual intimacy issues or are a survivor of sexual trauma], you are invited to complete this survey. If you are interested in helping with my thesis, please click on the link below, and go to my online consent form at Female Sexual Fantasy Study. In the survey site, if you click on "next" you will be routed to the on-line survey. I need at least 50 subjects so if you have friends willing to participate, please share the link. Thanks. I couldn't do this without you!!

Appendix B

Internet Recruitment Statement

**Interested in participating in a study on female sexual fantasy by
a student from Smith College School For Social Work?**

The purpose of the study is to investigate the attitudes and perceptions that women have about sexual fantasy and the connection that it has to sexual satisfaction in a committed relationship.

To participate in this study you must be English speaking/reading, had a positive experience with sexual fantasy, be at least twenty-one years of age, identify as female, be married or have been involved in a significant committed sexually intimate relationship with a partner for two years or more, have never been sexually traumatized or been treated for sexual trauma, and have access to the internet.

If you are interested in sharing your experiences, access the following website address [WEB ADDRESS WILL BE ENTERED HERE], read the consent and instructions, and complete the survey. Your name and e-mail address will be stripped from the survey. There will be no link to your personal information

Which of the following best describes your race/ethnicity?

- A. African American/Black
- B. American Indian
- F. Caucasian
- C. Asian
- D. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- G. Other
- E. Hispanic/Latino

What is your sexual orientation?

- A. Heterosexual
- B. Gay
- C. Lesbian
- D. Bisexual
- E. Transexual

What best describes your perception of the term sexual “fantasy”?

- A. An idea
- B. An image
- C. A vague feeling
- D. Pornography
- E. Role-playing

On average how often do you use sexual fantasies during your sexual experiences?

- A. Always
- B. Some of the time
- C. Almost never
- D. Never

My experience with use of sexual fantasy is free of guilt

- A. Always true
- B. Mostly true
- C. Neutral
- D. Sometimes false
- E. Always false

Would you consider sexual fantasy a “healthy outlet” when in a committed relationship?

- A. Yes
- B. Sometimes
- C. No

Narrative Questions

From your perspective how do you describe sexual fantasy?

How would you describe the role that sexual fantasy plays in your current sex life?

Explain how sexual fantasy and sexual intimacy are related in your mind?

Appendix D

Human Subjects Review Application

Investigator Name: Jillian Weis

Project Title: An exploration of women's attitudes and perceptions about sexual fantasy and how it relates to sexual satisfaction in a committed relationship.

Contact Address: 1004 Pine Street Boulder, Colorado 80302

Contact Phone: 443-614-3519

Contact E-mail Address: wjillian@hotmail.com

Project Purpose and Design

The purpose of this project is to examine how women's attitudes and perceptions regarding sexual fantasy are related to sexual satisfaction in committed relationships. Since approximately forty percent of marriages end in divorce in America, and sexual satisfaction is a valuable aspect of marital satisfaction, this is an important area of focus for many couples that may seek help from sex therapists in the field of social work. While there are a number of factors that contribute to sexual satisfaction, sexual fantasy is one of the least understood. A clear source for this confusion within the clinical profession can be linked to Freud's 1908 comment: "a happy person never fantasizes only a dissatisfied one." Although research has been done in the past thirty years to negate this viewpoint, in all likelihood some clients and clinicians still believe that the use and frequency of sexual fantasy is something to be ashamed of, and equals sexual inadequacy (especially for women). There is a lack of research done on how women feel about the sexual contents of their imagination, and how it is related to sexual satisfaction. My intention is to further clinical treatment options to women who are having difficulties

in their sexual relationships by examining the positive aspects of sexual fantasy from people who report positive experiences. In addition, clinicians may use the research to assist women in feeling more comfortable about their sexual desires.

The proposed method is to be comprised of a quantitative survey, which includes some demographic questions, some fixed questions, and some open-ended narrative questions. The survey will utilize the Internet SurveyMonkey for data collection. This approach will capture personal perspectives while assuring total anonymity of the responses and thus, hopefully increase respondent comfort level in terms of the personal material that is being shared. Also, in choosing this type of method it is hoped that it will assure a greater diversity in the respondent pool.

The results of the proposed study will be used for the MSW Thesis at the Smith College School for Social Work, which includes a Thesis presentation in this researcher's final summer at Smith, and possible further publication.

Characteristics of the Subjects

The proposed study will include at least fifty subjects who will be geographically located all over the country because of the use of Internet for accessing sample. An inclusion criterion for this study requires subjects to be female, which includes heterosexual and homosexual females. In addition, they must be at least twenty-one years of age, acknowledge having a positive perception about sexual fantasies, and should be married or in a committed relationship defined as being in an exclusive relationship that is understood and acknowledged by both partners in the relationship for a minimum of two years, and be expected to read at a high school grade level. Also, it is hopeful that

this study will attract a diverse sample by means of the recruitment process, which includes different ethnicities, diverse religious backgrounds and spiritual beliefs.

Exclusion criteria are people with sexual trauma history, don't acknowledge having sexual fantasies, are male, under the age of twenty-one, and/or haven't been in a committed relationship for at least two years or more. People who are currently in treatment for sexual satisfaction issues will be excluded as well. Inclusion and exclusion criteria will be clearly stated both on the recruitment flier and the survey.

The Recruitment Process

Subjects will be recruited by creating accounts on the following websites: myspace.com, salon.com, and friendster.com. These websites are widely accessed sites. The study will be advertised as femalesexualfantasystudy on the websites, than routed to an informal letter explaining my study (Appendix A I). Once willing subjects click on the link they will read the study overview, and the informed consent (Appendix A) survey header about study participation. Immediately following this part of the survey, potential subjects will have the option to click on "next" if they agree to participate; or click on "exit" if they choose not to participate in the survey. The subjects will not be able to access the survey without first viewing the informed consent and clicking "next". The Survey and the informed consent "header" are anonymous, and the e-mail addresses are "stripped" from the completed surveys.

The Nature of Participation

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and anonymous. Participant involvement is initiated by responding to a recruitment statement posted on Myspace.com, Salon.com, and Friendster.com websites that includes an auto link to the

“Female Sexual Fantasy Study” in the SurveyMonkey website. If the subjects choose to participate in the study after reading the informed consent form, they will then be asked to read the instructions for the survey and complete the survey. The survey is comprised of three distinct sections. The first section of the survey is composed of demographic questions. The second section of the survey will include questions about the subject's use, attitudes, and perceptions toward sexual fantasy. Finally, the last section of the survey includes narrative questions designed to elicit more intimate, qualitative information about the subject's sexual fantasy life. This section includes questions regarding the incorporation of the subject's sexual fantasy life into their current sexual relationship with their partner.

Throughout the process of completing the survey, subjects will have the ability to change their answers to questions by using the “back” button on their web browser. Once the survey is completed and submitted, subjects can not withdraw from the study because there will be no possibility for identifying that subject’s particular set of responses from other subjects. Upon completion of the survey subjects will be thanked for their efforts and routed to a page that includes information about how to find mental health resources throughout the country, and finally connected back to “SurveyMonkey” home page. The survey site will automatically strip individual identification, rendering survey responses totally anonymous, with no chance to trace responses to any single individual.

Risks of Participation

Because of the anonymous nature of data collection, there are few risks to subjects in the study. Although the topic of sexual fantasy and its relation to sexual satisfaction is sensitive, inclusion criteria are subject’s who self-identify that they are

comfortable and have a positive experience with sexual fantasy. While it may be embarrassing for them to share this information, it is unlikely that completing the survey will trigger trauma in the subjects. In anticipation of any risks that may be present throughout the study, the subjects will be routed to a web page (such as the NASW website) with resources through which to locate mental health agencies in specific locations.

Benefits of Participation

Participation in the study will give women the opportunity to share their positive experiences and perceptions about the benefits of use of fantasy in helping to maintain sexual, and thus potentially marital satisfaction. In addition, subjects may have the chance to reflect on their personal sexual fantasies through this sharing process and further ways that they could use these or other fantasies to enhance sexual satisfaction.

Informed Consent Procedures

The subjects will have to read the informed consent header located at the start of the survey process before they proceed to the survey, and they will either click on next to continue to the survey, or exit to opt out of the survey. This informed consent informs subjects that their responses are anonymous, and that the data from this survey will be maintained in a locked, secured condition, and eventually destroyed.

Precautions Taken to Safeguard Confidentiality and Identifiable Information

No personal identifying information will be available once the survey is completed, so anonymity is guaranteed. This researcher will store the data collected from this study in a secure place for three years as required by Federal regulations. After this

time has passed the data will be destroyed or continue to be kept secured as long as needed.

Investigator's Signature:

Advisor's Signature:

Date:

Date:

Appendix E

HSR Approval Letter

February 14, 2007

Jillian Weis
1004 Pine Street, Apt. 3
Boulder, CO 80302

Dear Jillian,

Your recent set of revisions has been reviewed and all is now in order. We are therefore now able to give final approval to your study.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain signed consent documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Good luck with your project. It will be interesting to see how many women will be willing to sign on.

Sincerely,

Ann Hartman, D.S.W.
Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Elaine Kersten, Research Advisor

Appendix F

Informed Consent Letter

Dear Subject,

I am Jillian Weis, a graduate student working towards a Master's Degree in Clinical Social Work (MSW) at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. I am currently conducting research for my Master's Thesis, which is focused on evaluating women's attitudes and perceptions about sexual fantasy and how it relates to sexual satisfaction in a committed relationship. The data collected through my research will be used for my MSW thesis, and possibly other publications and presentations.

To participate in this study you must be English speaking/reading, have had a positive experience with sexual fantasy, be at least twenty-one years of age, identify as female, and have been involved in a significant committed sexually intimate relationship with a partner for two years or more. You will be asked not to participate in this study if you are male, not twenty-one years of age, do not speak or read English, have not been in a committed relationship for two years or more, and are currently in active treatment for sexual intimacy issues or are a survivor of sexual trauma. If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to fill out a survey that will take about 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey is comprised of a series of structured/semi-structured questions designed to elicit some demographic background information about you, in addition to some questions regarding your sexuality and specifically attitudes, perceptions, and use

of sexual fantasies. Also, there will be narrative questions regarding the relation of sexual fantasy and sexual satisfaction in your committed relationship.

Since your participation in this study will be anonymous, there are few perceived risks to participating in this study. Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any question(s). As with any exercise where self-reflection is requested, there is always the risk that strong feelings may emerge. Therefore, if you choose to continue with the study you will be routed to a website through which you will find mental health services in your specific location. Also, if you choose not to participate in the study and click on exit at the end of this form you will also be routed to this referral page.

There will be no financial remuneration for participation in this study. This study will contribute to our professional knowledge base about female sexual fantasy and its relation to sexual satisfaction, and thus, a benefit from participation is to contribute to that study purpose.

At the completion of the survey, all personal identification will be stripped from the survey, and there will be no way to trace responses to any individual. Your answers are anonymous. Study data will be stored in a secured place and will be maintained for three years as required by Federal regulations, after which time, it will be destroyed. Only two people will have access to the raw data: a statistical consultant and myself.

It is important to note that your participation in the study is completely voluntary. It is your right to withdraw from the study before you complete the survey, and you may refuse to answer any questions that are included in the survey. However, once you complete the survey, your responses become part of the study database, and you will not

be able to remove your responses. If you agree to the terms and conditions listed above, please click “next”. If you do not choose to complete the survey, please click “Exit

Appendix G

Referral Source

National Association of Social Workers

Telephone: (800) 638-8799

Website: <http://www.socialworkers.org/register/default.asp>

Appendix H

Figure 1: Age of Participants (in years)

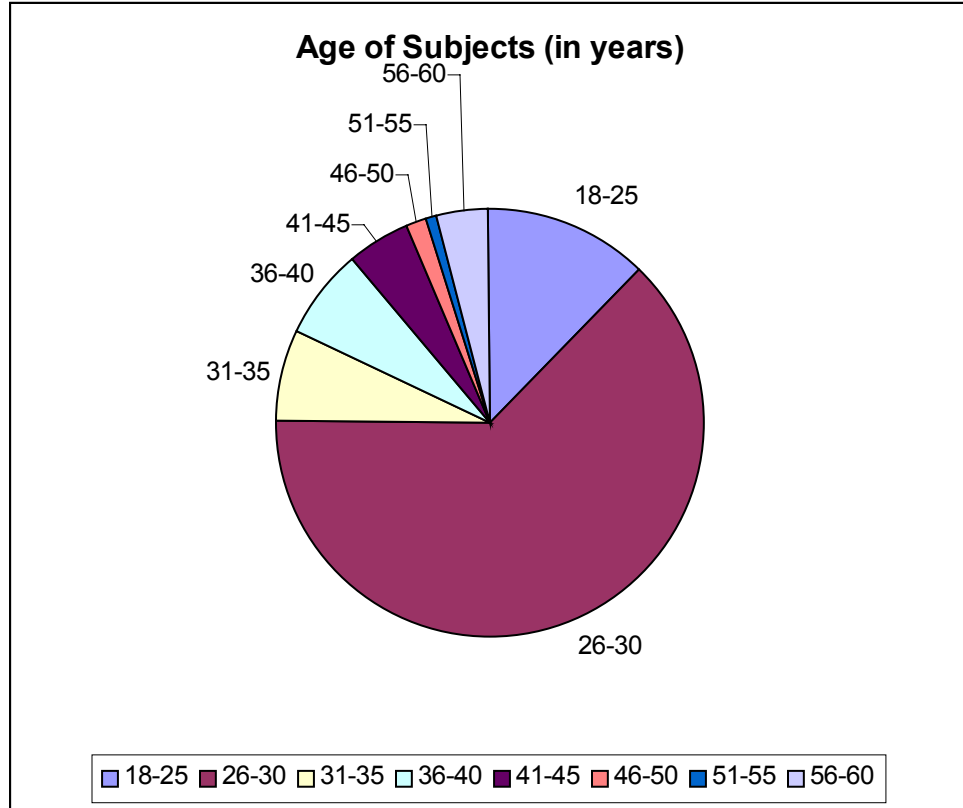


Figure 1: Age of subjects is as follows: 26-30 (62.5%), 18-25 (12.5%), 31-35 (7%), 36-40 (7%), 41-45 (4.7%), 56-60 (3.9%), 46-50 (1.6%), 51-55 (.8%).

Appendix I

Figure 2: Religious Affiliation of Subjects

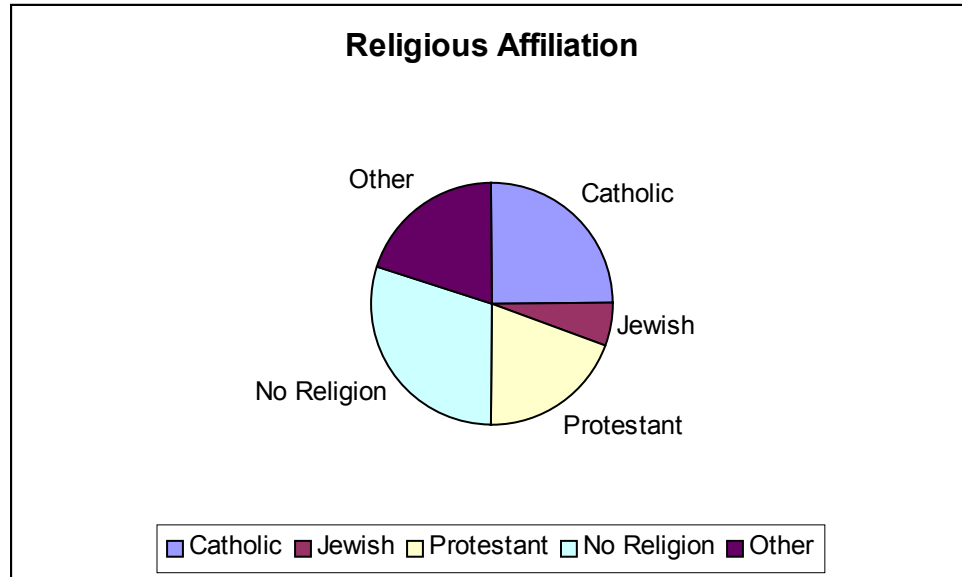


Figure 2: Religious Affiliation of Subjects is as follows: No Religious Affiliation (29.7%), Catholic (25%), Other (20.3%), Protestant (19.5%), Jewish (5.5%).

Appendix J

Figure 3: Race/Ethnicity of Subjects

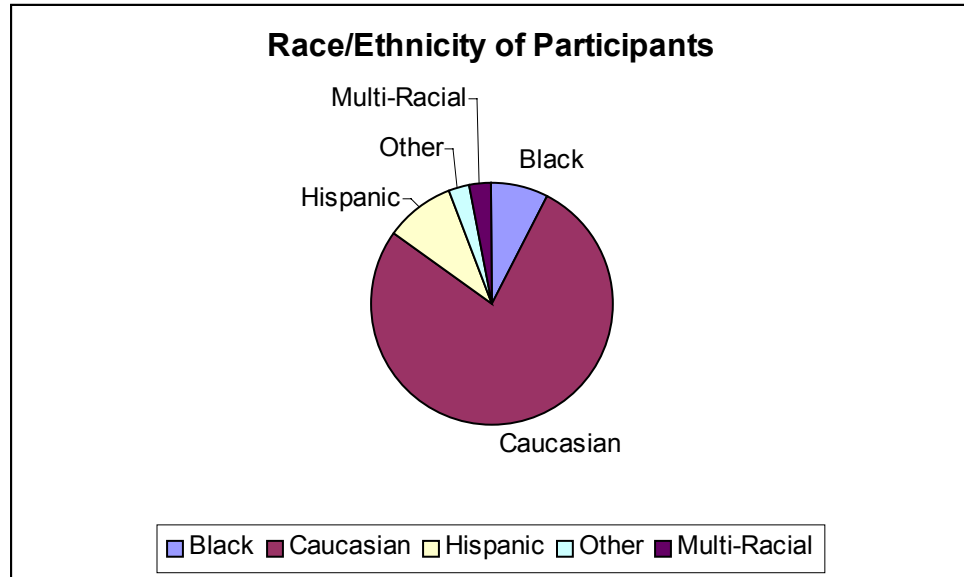


Figure 3: Race/Ethnicity of subjects: Caucasian (77.2%), Hispanic (9.4%), Black (7.9%), Multi-Racial (3.1%), Other (2.4%).

Appendix K

Figure 4: Sexual Orientation

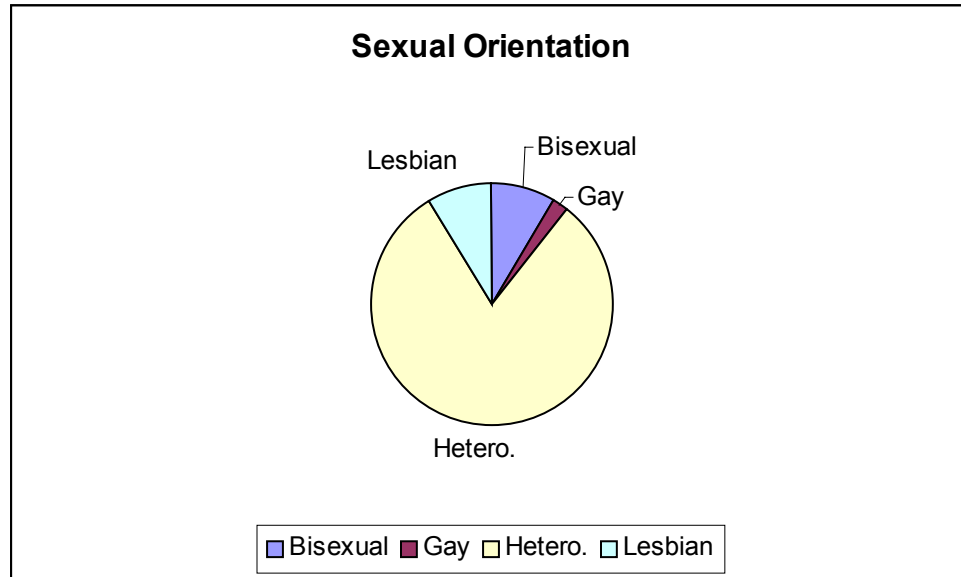


Figure 4: Heterosexual (80.5%), Bisexual (8.6%), Lesbian (8.6%), Gay (2.3%).

Appendix L

Table 1: Crosstabulations for Subjects' Religious Affiliations and Sexual Fantasy Themes

Subjects' Religious Affiliations and Theme of Fantasizing About Partner

Crosstab

		Current sexual partner		Total	
		not checked	checked		
relig	catholic	Count	3	29	32
		% within relig	9.4%	90.6%	100.0%
	jewish	Count	3	4	7
		% within relig	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	protestant	Count	5	20	25
		% within relig	20.0%	80.0%	100.0%
	no relig	Count	7	31	38
		% within relig	18.4%	81.6%	100.0%
	other	Count	2	24	26
		% within relig	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	20	108	128
		% within relig	15.6%	84.4%	100.0%

Subjects' Religious Affiliation and Theme of Fantasizing About Strangers

Crosstab

		Strangers		Total	
		not checked	checked		
relig	catholic	Count	17	15	32
		% within relig	53.1%	46.9%	100.0%
	jewish	Count	3	4	7
		% within relig	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	protestant	Count	12	13	25
		% within relig	48.0%	52.0%	100.0%
	no relig	Count	11	27	38
		% within relig	28.9%	71.1%	100.0%
	other	Count	7	19	26
		% within relig	26.9%	73.1%	100.0%
Total		Count	50	78	128
		% within relig	39.1%	60.9%	100.0%

Appendix M

Table 2: Crosstabulations for Subjects' Race/Ethnicity and Sexual Fantasy

Subjects' Race/Ethnicity and Sharing Fantasy Increases Intimacy With Partner

Crosstab

		sharing enhances sexual intimacy		Total	
		yes	no		
race	african amer	Count	8	2	10
		% within race	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	caucasian	Count	71	20	91
		% within race	78.0%	22.0%	100.0%
	hispanic	Count	12	0	12
		% within race	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	other	Count	1	2	3
		% within race	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	multi-racial	Count	3	1	4
		% within race	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	95	25	120
		% within race	79.2%	20.8%	100.0%

Subjects' Race and Ethnicity and Experience With Fantasy Helped To Feel More Open

Crosstab

		positive experience w/sexual fantasy helped you feel more comfortable/open sexually w/partner?			Total
		yes	no		
race	african amer	Count	7	3	10
		% within race	70.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	caucasian	Count	66	27	93
		% within race	71.0%	29.0%	100.0%
	hispanic	Count	11	1	12
		% within race	91.7%	8.3%	100.0%
	other	Count	2	0	2
		% within race	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	multi-racial	Count	3	1	4
		% within race	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	89	32	121
		% within race	73.6%	26.4%	100.0%

Subjects' Race and Ethnicity and Sexual Fantasy as a Healthy Outlet

Crosstab

		sexual fantasy a 'healthy outlet'			Total	
		yes	sometimes	no		
race	african amer	Count	9	1	0	10
		% within race	90.0%	10.0%	.0%	100.0%
	caucasian	Count	72	23	1	96
		% within race	75.0%	24.0%	1.0%	100.0%
	hispanic	Count	10	2	0	12
		% within race	83.3%	16.7%	.0%	100.0%
	other	Count	1	2	0	3
		% within race	33.3%	66.7%	.0%	100.0%
	multi-racial	Count	3	1	0	4
		% within race	75.0%	25.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	95	29	1	125
		% within race	76.0%	23.2%	.8%	100.0%

Appendix N

Table 3: Crosstabulations for Subjects' Age and Sexual Fantasy

Subjects' Age and Likelihood of Sharing Fantasies With Partner

Crosstab

			share with partner		Total
			yes	no	
agecat	18-30	Count	63	31	94
		% within agecat	67.0%	33.0%	100.0%
	31-45	Count	12	12	24
		% within agecat	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	46 and above	Count	2	5	7
		% within agecat	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	77	48	125
		% within agecat	61.6%	38.4%	100.0%

Subjects' Age and Perception That Sharing Enhances Intimacy With Partner

Crosstab

			sharing enhances sexual intimacy		Total
			yes	no	
agecat	18-30	Count	75	16	91
		% within agecat	82.4%	17.6%	100.0%
	31-45	Count	19	5	24
		% within agecat	79.2%	20.8%	100.0%
	46 and above	Count	2	4	6
		% within agecat	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	96	25	121
		% within agecat	79.3%	20.7%	100.0%

Subjects' Age and No Themes Found In Fantasy

Crosstab

		None		Total	
		not checked	checked		
agecat	18-30	Count	94	2	96
		% within agecat	97.9%	2.1%	100.0%
	31-45	Count	24	0	24
		% within agecat	100.0%	.0%	100.0%
	46 and above	Count	6	2	8
		% within agecat	75.0%	25.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	124	4	128
		% within agecat	96.9%	3.1%	100.0%

Subjects' Age and Perception That Sexual Fantasy is a Healthy Outlet

Crosstab

		sexual fantasy a 'healthy outlet"			Total	
		yes	sometimes	no		
agecat	18-30	Count	68	26	0	94
		% within agecat	72.3%	27.7%	.0%	100.0%
	31-45	Count	22	2	0	24
		% within agecat	91.7%	8.3%	.0%	100.0%
	46 and above	Count	6	1	1	8
		% within agecat	75.0%	12.5%	12.5%	100.0%
Total		Count	96	29	1	126
		% within agecat	76.2%	23.0%	.8%	100.0%

Appendix O

Table 4: Crosstabulations for Subjects' Sexual Orientation and Sexual Fantasy

Subjects' Sexual Orientation and Sharing Sexual Fantasies with Partner

Crosstab

			share with partner		Total
			yes	no	
sexorient2	bisexual	Count	6	5	11
		% within sexorient2	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	gay or lesbian	Count	11	3	14
		% within sexorient2	78.6%	21.4%	100.0%
	heterosexual	Count	60	40	100
		% within sexorient2	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	77	48	125
		% within sexorient2	61.6%	38.4%	100.0%

Subjects' Sexual Orientation and Perception That Sharing Enhances Intimacy

Crosstab

			sharing enhances sexual intimacy		Total
			yes	no	
sexorient2	bisexual	Count	8	2	10
		% within sexorient2	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	gay or lesbian	Count	12	1	13
		% within sexorient2	92.3%	7.7%	100.0%
	heterosexual	Count	76	22	98
		% within sexorient2	77.6%	22.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	96	25	121
		% within sexorient2	79.3%	20.7%	100.0%