

# Fantasy and Sex Offending

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# Questions to be Addressed

- **What do we mean by the term Fantasy?**
- **How can we assess fantasy?**
- **What is the relation between fantasy and psychopathology?**
- **What is the role of fantasy in offending behaviour**

# Definitions

- ❖ *“Cognitive activity representing a shift of attention away from a task”*. Singer (1966)
- ❖ *“Elaborate thought with great pre-occupation anchored with emotion and origins in daydream.”* Burgess et al (1986)
- ❖ *“Thoughts”* replaced with cognitions, rehearsal and pre occupation are key characteristics. Prentky et al (1989)
- ❖ Mental picture comprised of group of symbols unified into a script, individual has role to play in a sequence of events, organised, incapable of dramatisation. (e.g. Schlesinger and Kutash 1981, Carison and Coleman 1977.)

# Functional Explanations

- **Psychodynamic theory:**
  - ◆ expression of unfulfilled conscious/unconscious wishes (Hollender 1963).
- **Behavioural theory:**
  - ◆ fantasy content occurs through reinforcement and are themselves reinforcing (Rimm and Masters 1974).
- **Other theorists :**
  - ◆ fantasies reflect current events and life concerns serving several functions including rehearsal, re-working and re-organising information. (Klinger 1971).

# The Role of Fantasy

- ❖ **Foundation of serenity and purpose in life. Substances are abused to stimulate or numb inner lives Fantasy is part of healthy development of any person.**
- ❖ **Effective fantasy protects against risk of serious developmental difficulties such as delinquency, eating disorders, and substance abuse**

**Singer (1976)**

# Individual Differences

## ■ Orientation

- ◆ Storms (1981)

## ■ Fantasy Proneness

- ◆ hypnotisability,
- ◆ imagination,
- ◆ waking suggestibility,
- ◆ hallucinatory ability,
- ◆ creativity,
- ◆ psychopathology,
- ◆ childhood experiences

Lynn and Rhue (1988)

- *“able to set the theme and then an imaginative scenario unfolds that has some characteristics of a dream and some of a motion picture”*

Wilson and Barber 1983)

# Factors Affecting Fantasy

- **Intelligence linked to translation of fantasy into behaviour.**

Ressler et al (1981); Prentky et al (1989)

- **Fantasy changes with Age**

Shannon (1977)

- **Sex differences**

- ◆ **Submissive**

**Aggressive**

- ◆ **General**

**Specific**

Barclay (1973); Friday (1973)

# Fantasy Assessment

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- **Strategies**

- ◆ **Diary**

- Rokach (1990)

- ◆ **Direct Interview**

- Prentky et al (1989)

- ◆ **Questionnaire and checklists**

- **Wilson (1978)**

- ◆ **Projective Techniques**

- Rorschach - link between imagination and fantasy.
- Criminal fantasy technique Schlesinger et al (1981)

# Challenges in Assessment of Fantasy

- **Preconceived Focus**
- **Demand Characteristics**
- **Subject to Interpretation**
- **Context and Expectancy Effects**
- **Individual Meaning**
- **Lack of a Normative Picture in content, function and frequency.**

# Fantasy Diary

**SEX:**

**DATE:**

**TIME:**

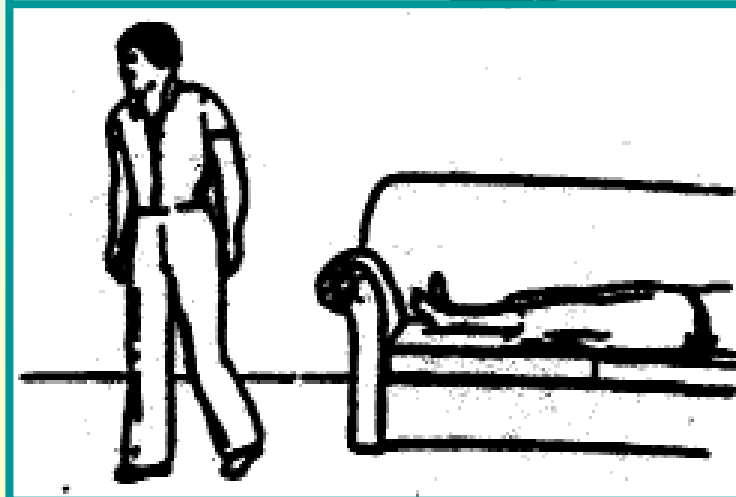
**PLACE:**

**MOOD:**

**Describe FANTASY in detail below and rate AROUSAL  
(1 minimum -10 maximum)**



# The Criminal Fantasy Technique



# Fantasy and Psychopathology

- *“Fantasy.. may be a substitute for action or may prepare the way for later action”*. (Beres 1961)
- **Motiveless crimes later explained by, enactment of fantasy leading to commission of the offences.**
- **Sadistic crimes. driven by sadistic fantasies in a repetition-compulsion fashion, mock trials and eventually assaults. MaCulloch et, al (1989)**
- **Increased rehearsal leads to increased efficiency as a source of arousal and pleasure.**

# Fantasy Consummation

- **Role of direct reinforcement in fantasy escalation**

**MacCulloch et al 1989**

- **Need for control of events in real world met by fantasy to control their inner world**

**Prentky et al (1989)**

- **Minimisation of anxiety as a result of the fantasy building up to a point where inner stress is unbearable and the way for later action is prepared**  
**Schlesinger & Revitch (1980)**

- **Removal of inhibiting restraints leads to series of “trial runs” to enact the fantasy as imagined.**

**MacCulloch et al 1989**

# Fantasy and Offending

- **Burgess et al 1986 Motivational Model (sexual homicide)**
  - ◆ Early development of active fantasy life and..
  - ◆ Later sexual reinforcement and..
  - ◆ Increasing detachment from social rules of conduct leads to..
  - ◆ Reinforcement from subsequent violent behaviour
- **MacCulloch et al 1989 Control Model**
  - ◆ Cognitive rehearsal leads to
  - ◆ Behavioural try-out leads to
  - ◆ Modification of fantasy leads to
  - ◆ Arousal and pleasure
- **Schlesinger and Revitch (1980) Stress Model**
  - ◆ *“fantasy builds to point where inner stress is unbearable, then the way for later action is prepared?”*

# Offending Taxonomies and Fantasy

- **Organised vs Disorganised**

- ◆ **Organised serial sexual murderers were more likely to have an internal drive mechanism consisting of an intrusive fantasy life manifested in paraphillias, organised crime scenes, violent fantasies.**

**Prentky et al (1989)**

- **Predatory vs Opportunistic**

- ◆ **Predatory sex offenders characterised by organised, elaborate and planned criminal fantasy life but No differences in criminal content from non-offending controls.**

**Deu and Edelmann (1997)**

# Conditioning and Fantasy

- **Early connections are made between events or objects and sexual arousal. These become cues.**
- **Repeated pairing of fantasized cues with sexual arousal or orgasm results in a reinforcement feedback loop.**
- **Fantasy development snowballs and generalizes**
- **Suggests the benefit of masturbatory conditioning**

(Laws and O'Neil 1981)

- **Practical difficulties**

# Implications

- **Detecting offenders who utilise fantasy as a forum for the rehearsal of criminal activity at an early stage in their criminal careers, could have preventative implications**
- **Predatory sex offenders may benefit from treatment focusing on development, meaning and use of their fantasies prior to traditional behaviour modification techniques.**
- **Need to examine potential cognitive correlates for organised and elaborate fantasy life driving particular offences**