

A CASE STUDY OF RECURRING FANTASY NARRATIVES  
AND ADOLESCENT DEPRESSION

By

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### Abstract

The literature and research on the interaction between fantasies and depression is extremely limited and there has been no research on the interaction of these two forces during adolescence in females. The two basic possibilities that fantasies may contribute to depression or help to alleviate it are offered. The study presented utilizes a case study approach from a Narrative perspective. Multiple functions of fantasy are revealed, contributing to a complex interaction between fantasy and depression. There is also interplay between fantasy and reality that provides the basis for the therapeutic potential of fantasy.

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## Dedication

For Alden and Callia.

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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

The world of fantasy is often secretive yet everyone engages in some form of it on a daily basis. People will reveal the most intimate details of their lives in casual conversation yet fantasies are often so private that they may never be revealed to anyone. Is this because they are shameful and embarrassing? Are they childish, frivolous, and egocentric? Are they sexual? Do they expose our vulnerabilities? Do they reveal thoughts and feelings that we cannot accept and therefore want to deny? Are they pathological? These questions are only a sample of the thoughts that go through a person's mind and to some extent the answer to all of them may be "yes". The pervasive and powerful nature of fantasy can be seen in the following quote by Caughey (1984) that "fantasy, like religion, is an inexpensive opium for the people" (p. 186).

My own interest in fantasy derives from personal experiences I had in adolescence. I went through a period of depression that was marked by low mood, crying on almost a daily basis, sleep difficulty and feelings of hopelessness and isolation. The depression I went through was largely what would be termed a situational depression although I was never formally diagnosed with depression at all. I refer to my depression as situational because it dissipated almost entirely after I left the family home.

Fantasy provided me with a mental escape from the emotionally difficult world I lived in. Overtly, a female friend and I created a world of fantasy together. My friend was also dealing with emotional issues and together we collaborated on a fantasy world that revolved around a popular band at the time. We created stories that were filled with idealism but also others which presented dilemmas or problems to work through. We



created together but also used the fantasy world on our own. The fantasies provided a realm for escape, positive emotion, self-exploration and in our case fantasizing together provided connectedness. I also had future oriented fantasies of my own during this period that focused on what my adult life would be like. These fantasies provided me with hope, optimism and a sense of purpose.

During my experiences I was somewhat unaware of the process I was engaged in. It is only with some degree of reflection that I can see I was engaged in creating daydreams or fantasies. Perhaps due to the private nature of these experiences it is difficult to define or even differentiate between the terms “fantasy” and “daydream”.

The terms “fantasy” and “daydreaming” have multiple meanings. “Fantasy” is often associated with sexuality or science-fiction genres and “daydreaming” can have negative connotations of a person who is highly distractible, often looking vacant. The Oxford English Dictionary defines fantasy in several ways. Some definitions refer to seemingly negative aspects such as “the fact or habit of deluding oneself by imaginary perceptions or reminiscences” or “a supposition resting on no solid grounds; a whimsical or visionary notion or speculation” (OED, 1989). Another definition seems to be directly derived from Freud and states that fantasy is “a daydream arising from conscious or unconscious wishes or attitudes” (OED, 1989). The term “daydream” is defined as “a dream indulged in while awake, especially one of happiness or gratified hope or ambition; a reverie, castle in the air” (OED, 1989). Certainly there is overlap between the definitions of fantasy and daydreaming, but a clear distinction cannot be made. Fantasy can be considered the broader term as there are multiple definitions given whereas the definition for daydream is singular in connotation.

Researchers in the field of fantasy have also attempted to define it as part of their work. Segal Huber and Singer's (1980) working definition of "daydreaming" is "a shift of focus away from an ongoing task defined by immediate stimulus contexts" (p. 36) and they term "fantasy as "a specific type of daydream that introduces new combinations of material from the past to an especially probabilistic or even impossible private context" (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 37). The idea of a shift in attention is found in many of the definitions in the literature. Goldstein and Baskin (1998) simply state that "daydreaming is defined as thought which is unrelated to one's present tasks" (p. 83) and Segal Huber and Singer (1980) echo this in their working definition of daydreaming as "task-irrelevant or stimulus-independent mentation" (p. 36). Klinger (1971) provides the more complex definition of fantasy "as report of mentation other than orienting responses to, or scanning of, external stimuli, or operant activity such as problem-solving in a task situation" (p. 10).

For the purposes of this study a working definition of fantasy and or daydreams is necessary. The terms "fantasy" and "daydream" are difficult to discriminate between and are used interchangeably in the works by both Klinger (1971, 1990) and Singer (1975). Therefore, the terms will be used interchangeably in this study as well. The previous definitions had a common theme whereby fantasy or daydreams related to a cognitive activity not directly related to a present reality. Therefore, an interior monologue running through your head about the steps to bake a cake would not be considered fantasy.

However, anticipating the reaction of others when they eat the cake and the effect that this will have on you can be considered a fantasy. There may be elements of the past or future involved in fantasy and the fantasy may be related to the present as well. More

specifically, this study will be examining recurring fantasies. Singer (1975, pp. 17-32) describes examples of his own recurring fantasies all of which have an element of story to them. He comments, "a small reality is nonetheless involved in each fantasy" (p. 26) and describes recurrent fantasies as "extensive", "well-crystallized", and "creative". Recurring fantasies can be differentiated from general fantasy in that they appear to be more organized, complex and story-like. However, the fantasies experienced by Singer and myself provided positive feelings. It remains to be seen whether or not negative recurring fantasies can be described in this way.

The discomfort we have about talking about our fantasies can be likened to the same discomfort many people have when going to a counsellor. It is perhaps not in spite of this discomfort but rather because of it that there is the possibility of using fantasy as a therapeutic tool. This can already be seen in the use of guided imagery techniques where the therapist sets the stage for fantasy as a means to reveal thoughts and feelings below the surface. The use of fantasy can also be seen in athletes who visualize a performance as a means of rehearsal. More dramatically, the use of fantasy can be seen in extreme situations such as POW camps where individuals create a fantasy life as a means of inner survival.

Fantasy is a part of everyone's lives whether they are cognizant of this fact or not. Person (1995) refers to the concept of "repeating fantasies," saying that they are "familiar friends (sometimes enemies) that have an enormous impact on how we act and how we think about ourselves, and all of us have them" (p. 94). She cites the extreme living conditions of Victor Frankel in Auschwitz and American hostages in Iran who used fantasy to cope. She concluded, "fantasizing a happier future may permit us to bear an

untenable present rather than be overwhelmed by depression and feelings of hopelessness” (Person, 1995, p. 37). Situations such as a POW camp are extreme but it leads to the question of how fantasy interacts with depression in an individual’s everyday life?

Depression is something that nearly everyone experiences on some level. However, the question of how to define depression is not a simple task. Depression is most often defined through its symptoms such as sadness, change in sleep patterns, and feelings of hopelessness to name a few. Many of these symptoms relate to emotions but underneath these emotions are cognitions. It is difficult to define depression in discrete terms as it most often refers to a state of mind. A definition that goes beyond symptoms largely depends on the theoretical perspective one is working from. For the cognitive therapist a state of depression rests largely on faulty cognitions whereas a narrative perspective would also work with cognition but also examine the socio-cultural influences on depression. The study presented here is situated in a narrative theoretical framework that provides a postmodern view of depression.

Gender appears to play a part in depression and depressive symptoms. Nolen-Hoeksma (1990) cites research that states that “women are about twice as likely as men to develop both moderate and severe depressions” (p. 1) and she notes that “among adults women report significantly more depression than men across most age groups and income levels” (p. 28). The issue of gender and depression will be explored more fully in the literature on depression. However, it is useful to note “the rates of depression of both boys and girls are quite low before puberty but increase substantially in adolescence”

(Nolen-Hoeksma, 1990, p. 46). Clearly, adolescence is an important period to study

depression in females. Hence, the population for this study will focus on adolescent females.

There are several important reasons for studying the interaction between fantasy and depression. My initial interest arose from personal experiences that I found to be quite powerful in my life. I was surprised to find out that there was no literature that directly addressed the interaction between fantasy and depression. The literature on fantasy provides some insight into possible interactions. However, much of the literature on fantasy is more than 20 years old. Despite its age, the literature on fantasy continues to be relevant; the only limitation being that the approach to studying fantasy at that time did not include narrative or qualitative research methods. Additionally, researchers even then lamented the lack of study on fantasy:

After millennia of philosophical inquiry into the mind, a half-century of experimental analysis of consciousness, and a further half century of experimental analysis of behaviour, very little is actually known about fantasy. (Klinger, 1971, p. 4)

While the literature on depression is current, it still has many gaps. For example, the vast majority of the literature is quantitative and approached from a medical model standpoint. There are few, if any, studies that address the experiences of depression among adolescent females from a narrative approach. Also, the relationship between fantasy and depression is implied in the literature on depression but not explored.

This study that focuses on the interaction between fantasy and depression during adolescence in a female, is important for the field of counselling for several reasons.

Foremost, it provides a different perspective on the phenomena of both fantasy and

depression respectively. More specifically, the study relates these phenomena to a specific subject group of a female during adolescence in a detailed manner using a qualitative narrative approach. The study also fills some of the gaps in the literature that were previously mentioned. Finally, a study of the interaction between depression and fantasy yields valuable insight and tools for the therapeutic process. This leads us to the specific research question explored: How do recurring fantasies interact with depression in the life of an adolescent girl?

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

An exploration of fantasy and depression may seem an antithetical pairing. Depression is associated with feelings of sadness and apathy, while fantasy is often associated with whimsy and play. Obviously, these are only superficial connotations but perhaps these implicit associations have prevented researchers from considering the interaction of these two forces. Fantasy in particular may have been overlooked as many equate it to a symptom of pathology, likening it to delusions or hallucinations.

There is a prolific amount of literature about depression and it has been shown to be a pervasive problem in society today. On the other hand, fantasy has had considerably less literature and research devoted to it but is part of our everyday lives.

The question of how fantasy and depression interact with one another seems to hold two opposite possibilities of the negative and the positive. A positive interaction would be one where fantasy provided some form of relief from the depression. This could come in several forms and vary in duration.

Several positive roles for fantasy are possible. Fantasy may be used as a distraction that allows the individual to cope with unpleasant events while they are occurring. Fantasy may also combat the feelings of boredom accompanied by the apathy of depression. On the other hand, fantasy may serve an adaptive role in providing positive and pleasurable experiences for someone who is depressed. A person's daydreams may provide an opportunity to explore positive and interesting realities when the person's own reality seems hopeless. In this sense the fantasy is able to promote hope if the person is able to envision a better future for his or her self. Similarly, fantasy can also be used in

problem solving. A person may use his or her fantasies to “role-play” and work out dilemmas or problems.

Negative possibilities revolve around contributing to the depression. A depressed person may use fantasy to “re-play” a traumatic event over and over again. Fantasies may fall victim to distorted thought patterns such as catastrophic thinking which makes everything feel overwhelming and hopeless. The negative fantasy would provide the individual an opportunity to distort things further through the power of fantasy.

The interactions between fantasy and depression is the main focus of this study but several other considerations are relevant. The research question examines the impact of recurring fantasies on depression in adolescent females. Hence, the focus will be not only on fantasy and depression, but also the targeted population and type of fantasy. Specifically, adolescence and developmental considerations as well as gender differences will be examined in the literature on both depression and fantasy. Additionally, information regarding the nature of recurring fantasies will be sought.

### Theories of Fantasy

The idea of fantasy as a part of the human experience is seen throughout history in such disciplines as literature and philosophy. However, fantasy has not been as evident in psychology as one might think. Most commonly, fantasy is associated with Sigmund Freud but dreams were much more prominent in Freud’s work than fantasy. In fact, several other researchers made fantasy the focus of their efforts and endeavoured to create a theory around the human experience of fantasy. The works of Freud (1908), Singer (1975), and Caughey (1971, 1990) will be explored in this review of the literature.



Freud's ideas will form a limited beginning, with more substantive attention paid to the other two authors who focus on fantasy.

Perhaps the most prolific of the researchers is Jerome L. Singer (1975, 1980) who is co-author of the Imaginal Processes Inventory (IPI) (Singer & Antrobus, 1966, 1970a, 1970b), a psychometric tool focused on fantasy. In addition to this he has written several books on fantasy and been a part of many experiments. His work provides both quantitative data from research conducted and qualitative anecdotes and commentary as part of his books.

Eric Klinger's (1971, 1990) approach can be characterized as both comprehensive and thorough. He attacks a theory of fantasy by examining everything from cognitive processing to relating other theories such as that of play and motivation. He strives to define the nature of fantasy through what it is and is not. Primarily, he focuses on the objective world of quantitative research that he uses as a foundation to draw upon.

Finally, John L. Caughey (1984) views fantasy as immersed in "social worlds". This perspective of fantasy explores the influence of culture on fantasy and suggests that there may be practical implications for the use of fantasy.

In "Creative Writers and Daydreaming" Freud comments on the developmental aspect of fantasy by saying that "the growing child, when he stops playing, gives up nothing but the link with real objects instead of *playing*, he now *phantasies*" (Freud, 1908, as cited in Person, E., 1995, p. 145). However, the transition is not so smooth and the overt act of play becomes covert in the adult world of fantasy. The following statement exemplifies this contrast:

The adult, on the contrary, is ashamed of his phantasies and hides them from other people. He cherishes his phantasies as his most intimate possessions, and as a rule he would rather confess his misdeeds than tell anyone his phantasies. (Freud, 1908, as cited in Person, E., 1995, p. 145).

Freud likens play to fantasy, yet his ideas about fantasy harbour a pathology that he does not associate with play.

The basic tenet that Freud (1908) proposes about fantasy is that “the motive forces of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single fantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality” (as cited in Person, E., 1995, p. 146). Hence, fantasy is purposeful yet Freud attaches a negative bias to all fantasy. He asserts that “a happy person never phantasies, only an unsatisfied one” (Freud, 1908, as cited in Person, E., 1995, p. 146). The implication is that one cannot be happy until all aspects of a person’s life are fulfilling. Freud (1908) also divides fantasy into “either ambitious wishes, which serve to elevate the subject’s personality; or they are erotic ones” (as cited in Person, E., 1995, p. 147). Again, a negative shadow is cast on fantasy with tones of narcissism and indulgence. Despite Freud’s negative views about fantasy, he eloquently describes their temporal impact by saying that “past, present and future are strung together, as it were, on the thread of the wish that runs through them” (as cited in Person, E., 1995, p. 148).

Jerome L. Singer is one of the major authors and researchers in the area of daydreaming. In his book The Inner World of Daydreaming he ponders a variety of research questions that include “exploring the adaptive and pathological characteristics of daydreaming” and “therapeutic uses that have been made and could be made further in the use of imagery and fantasy techniques” (Singer, 1975, p. 8). His approach is based

both on his quantitative research and his own personal experiences. The primary focus is the function and purpose of fantasy.

Singer introduces the idea of fantasy by describing a recurring fantasy from his childhood that revolved around baseball and centred around a character named 'Poppy Ott'. He acknowledges, "in high school and even in adult life, confronted with situations that were monotonous or dull I would find myself resorting consciously to playing out a particular game in which Poppy Ott starred" (Singer, 1975, pp. 20-21). He also reports using the same fantasy as "preparation for sleep" and "during periods of long waiting" (Singer, 1975, p. 21). Singer's example demonstrates the use of fantasy as a distraction to combat boredom but also places fantasy in the context of an adaptive tool that can be called upon at any time.

However, the function of fantasy can go beyond the temporary replacement of reality and actually interact with the reality at hand. This interaction can produce both positive and negative results. The negative effects of fantasy can be seen in the following example:

Clinical observation of patients who are blocked in writing or other creative work has often suggested that a grandiose fantasy standard may make their initial effort seem hopelessly inferior, so that the attempt to narrow the gap between the fantasy and their own product becomes too burdensome. (Singer, 1975, p. 27)

Hence, a positive fantasy may turn negative when it is so far from reality that it becomes unattainable and therefore frustrating. There are also other individuals who Singer identifies as having high scores on the Anxious Distractibility Scale of his Imaginal Processes Inventory (IPI), who "would be characterized by having many rather

fleeting and loosely connected fantasies, usually involving anxieties and worries” (Singer, 1975, p. 68). These people would find that “daydreaming is not a useful resource and they take little pleasure in it” (Singer, 1975, p. 68). On the other hand, there are individuals for whom “fantasy as an evasion of responsibility or as a means of suppressing awareness of current life dilemmas is an important psychological feature of their behavior” (Singer, 1975, p.182). Such individuals may become lost in a world of fantasy to the point that they are no longer coping with reality. Like most coping methods, fantasy can be taken to extremes and Singer takes the position “that daydreaming is a neutral skill available for adaptive enrichment of the life of otherwise ordinary persons as well as a manifestation in many persons of escape, evasion of responsibility, or self-dissatisfaction” (Singer, 1975, p. 169). Hence, daydreams can become a detriment to the individual when the content is pervasively negative as well as when fantasy takes control of the individual’s life rather than enhancing it.

Daydreams may also play a positive functional role in people’s lives. Singer asserts that “daydreams frequently deal with planning for future actions and particularly for dealing with other people in significant relationships” and “the majority of our subjects have reported that they enjoy daydreaming”(Singer, 1975, p. 55). In support of this positive perspective is Singer’s own personal assertion that he “experienced a great deal of good feeling in the course of [his] daydreams” and “was rarely aware of much negative emotion in [his] fantasy life” (Singer, 1975, p. 27). Hence, daydreaming can provide people with an internal stimulus for enjoyment. The dichotomous potential of daydreams is best summarized by saying that “our everyday daydreams carry the seeds of

psychopathology at the same time as they offer us the best of human experiences” (Singer, 1975, p. 204).

The period of adolescence, of particular interest for this study, is explored in some detail. Singer examines adolescence in relation to fantasy, and from his own research notes that “adolescents report much more frequent daydreaming than do young adults or respondents from the older age groups” (Singer, 1975, p. 150). He even asserts, “the moodiness of adolescence ... seems in part attributable to the fact that adult’s injunctions ... are interrupting elaborate private sequences of pleasurable or anticipatory fantasies” (Singer, 1975, p. 150). Adolescent daydreams are viewed as “preparations for future behavior” (Singer, 1975, p. 151) and “part of the growth of a sense of separate identity” (Singer, 1975, p. 152). It is accepted that both these tasks are part of adolescent development and he further asserts that “the inner experience serves to buffer the stress of adolescence” (Singer, 1975, p.160) and “adolescent daydreams also can play a role in helping one develop a sense of power and autonomy, not only over parents but in general over one’s life situation” (Singer, 1975, p.161). Hence, daydreams can play a powerful role in the period of adolescence.

The future orientation of fantasy is explored as Singer notes that “the gap between possibility and probability has narrowed somewhat in adolescence” (Singer, 1975, p. 153) and fantasies become more and more related to reality as opposed to functions of play. An example of this is that “girls in late puberty may continue to play out fantasy games sociodramatically around romantic subjects” (Singer, 1975, p. 149). Hence, fantasy may go beyond the confines of the mind and actually involve physical activity even if only in the confines of privacy. Singer believes there is pressure for the adolescent to abandon

the world of fantasy and advises that it is helpful "if one then can explore with the patient his or her areas of competence or potential reward as they relate to some of these fantasies, the bitter and painful relinquishment of *all* fantasy (often associated with depression or painful 'acting out')" (Singer, 1975, p. 159) can be avoided. Implied in this quote is the idea that fantasy offers at least some protection against depression in childhood and adolescence. Singer supports this idea by saying that "adolescent daydreaming... provides defences and approaches to coping with frightening events" (Singer, 1975, p. 160). In summary:

The daydreams of the adolescent are a basic part of his growth process. If he can effect some combination of a varied and increasingly elaborate but partially reality-oriented daydream life, he can move into adulthood armed with a significant skill and with important adaptive potential. (Singer, 1975, p.162)

Singer's ideas take daydreaming beyond others who preceded him such as Freud. Singer disputes Freud's ideas about fantasy as a mechanism for "drive reduction". Singer cites studies using the "Thematic Apperception Test" (TAT) by Seymour Feshbach, a study by Singer and Rowe, and a study by Paton using the Imaginal Processes Inventory (IPI). All of the studies look at anger and fantasy. Singer concludes from the results that the crucial factor in reducing anger through fantasy is merely the opportunity to fantasize, but not necessarily an acting out of anger through fantasy. He cites Paton's results saying that "subjects who had the chance to engage in primarily neutral fantasies showed a greater reduction in subsequent anger than those whose fantasies were primarily aggressive and violent" (Singer, 1975, p. 114). Singer concludes "the effect of the fantasy is indeed one of diversion and a shift in mood, rather than some kind of relatively

automatic reduction of a certain quantum of drive energy, as the old Freudian theory might have proposed" (Singer, 1975, p. 114). He goes on to say that "much seems to depend upon the habitual way in which individuals have learned to use their daydreams in various stressful or difficult situations" and a great deal depends on the context and social meaning of the situation" (Singer, 1975, p. 116).

In conclusion, Singer summarizes the various functions of daydreaming by saying that some "simply divert us and lower the level of tension and distress, ... others provide us with an alternative environment to one that is boring or contains within it reminders of failures or insults, ... some represent rehearsals for future actions [and] suggest new and alternative ways of dealing with situations" (Singer, 1975, p. 118). Daydreams can also "illuminate the humor in a situation or point up the incongruity between our current reality and our hopes" (Singer, 1975, p. 119). He points out that daydreams can have "motivational characteristics" (Singer, 1975, p. 118). Despite all of these affirmations, he summarizes by saying that "it is difficult to draw any really final conclusions about the functions of daydreaming without a good deal more careful research" (Singer, 1975, p. 118).

In Structure and Function of Fantasy, Eric Klinger is methodical in his analysis of fantasy within the pre-existing realm of psychology. He relates fantasy to previous theories and research on play, dreams, cognitive processing, creativity, and motivation.

Klinger notes the importance of fantasy by commenting that "so prominent an activity as fantasy is likely to exercise important functions in the adaptation of the organism" (Klinger, 1971, p. 4). The words "function" and "adaptation" certainly imply positive connotations to the use of fantasy. He also indicates that "people come to know

themselves in part through the content of their fantasies” (Klinger, 1971, p. 142), which implies the possibility of therapeutic uses for fantasy.

Klinger’s writing on development reveals several patterns. He notes that “fantasy seems to become frequent after the demise of play” (Klinger, 1971, p. 30) and “fantasy appears to be reported with increasing frequency, reaching a peak in late adolescence and early adulthood and then gradually declining” (Klinger, 1971, p. 32). He comments that “developmentally, the frequency of certain themes in play and dreams at particular ages reflects the kind of topics about which subjects of that age group are believed to be typically concerned” (Klinger, 1971, p. 348). More specifically, in adolescence “fantasies are often prospective in the sense of anticipating possible future developments in the subject’s life in the areas of vocation, achievement, athletics, and sex” (Klinger, 1971, p. 31). In conclusion, fantasy frequency and subject matter relate to developmental tasks and interests. Thus the abundance and nature of fantasy during adolescence provides a fertile period for the study of fantasy.

Fantasy and depression are indirectly explored through some of the negative characteristics of fantasy. Klinger notes that:

... fantasy is often unpleasant, that subjects often report anxiety-filled daydreams, unremitting worry, and the like, but, on the other hand, that fantasy is self-reinforcing in the sense that subjects continue to engage in it. (Klinger, 1971, p.306)

Engagement in fantasy is not dependent on fantasy as a positive experience. Instead the concept of a negative cycle is supported by Klinger. However, this is in contrast to his earlier assertion that fantasy plays an ‘adaptive’ role.



The idea of fantasy as a form of “drive reduction”, most commonly associated with Freud, is refuted by Klinger but in some sense Klinger supports it. Upon examining the research, Klinger found that “taken by itself, the arousal of drives has a remarkably weak effect on fantasy, if indeed it has any” (Klinger, 1971, p. 280). He concluded, “drive as such affects fantasy only insofar as it enhances or depresses the value of incentives” (Klinger, 1971, p. 299). However his conclusion that, “the evidence suggests strongly that, like play and dreams, the thematic content of fantasy is influenced by the individual’s ‘current concerns,’ which are states of involvement with relatively important goals which he has not yet attained or abandoned” (Klinger, 1971, p.353), is only subtly different from Freud’s idea of “drive reduction”. The distinction between “drive reduction” and “current concerns” is dubious as both involve the individual striving towards something that she or he has not yet attained.

Klinger updated his work from the 70’s in 1990 and wrote the book Daydreaming which is much more accessible in its style and content. The importance of daydreaming is stressed throughout the book and in temporal terms Klinger notes, “we spend on average about half of our mental activity on some kind of daydreaming” (Klinger 1990, p. 6). Klinger views this prolific amount of time as purposeful. Specifically, he outlines several functions for daydreaming such as organizing our lives, learning from our experiences, exploring the future, making decisions, understanding ourselves, growing as individuals, and changing our moods (Klinger 1990, pp. 7-8).

Examining daydreams from a biological perspective Klinger notes “when you daydream, you exercise parts of your brain that are responsible for the activities you are daydreaming about” (Klinger 1990, p. 215). Several studies are cited which reveal that

just the act of thinking about a movement causes the neurons to send a message to the muscles involved in that movement. The movement itself is imperceptible but can be measured. Hence, "visualization" techniques prove very useful for athletes. From this, Klinger concludes that "the lessons that we learn in our daydreams are learned just as surely as if we had learned them in real life" (Klinger 1990, p. 307). Such a conclusion may be a bit premature, as it may only hold true on a physical level but not an emotional level.

Klinger directly addresses the interaction between daydreaming and depression but concludes that there is only one possible interaction. Simply put, he states, "depressed people have depressed daydreams" (Klinger 1990, p. 3). He points to a study by Giambra & Traynor that found that "depressed college students and depressed inmates both reported daydreaming more ... and they enjoyed their daydreams less" (Klinger 1990, p. 234). Klinger acknowledges that such a conclusion may be counter-intuitive:

If fantasy were an escape, you would expect that the people with the most need to escape would have daydreams that make them feel happier, but the opposite seems to be true. The people who most need that escape, those afflicted with anxiety and depression, do daydream somewhat more but, far from providing an escape, their daydreams largely provide yet another domain for feeling unhappy. (Klinger 1990, p. 234)

Certainly there is a partial truth there but there may also be other truths to be discovered with different questions and methodologies, as the conclusions thus far have relied solely on quantitative research.

Klinger concludes by examining the “hidden benefits” of daydreaming. He posits that daydreams can:

- Make us feel more relaxed
- Stimulate us
- Help us keep our lives organized
- Increase our understanding of ourselves
- Help improve physical skills through mental practice
- Help us become more effective in social and other situations through exploration and rehearsal
- Provide a medium for growth and therapy
- Move us toward making decisions
- Foster finding creative solutions to problems
- Help us to empathize better with other people
- Perhaps help us develop desirable personality traits

(Klinger 1990, pp. 281-282)

Klinger also cites numerous authors and their research that support the therapeutic efficacy of guided imagery. He summarizes by stating that “all this means that daydreams reveal something about what daydreamers are after and something about the way they perceive, think about, and act about their world” (Klinger 1990, p. 37) and “they are in the main an essential personal resource for coping with life” (Klinger 1990, p. 307).

In Imaginary Social Worlds, John L. Caughey (1984) approaches the study of fantasy as a social phenomenon rather than viewing it exclusively as solitary and internalized. Instead he sees a person’s fantasy life as directly related to reality.

Not only do imaginary experiences consume much of the individual's life; they also have multiple, complex, and significant connections to actual social conduct.

(Caughey, 1984, p.29)

Caughey goes further in his argument by stating: "by providing purpose and meaning, fantasy has indirect but important effects on actual interactions" (1984, p.188). The connection between fantasy and overt action provides potential for the use of fantasy in therapy and encouragement for more research in this area. Furthermore, Caughey describes fantasy as "an important, powerful, and pervasive aspect of contemporary American life" (Caughey, 1984, p. 7). However, he also acknowledges that fantasy is often associated with "pathology" (Caughey, 1984, p.6). Thus fantasy has the potential for both positive and negative effects.

Caughey does not focus on the interaction between depression and fantasy but there are several references made. There is suggestion of fantasy having both a positive and negative influence. He acknowledges that "people can and do become "lost" in imaginary social worlds, and imaginary social relationships sometimes have highly negative effects on actual social interaction" (Caughey, 1984, p. 30). Thus individuals who are feeling depressed may choose to withdraw into a world of fantasy. Caughey also cites numerous examples where the fantasies themselves help to perpetuate depression when an individual uses fantasy as a means to replay negative experiences.

Not only does depression foster the recurrence of painful memories, but such spontaneous memories also foster and sustain depression. (Caughey, 1984, p. 142)

Hence a depressive cycle is set up and maintained. Furthermore, "erroneous rehearsals of future social situations may also lead to the construction of maladaptive scripts for real

conduct” (Caughey, 1984, p. 142). In this case, unrealistic expectations lead to disappointment in reality, which can contribute to both depression and withdrawal.

However, there is a more positive potential for fantasy. Instead of becoming absorbed in depressive memories, fantasy can be used to give an individual another chance to change the outcome and “recreate the past” (Caughey, 1984, p.149). Similarly, fantasy can also function as a way to explore and rehearse future events or new roles. Caughey posits that “fantasy is an escape from reality; it is also an escape from thinking about reality, from coping with it through self-talk, memory, or anticipation” (Caughey, 1984, p.159). Thus fantasy can be seen as a means to escape a bleak reality such as depression. Fantasies may be induced by depression “when mental coping ... reach a certain negative threshold” (Caughey, 1984, p.174). In the realm of fantasy “negative elements are magically erased and positive elements are heightened and magnified” (Caughey, 1984, p. 160).

From Caughey’s perspective of fantasy as part of a social world, these fantasy relationships “often fill gaps in the individual’s social world” (Caughey, 1984, p.49). One example cited is that of an elderly woman who relieves depression by listening to Frank Sinatra records because in some sense over the years she has built a relationship with him. Another participant in Caughey’s work describes the soothing effect of fantasy in her life: “I feel much more calm and comfortable in my world of fantasy than in my real world” (Caughey, 1984, p.72).

Several practical applications are offered by Caughey. He argues for further research as well as continued application of fantasy as a therapeutic tool. He states, “such guided imagery techniques suggest that systematic ‘daydreaming’ may deepen self insight” and

are an “example of how actual social relationships ... can be organized around imaginary social relationships” (p. 152). Caughey echoes Freud’s drive theory in stating that “fantasy ... is the product of the individual’s psychological needs” (Caughey, 1984, p. 163).

Caughey argues that “imaginary worlds are social worlds” and “this means that we can apply methods of social analysis to them” (Caughey, 1984, p. 29). He acknowledges that the process of studying fantasy is complicated in that “imaginary processes are not subject to direct “objective” observations” (Caughey, 1984, p.23). However, he argues that the use of introspection can be used to facilitate the study of fantasy: “since this an accepted method for studying actual experience, there is no reason not to apply it to the study of imaginary experience” (Caughey, 1984, p. 24). Caughey comments on the types of problems associated with using introspection as a tool for research and says, “usually, deliberate distortion is less of a problem than lack of recall” (Caughey, 1984, p. 26).

#### Research on Fantasy

The research on fantasy is limited in several ways. Foremost is the fact that there is not a great deal of research in the area of fantasy and most of it is not current. Consequently, the available research is almost exclusively quantitative and necessarily specific in the aspects studied, which does not allow for a broader understanding of fantasy.

Goldstein and Baskin examine sex differences in daydreaming behaviour in their research but their findings are very limited. The researchers relied on the use of the Imaginal Processes Inventory Scales (IPI) as developed by Singer and Antrobus, and modified by the researchers. Statistically, there were no differences related to daydreaming amongst men and women. The authors acknowledge that the relatively

small sample (n=153) makes it difficult to make “definitive generalizations” (Goldstein & Baskin, 1998, p. 89). However, there were differences that emerged as patterns in the research.

“Females reported more problem solving in daydreams, more future orientation in daydream and more self-revelation in their daydreams” (Goldstein & Baskin, 1998, p. 87). Certainly, there are positive connotations to this view and it supports the idea that fantasy may serve a positive and useful function. In contrast to this, the researchers also found that “females often report that something bad is happening to them” (Goldstein & Baskin, 1998, p. 88). It is important to note that the effect of both these findings on the life of an individual is left unclear. The authors urge “future studies should explore the precise functions of specific daydreams for men and women” (Goldstein & Baskin, 1998, p. 90).

Taylor, Fulcomer, and Taylor (1978) also explore sex differences in their research but specifically focus on an adolescent population. Again, the Imaginal Processes Inventory (IPI) was used as the instrument of measurement. However, the sample consisted of “racially diverse” high school students. The IPI was modified by making it shorter and the “response format was changed” (p.735).

There were several trends and differences reported in the study that can be related to depression or sex differences. The results show a positive side to daydreaming in that “the rank order of this study found generally positive emotions more prevalent than aggressive and anxious ones” and “daydreams indicating problem solving and adaptation to the future rank the highest” (Taylor, Fulcomer, Taylor, 1978, p.745).

Upon comparing their results with others', the researchers conclude "sex has considerable impact on many of the Revised IPI Scale Scores" (Taylor, Fulcomer, Taylor, 1978, p.746). Specifically, they report that:

Females report more Acceptance, Positive Reactions, and Future Orientation than males. To the degree that daydreaming forms a positive, adaptive skill, females possess more of this quality. (Taylor, Fulcomer, Taylor, 1978, p. 747)

Finally, the study also indicated that there is "greater reported daydreaming for the high school sample than the college" (Taylor, Fulcomer, Taylor, 1978, p. 746). It is unclear whether the younger sample simply reported their daydreams more fully or if they in fact daydream more. In either case, this makes an adolescent population potentially better subjects than an adult one.

The article also comments upon practical aspects of studying fantasy. The authors write, "the most critical part was developing rapport with the students and convincing them to put their efforts into providing data" (Taylor, Fulcomer, Taylor, 1978, p. 737). The need for rapport suggests that a more personal approach such as interviews would be most effective.

In Streissguth, Wagner, and Weschler's (1969) article the researchers used an earlier form of the IPI and compared psychiatric patients to medical patients and also a control group. They further broke the sample down into inpatients and outpatients among the hospitalized group and examined sex differences. There were 200 participants in total with 20 in each subgroup. The researchers acknowledge that fantasy is often associated with pathology but "the view that daydreaming is in itself pathological is not supported by these data" and "although psychiatric patients report more daydreaming, there is no



evidence from this study to suggest that the process of daydreaming is uniquely associated with mental illness" (Streissguth, Wagner, Weschler, 1969, p. 224).

The statistical results on sex differences are similar to previously mentioned studies. The factor analysis yielded no statistically significant differences between the sexes. However, the trends reported are very different from that of Taylor, Fulcomer, and Taylor. In this article the researchers found that:

The only content scale endorsed significantly more often by women than men is probable daydreams, which includes a selection of rather concrete, practical daydreams such as planning what to cook for dinner or what clothes to wear. Women also tend to score higher than men on a scale of passivity in daydreaming, which include a selection of fairly static, unimaginative, inactive daydreams. (Streissguth, Wagner, Weschler, 1969, p. 220)

Certainly, a great deal of stereotype is embedded in the above description but it also represents completely different findings as evidenced by the trends found about males. The differences are reported as follows:

The primary difference occurs in terms of the action-oriented and imaginative content of men's daydreams compared to the passive, reality-oriented daydreams of women. Men are also more accepting of their daydreams, more emotionally involved and appear to use daydreaming for new approaches to problem solving. (Streissguth, Wagner, Weschler, 1969, p. 221)

The language used in the description of male daydreams is remarkably similar to that used by Taylor, Fulcomer, and Taylor in reference to females (see inset quote above).

Perhaps both descriptions reflect the variation in societal expectations of the sexes but the

most salient point is that sex differences were reported by both. The authors do acknowledge the effect of social desirability on the results but view this as the inherent difficulty in studying fantasy. They comment "it is difficult to imagine any way other than self-reports to measure an individual's daydreaming, so all that would ever be measurable would be reported daydreaming activity" (Streissguth, Wagner, Weschler, 1969, p. 223). This issue will be further discussed in the methodology section of this paper.

Starker and Singer (1975) use the IPI on yet another population of veteran (male) psychiatric patients as they applied to be outpatients. The study differentiated 113 subjects based on their complaints. Depression rated as one of the highest reported complaints. Several conclusions are drawn about the interaction between fantasy and depression.

The authors assert, "the major conclusion to be drawn from the results obtained in this investigation is that self reports of frequency of daydreaming are not directly associated with occurrence of specific psychiatric symptoms (Starker & Singer, 1975, p. 569). However, the "major exception to the general result is the inverse association between positively oriented fantasies and the occurrence of depression" (Starker & Singer, 1975, p. 570). This finding only asserts that the subjects who suffer from depression are not having positive fantasies but does not comment on the relative frequency of negative fantasies. However, the concept of a negative cycle is suggested in that "one's orientation toward the future and one's mode of organization of fantasy may play a significant role in the onset and maintenance of depression" (Starker & Singer, 1975, p. 570).

The researchers also found that there was “an inverse relation between guilt daydreams and depression” (Starker & Singer, 1975, p. 570). There is acknowledgement that this seems contradictory to the presentation styles of many depressed people and the authors urge that it is “worth pursuing in further research” (Starker & Singer, 1975, p. 570). There is also a “strong negative loading appearing for depression” (Starker & Singer, 1975, p. 569) as related to visual imagery. There are no possible explanations offered for such a relationship. The authors conclude by asserting that “the popular views linking fantasy and daydreams to psychopathology must be called into question” (Starker & Singer, 1975, p. 570) which echoes the findings of the authors previously mentioned in this section.

The research presented in “Drugs, Daydreaming, and Personality” represents the culmination of a number of studies performed by Segal, Huber, and Singer (1980). The authors studied a college population with regards to drug use, daydreaming, and personality. The major comparison sought to contrast drug use with the inner life of an individual. More specifically, the “private personality” and daydreaming as factors that are related to drug use. The Imaginal Processes Inventory (IPI) and Personality Research Form (PRF) were the primary instruments of measurement. Additionally, a questionnaire was used to determine drug use. The sample consisted of 1095 college students from two different colleges. Canonical correlations were used to analyze the data.

The researchers propose two possibilities for the interaction between drugs and daydreaming. The first acknowledges the “pathological implications” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 2) of daydreaming and the authors query whether “some individuals will turn to alcohol or other drugs in an attempt to self-medicate, or supplement, such inner

reality” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 2). The other possibility is that “if certain forms of inner experience are adaptive for the individual, drugs may be used to induce desired states of consciousness” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 2).

An analysis of all the studies represented in this book yielded three major patterns of daydreaming. The first pattern is “a more positive, exploratory, and fanciful or playful orientation of thought” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 218). The second is “characterized by a strongly negative affective tone” which “involve speculations about guilty or hostile and aggressive behaviors as well as fantasy expectations of failure” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 218). The last pattern “reflects aspects of mindwandering, distractibility, and boredom, as well as occasional fleeting, frightening, or anxious fantasies” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 218).

The authors suggest that “our findings with respect to reasons for drug use and their relation to private experiences suggest that some patterns of fantasy as well as drugs may be enhancing of positive experiences, whereas others may be indulged in primarily to reduce negative affect” and that “individuals who lack a well-developed capacity for self-entertainment through fantasy ... may be especially susceptible to resorting to drugs or alcohol on a regular basis to reduce negative affect” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 221).

A more specific finding was that “the dysphoric guilt-oriented fantasy dimension seems somewhat more characteristic of males ... and may become the basis for obsessional rumination and depressive moods” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 219).

This finding contrasts other previously mentioned researchers who found minimal differences between the sexes or an opposite effect. The authors cite the work of Starker

who “summarizes other research that calls attention to the fact that the guilty-dysphoric pattern of daydreaming may create a cycle of depressive response to the point in which, without the alternative of positive fantasy that may break up and change the mood, the ultimate resolution may have to be the intervention of ‘mood elevating drugs, psychotherapy and social systems’” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 220).

The authors also cite the ideas of Bandura to assert that “a preventive approach, we believe, must include at least some systematic efforts for enhancing the ability of children and adolescents to employ their own imaginative potential for planning, playful fantasy, and the development of imagery of self efficacy” (Segal, Huber, & Singer, 1980, p. 221). The implication is that fantasy could be used as a tool in the prevention of substance abuse and holds inherently therapeutic value that should be encouraged.

A unique approach to daydreaming is presented by Eric Mueller (1990) who merges daydreaming and computers together. Originally, this book was a dissertation in the field of Computer Science. The concept of the project was to create a computer program capable of producing human daydreams. Inherent to the project is an analysis and understanding of daydreaming processes and behaviours.

A major impetus for the study of daydreams rather than other phenomenon is the pervasive and practical nature of the activity. The author asserts “the fundamental hypothesis of our work is that daydreaming is useful for humans” (Mueller, 1990, p. 6). More specifically, daydreams facilitate “learning from imagined experiences”, “creative problem solving”, and “useful interactions with emotions” (Mueller, 1990, p. 6).

Mueller also explores practical applications for the DAYDREAMER program that are based on the hypotheses mentioned above. The transformation from reality to fantasy is

the key concept. He states “daydreaming often explores possibilities which are unrealistic or fanciful at first glance, but which can sometimes be incrementally modified into realistic, useful solutions to problems” (Mueller, 1990, p.12). The DAYDREAMER program is also a potential tool for research and “could eventually be employed as a model to test various strategies for treating depression and for investigating the processes that might lead to depression” (Mueller, 1990, p. 269). Despite working from a computer science perspective, Mueller’s ideas are consistent with other literature about fantasy and demonstrate some of the potential therapeutic possibilities that fantasy holds. His integration of fantasy and computer science is surprising in both form and what it is capable of revealing.

The literature on fantasy and daydreaming is diverse yet there are several commonalities which can be broken down into themes. These themes are relevant to the study of the interaction between fantasy and depression, supporting the need for further study. The following is a list of conclusions that can be drawn from the literature:

1. Fantasy has function.
2. Fantasy in itself is not an indicator of pathology.
3. Sex differences were found in relation to fantasy.
4. There is therapeutic potential in that fantasy is directly related to reality.
5. Fantasy may contribute to depression or may also help alleviate it.

Each author or researcher adds their own flavour to these basic themes but they essentially remain true across the breadth of the literature. More importantly, the research supports the parameters set in this study, a female adolescent population. There is also support for the possibility of both a negative or positive interaction between fantasy and

depression. The therapeutic possibilities of fantasy will be explored in the conclusions for this study.

The literature on fantasy is limited in several ways. Foremost, is the lack of current research as the theories regarding fantasy date back to the 1970's. Secondly, the research is almost exclusively quantitative with the exception of some anecdotes. Lastly, the phenomenon of recurring fantasy is not fully explored except for some personal recollections by Singer. The literature on fantasy needs to be updated and is ripe for further study. The qualitative study presented here will serve to fill some of these gaps and provide a fresh perspective on the pervasive problem of depression.

### Theories of Depression

The literature on depression presented in this section represents the most current findings and relevant theoretical perspectives. Literature which links fantasy to depression appears to be non-existent at this point. However, parallels can be drawn and subtle allusions made to a relationship between fantasy and depression.

Ruminative thoughts are one aspect of depression that can be linked to fantasy. Ruminative thoughts are defined as "a class of conscious thoughts that revolve around a common instrumental theme and that recur in the absence of immediate environmental demands requiring the thoughts" (Martin & Tesser, 1996, p. 1). This definition is strikingly similar to definitions of fantasy previously mentioned. The common aspect being that the thoughts occurring do not directly relate to a current stimulus or activity. The line between ruminative thoughts and fantasy is not distinct. In fact, Eric Klinger and Jerome L. Singer's work on fantasy is referenced throughout the chapter and similarities can be seen between rumination and fantasy in definition, function and relation to affect.

In terms of function the authors state “rumination occurs only when the rate of progress [towards a goal] is not what the person expects it to be (i.e., is faster or slower)” (Martin & Tesser, 1996, p. 4). The concept of “goal attainment” can also be seen in the literature on fantasy (see Klinger, Freud etc.). Furthermore, rumination can involve “any kind of content” and “people can ruminate about positive content or about negative content” (Martin & Tesser, 1996, p. 9).

The authors assert, “rumination and affect are correlated” (Martin & Tesser, 1996, p. 17). Specifically, they posit that “the more intense the affect (especially negative affect), the greater the rumination” (Martin & Tesser, 1996, p. 17) and that the “rumination merely maintains or polarizes feelings that are already present” (Martin & Tesser, 1996, p. 18). The influence of negative affect may contribute to rumination in that “people in negative moods may perceive more discrepancies and hence experience more rumination than people in positive moods” (Martin & Tesser, 1996, p. 18). This is similar but somewhat opposite to the idea of negative fantasies perpetuating a cycle of depression.

Aaron T. Beck has made major contributions to the field of depression which have included books, research articles and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI). In an attempt to define depression he refers to the “paradox” of depression whereby the depressed person has a distorted view of herself which is opposed by “objective evidence” (Beck, 1970, p. 3). His elaborations on a definition of depression don’t focus into a succinct definition. Instead he opens up the discussion into the symptoms of depression as a basis for understanding the phenomena. He divides these manifestations into the four major categories of Emotional, Cognitive, Motivational, and Vegetative and Physical. These major categories are then broken down further into more concrete symptoms such as



“negative feelings toward self”, “distortion of body image”, “suicidal wishes”, and “sleep disturbance” (Beck, 1970).

One subcategory of Motivational manifestations is “avoidance, escapist and withdrawal wishes”. Beck describes, “the depressed individual regards his duties as dull, meaningless, or burdensome and wants to escape to an activity that offers relaxation or refuge” (Beck, 1970, p. 29). The idea of “wishes” echoes Freud’s concept of daydreams as wish fulfillment and the view that daydreams were evidence of pathology. Beck presents anecdotal examples, using the term “daydreams”, which illustrate mild, moderate and severe manifestations. He notes that the most severe of these escapist wishes is suicide as “the patient feels a strong desire to end his life as a way of escaping from a situation he regards as intolerable” (Beck, 1970, p. 30).

The “paradox” of depression is revisited later in the book and Beck (1970) suggests a “triad” of “three major cognitive patterns that force the individual to view himself, his world, and his future in a idiosyncratic way” (p. 255). This triad consists of “construing experiences in a negative way”, “viewing himself in a negative way”, and “viewing the future in a negative way” (Beck, 1970, p. 255). In the final pages of the book Beck explicitly advocates the use of “fantasy induction” as a means to combat negative cognitive interpretations. He states, “some depressed patients report spontaneous fantasies (daydreams), which have gloomy content such as deprivation, personal inadequacy, and thwarting” (Beck, 1970, p. 329). He cites an example where the patient has a fantasy of a common scenario of grocery shopping which she elaborated into an experience that was humiliating. Beck (1970) notes, “the patient experienced intense humiliation as though the fantasied event was occurring in reality” (p. 329). He had the

patient imagine the scene again and “by having the patient repeat the depressive fantasy during the therapy session, the therapist can help him gain greater objectivity towards the actual real life situation” (Beck, 1970, pp. 329-330). The patient was then able to change the way she imagined the scenario and see the distortions of her original fantasy.

This form of “rehearsal” is noted in the literature on fantasy as adaptive and may help to break the cycle of negativity. Beck (1970) concludes the book by saying:

By examining his gloomy fantasies, the patient is able to loosen their grip on him, to reality test them, and to consider more favourable outcomes. Moreover, the induction of pleasant fantasies helps to neutralize his sadness and pessimism. (p. 330)

The implication is that negative fantasies may contribute to depression but fantasy can also be used as a therapeutic intervention in working with an individual.

A feminist social constructionist point of view offers a different vantage point on depression and women. This approach seeks to understand the context and construction of the concept of depression. Stoppard (2000) seeks to conceptualize depression in three distinct ways that “depends to a large extent on the context in which it is used” and “who is using the word” (p. 6). She uses the term “depressive disorder” to define depression from the point of view of mental health professionals and researchers. Similarly, the term “depressive symptoms” delineates depression when ascribed by clinical researchers using a questionnaire. Finally, the term depressive experiences is used “when discussing the way women describe experiences they call depression, as subjectively experienced in the context of their everyday lives” (Stoppard, 2000, p. 10). She reserves the term depression to be used “in a non-specific way to refer to the general topic of depression” (Stoppard,

2000, p. 10). However, the definition of these terms is offered for the sake of clarity rather than as an answer to a definition. Instead, Stoppard spends a number of pages exploring the concept of depression from multiple perspectives, which serves to expose the complexity and opens up the discussion of a definition rather than narrowing it.

Stoppard addresses the issue of depression in adolescence and identifies several contributing factors. She comments on the concept of adolescence as embedded in culture and society positing that “these experiences also are interwoven with cultural beliefs about adolescence and expectations about appropriate behavior for adolescents, which can at times create a confusing mix for teenage girls to contend with” (Stoppard, 2000, p. 126). She describes the difficulties faced by adolescent girls in the following excerpt:

Gender takes on a more prominent place, and other’s reactions are more frequently structured by cultural discourses around female bodies. While young women become more aware of their bodies as they experience pubertal changes, their attention focuses increasingly on their own appearance as a result of peer (especially male) reactions. These peer reactions both enforce gendered assumptions about the female body and femininity and serve to “discipline” young women who show signs of straying from their culturally prescribed gender domain. (Stoppard, 2000, p. 132)

She notes that research has shown that females appear to be more vulnerable to depression and argues for a “woman centred approach” for studying depression (Stoppard 2000). Stoppard (2000) states that:

From a feminist perspective, therefore, an important implication of this social constructionist epistemology is that knowledge is likely to be more valid and useful for women, if it is generated from the standpoint of women. (p. 16)

More specifically, Stoppard (2000) advocates for the use of qualitative methods and in particular interviews as “a focus on verbal accounts also provides an avenue for exploring subjectivity, which includes a woman’s sense of self or identity and how she understands and explains depression and her depressive experiences” (p. 37).

### Research on Depression

Brightman uses classic behavioural techniques as a means to investigate the concept that depression may lead to increased helplessness. The study draws largely upon the work of Bandura and Seligman respectively. The sample consists of 40 depressed subjects and 40 non-depressed subjects. All of the subjects were taking a course on human behaviour and were 17-18 years of age. The Beck Depression Inventory was initially used to assign participants to the depressed or non-depressed groups and the Self-Rating Depression Scale “was used as a post-experimental check on the validity of the group administered BDI” (Brightman, 1990, p. 443).

The participants were further divided into the helpless and nonhelpless groups as well as control groups. The actual procedures are somewhat convoluted in written form but the experiment involved an aversive noise, a red light, and buttons that may or may not have controlled anything. The design is reminiscent of Pavlov and involved two phases where in the second phase the noise was avoidable with the correct response (this response remained the same throughout the second phase). The purpose of the study is “to test the hypothesis that individuals with depression who are exposed to uncontrollable aversive

noise will perform worse on a different task (learned helplessness) than non-depressed individuals exposed to the same uncontrollable situation” (Brightman, 1990, p. 442).

The results yielded several interesting findings. The researcher found that the “helplessness in Phase 1 disrupted the coping behavior (effort/persistence, problem solving) of subjects in the D [depressed] group but not those in the ND [non-depressed] group in phase 2” (Brightman, 1990, p. 447). Specifically, 60% of the depressed subjects who had previously been in the “helpless” category in Phase 1 failed to solve the solvable Phase 2 problem, whereas in their non-depressed counterparts (“helpless” category in Phase 1) 30% did not solve the Phase 2 problem. The researcher comments “while exposure to uncontrollable events produced lower levels of perceived control for subjects in both the D and ND groups, such a perception *specifically* disrupted the D group subjects’ capacity to master a subsequent controllable situation” (Brightman, 1990, p. 447).

It is important to note the limitations of this experiment as it occurred in a controlled artificial environment. Additionally, there was no effort made to explore the participant’s perceptions of the task and experiment. However the results indicate that further study may be warranted. The author postulates that “a specific vulnerability in depressed adolescents to suffering a decline in adaptive coping following exposure to uncontrollable aversive events ... can produce a negative feedback loop of further failure and a deepening sense of hopelessness and despair” (Brightman, 1990, p. 448). The ideas of a “depressive cycle” and “adaptive coping” can also be seen in the literature on fantasy and suggest a common theme which may relate fantasy to depression.

A recent study (2000) that examined predictors of adolescent depression used a longitudinal approach. The sample “consisted of 274 participants who had experienced and recovered from an episode of major depressive disorder by age 19” (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, p. 1585). The researchers used “diagnostic interviews” to obtain data from both the participants and “first degree relatives over the age of 13” (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, p. 1585).

Initially the participants were interviewed “with a version of the Schedule for Affective Disorders and Schizophrenia for School-Age Children (K-SADS) (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, pp. 1585-1586) and then followed up twice using “the Longitudinal Interval Follow-up Evaluation (16), which elicited detailed information about the course of psychiatric symptoms and disorders since the previous interview” (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, p. 1586). Family members were interviewed using associated structured interview tools at the time of the first interview for subjects. Additionally, “an extensive battery of psychosocial measures was administered at time 1 to all participants” (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, p. 1586). The researchers also examined four “demographic characteristics” which consisted of “1) gender; 2) family intactness, 3) highest parental education within the household, which was included as a proxy measure of socio-economic status; and 4) ethnicity” (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, p. 1586).

Due to the extensive nature of the study there were multiple findings. In terms of factors contributing to the recurrence of depressive episode the researchers found that “multiple depressive episodes in adolescence, a family history of recurrent major depressive disorder, borderline personality disorder symptoms, and, for females only, increased conflict with parents” (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, p. 1589). The study also

identified several other factors that were common amongst those individuals who had a recurrence of “psychiatric problems”. These included “more severe depressive episodes”, “elevated stress, conflict and interpersonal dependency”, “elevated rate of substance use disorder”, and family history of major depressive disorder (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, p. 1589). The authors caution that those most at risk are “female adolescents (especially those who experience high conflict with parents), adolescents with multiple major depressive disorder episodes, and adolescents with a family history of recurrent depression” (Lewinsohn et al., 2000, p. 1590).

While the previous study examined factors correlated to a recurrence in depressive episodes, a study by Milne and Lancaster attempted to examine predictors of depressive episodes in adolescent females. Their aim was to “demonstrate how parental representations, parent attachment, separation-individuation, interpersonal concerns, and self-critical concerns can be combined to predict symptoms of depression in female adolescents” (Milne & Lancaster, 2001, p. 210). The participants were asked to complete 5 psychometric tests related to the constructs previously mentioned. There were 59 female participants who ranged in age from 14-16 years and participation was voluntary.

Through statistical analysis using SPSS the researchers were able to identify several statistically significant factors that could be used as a “predictor” of depression. Essentially, the previously mentioned factors correlated with depression but further study is indicated in order to truly call these factors “predictors” as the researchers have done here. However, the researchers concluded, “symptoms of depression were predicted by interpersonal concerns, self-critical concerns, and parent and peer attachment” (Milne & Lancaster, 2001, p. 215). Based on these findings they postulate that:

...adolescent females are more vulnerable to symptoms of depression when they perceive low levels of maternal care, experience feelings of dependency, experience self-criticism, experience feelings of guilt, have poor attachments to parents, or have poor attachments to peers. (Milne & Lancaster, 2001, p. 218)

It is important to note that this model is based on correlations and the authors acknowledge, "there is no guarantee that the causal links in the model are reflective of the actual situation" (Milne & Lancaster, 2001, p. 220).

Unlike many other studies that use gender as one of several variables, a Canadian study by Baron and Campbell (1993) explicitly examines "gender differences in the expression of depressive symptoms among the same nonclinical sample over time" (p. 904). The study is grounded in the idea that "individuals may learn to express their psychological distress in gender-appropriate ways" (Baron & Campbell, 1993, p. 903).

The sample consisted of 98 females and 55 males ages 14-16 years of age from a Francophone community. Translated versions of the Beck Depression Inventory and the Reynolds Adolescent Scale were administered at "two time points, approximately one year apart" (Baron & Campbell, 1993, p. 904). The data was analyzed using "Discriminant Function Analysis" as this was deemed best suited to the task of examining the differences between males and females.

The results showed that there was a statistically significant difference between males and females with depression as measured by the BDI and RADS. The analysis revealed that the "primary discriminators" in the BDI were loss of appetite, fatigue, weight loss, sad mood, and suicidal ideation and that "females scored higher on each of these items" (Baron & Campbell, 1993, p. 906). Females also scored higher on the discriminators of



the RADS which consisted of sad mood, stomach-aches, and self-deprecation. The authors conclude that:

...females continue to have higher mean scores on all discriminating items. These findings, based on a nonclinical sample, support the view that depressive symptoms are more characteristic of females. (Baron & Campbell, 1993, p. 907)

The authors also make the statement that "the phenomenon of depression is conceptually similar to the female role in Western society" (Baron & Campbell, 1993, p. 908). There are several possibilities which may include inherent bias of depression measurement scales, differences in symptomatology between males and females, differences in societal expectations for males and females. There are many possibilities and the researchers do mention gender roles by stating that "females may be more prone to expressing depressive symptoms, but when overall depression scores are high, both males and females express symptoms characteristic of their socially prescribed gender roles" (Baron & Campbell, 1993, p. 908). The findings in this article clearly support the concept of gender differences and in particular the differences in symptomatology between males and females.

Imagination specifically plays a role in a study done by Schonert-Reichl (1994) that examines "gender differences in the relationship between depressive symptomatology and the imaginary audience and personal fable constructs" (p. 49). "Imaginary audience" is defined as "the adolescents belief that everyone is as concerned about the adolescent's behavior as she or he is" and the related construct of "personal fable" is explained as "if everyone is concerned with the adolescent, then the adolescent must be a very important

and special individual” (Schonert-Reichl, 1994, p. 50). Certainly, fantasy is a part of these constructs as they pertain to elevated perceptions that are not based in reality.

The sample consisted of 30 males and 32 females ages 12-17 years and had been “selected”(there is no further explanation) from a public high school. The measures consisted of a demographic questionnaire, Reynolds Adolescent Depression Scale (RADs), Imaginary Audience Scale (IAS), and The New Personal Fable Scale (NPFS). As part of the analysis of the data the age groups were broken down into “early adolescents (12 through 14 years of age) and middle adolescents (15 through 17 years of age)” (Schonert-Reichl, 1994, p. 56).

There were several findings that emerged out of this research. The author summarizes her findings as follows:

- (a) Adolescent females regard themselves higher in uniqueness and self consciousness than adolescent males;
  - (b) social class as measures by father’s educational level significantly relates to adolescent egocentrism, and the nature of this relationship is determined by one’s gender; and
  - (c) gender differences emerge with respect to the relationship between dimensions of adolescent egocentrism and depressive symptomatology.
- (Schonert-Reichl, 1994, p. 60).

From a statistical perspective the gender differences were not significant. However, several trends can be related to gender. It was found that “females from higher SES homes feel a diminished sense of their own uniqueness, omnipotence, and invulnerability [personal fable]” and “are more self-conscious of the way they appear in public

[imaginary audience]" (Schonert-Reichl, 1994, p. 60). It is concluded that "the imaginary audience is positively related to depression for females" and more generally that "*higher* levels of personal fable are associated with *lower* levels of depressive symptoms" (Schonert-Reichl, 1994, p. 61). Hence, the author posits that personal fable as a "dimension of adolescent egocentrism may be a protective factor against depressive symptoms" (Schonert-Reichl, 1994, p. 61). Again, this can be likened to the literature on fantasy which posits that a realistic stance on life may not actually be adaptive and perhaps elements of fantasy or grandiosity protect the individual.

The literature on depression provides several important pieces of information for this study. First, the theories and research on depression are based in cognitions. The impact of distorted thinking can be seen in the theory on ruminative thought, learned helplessness, cognitive therapy techniques, and deconstruction. In contrast, cognitive coping can be seen in the concept of "personal fable".

Secondly, there is growing evidence for sex differences in the rates of depression and the manifestation of symptoms. Many of the studies did yield statistically significant results on this point. However, the other studies were able to suggest patterns evidenced from the statistics yielded and provide complementary qualitative evidence. Depression as embedded in feminine constructs also surfaced in the literature. A feminist perspective puts emphasis on society's influence in the construction of depression. Hence, depression emerges as a "gendered" problem.

There is no direct exploration of the interaction between fantasy and depression. However, there is subtle and implied evidence for such a relationship. Fantasy, like depression, is based in cognitions. The concept of a depressive cycle and recurrence of

depression is a common theme in the literature on depression. Both the cognitive aspect of depression and the link to negative thought patterns can be related to the literature on fantasy. The question of how fantasy and depression interact with one another has not been explored in the literature on depression yet there is evidence that supports such an inquiry.

Furthermore, there are still gaps in the literature on depression itself despite the prolific amount of research thus far. Qualitative and postmodern perspectives are still lacking in the research. The study presented in this paper will also examine depression from the perspective of adolescent females. This is another area that has been overlooked somewhat despite the evidence for sex differences and the emergence of depression in adolescence.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

The question of how depression and fantasy interact served as a guide for the methodology chosen for this study. The study documents and makes meaning out of the interaction between recurring fantasy narratives and a period of depression during adolescence in the life of a female. The research question presented sought a deeper level of understanding of fantasy and depression, providing descriptive information but also showing the relationship between these two forces. Qualitative methodology suited this purpose as it allowed an exploration of this interaction within a detailed and personal context. Specifically, the interaction between fantasy and depression was explored while allowing the participant to reflect upon her own experiences.

The theoretical framework for the study was narrative and the methodology chosen was case study using the qualitative interview. There were several sources that guided the methodology and these include narrative theory, and Kvale's (1996) writing on qualitative interviewing.

Narrative theory was intrinsically well suited to this study of fantasy. Narrative theory suggests that "persons organize and give meaning to their experience through the storying of the experience" (White, 1990, p. 12) and within the narrative context there is no one objective truth (White 1990, Monk, 1998, Smith & Nylund 1997). Instead "knowledge is socially or consensually constructed" (Smith & Nylund, 1997, p. 5) and "sociocultural and contextual factors are emphasized" (Smith & Nylund, 1997 p. 4). Within this context, the narrative researcher strives to "adopt a curious, 'puzzling together' posture" (Smith & Nylund, 1997, p. 4) rather than that of the expert who will provide answers. Co-

construction was central to this narrative process of doing the research. Monk addresses the important role of language stating that “the emphasis is on the constitutive function that language plays in the way it produces human experience” (Monk, 1998, p. 1).

The vocabulary of narrative theory as well as its principles are also present in the literature on fantasy. The constructivist nature of narrative can be seen in Klinger’s (1990) work on fantasy:

From literary fantasies to daydreams, then, our imaginations employ both our real selves and other possible selves that we have learned to know by experiencing them in others, in media portrayals, in the ideals held out to us by society, and sometimes by our own creative ideas of what might be possible for us. (p. 161)

Fantasy and daydreams can be considered one example of how people inherently use “stories” in their lives to make meaning and understand their world. Klinger (1990) describes it as follows:

Our daydreams have a certain flow and movement, a setting, sound and colour, action, and often, like a story, a plot and outcome. All of these are our own creations, and their specific details tell us a lot about ourselves, including some things we might not otherwise have realized. (p. 126)

Fantasy inherently uses stories as a means of expression. Thus, narrative with its emphasis on stories is inherently well suited to an exploration of fantasy in people’s lives. The narrative perspective also empowers individuals to take control of their stories through processes such as deconstruction so that these stories can be changed or seen from a different perspective.

The narrative ideal of therapeutic conversations can easily be transformed into a methodology for research. Kvale (1996) posits that “interviews are particularly suited for studying people’s understandings of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world” (p. 105). His approach to interviews emphasizes “the quality rather than the quantity of the interviews” (Kvale, 1996, p. 103).

The interview itself consisted of two sessions of approximately 2-3 hours each. The interview process allowed the participant of this study to not only document but also explore the meaning of her experiences with fantasy and depression. The researcher collaborated with the participant in creating this knowledge in the form of a narrative. Such an approach can be considered “postmodern” as it “focuses on interrelations in an interview, on the social construction of reality in an interview, on its linguistic and interactional aspects including the differences between oral discourse and written text, and emphasizes the narratives constructed by the interview” (Kvale, 1996, p. 38).

The construction of the narratives allowed for multiple perspectives without imposing a search for an objective truth. The interview utilized the technique of creating a “lifeline” (see Appendix A). Typically, the lifeline is used as a narrative tool in therapy. In this study it provided a structure for the interview. The lifeline helped to organize the story but it also allowed for a progression of meaning. The first level of meaning centred on the temporal aspects and created a framework. The process continued to reach toward deeper meanings as it went on and as trust and insight were developed. During the research interview the lifeline provided structure to the interview itself but it also made the concept of the narrative or “story” an explicit part of the process. A large piece of

paper was used to create the lifeline and this process supported a sense of collaboration as both the researcher and the participant physically created the lifeline. The lifeline was also used as a part of the “externalizing” process.

The concept of externalizing has become central to narrative technique (White 1990) and allows the individual to gain perspective and control over their “stories”. White (1990) describes that in the externalizing process “the problem becomes a separate entity and thus external to the person or the relationship that was ascribed as the problem” (p. 38). Therefore a person is not seen as a depressed person but instead she is a person who is struggling with the problem of depression. This simple shift allows the individual to attack the problem without blaming themselves or being hindered by feelings of guilt. The language and approach used in the interview was guided by the externalizing process.

### Participant

The participant for this study was a female who was 27 years of age at the time of the interview. The case study examined her life up until the time of the interview with a focus on her experiences in adolescence. The lapse between the age of the participant now and the focus on adolescence allowed for more insight and openness while minimizing other affective states such as embarrassment.

The participant was asked to reflect on an episode of depression that occurred during adolescence. The “diagnosis” of depression was self-identified and based on the criteria given by the researcher. The criteria for depression was that it endured for a period of at least six months and the DSM-IV criteria for Dysthymic disorder was used “loosely” as a guideline. Individuals who were currently experiencing suicidal ideation, severe



depression or feeling fragile were excluded from this study for ethical reasons. If the participant had disclosed that she was experiencing suicidal ideation or needed further help then a list of qualified counselling resources in her community would have been provided.

The fantasies of the participant were recurrent in nature and for the purposes of this study recurrent fantasies were defined as occurring more than four times in a six month period. The participant was asked to record as much as she could remember about the recurrent fantasy prior to being interviewed. The participant was prepared for this task by the researcher, who explained the process of the study and provided an excerpt from Singer (1974, pp. 13-64) in order to normalize the experience as much as possible. The researcher also explored how the participant felt about participating in the study in order to build rapport and neutralize any feelings of embarrassment about sharing private thoughts about her previous fantasies.

### Procedures

The study consisted of four parts. Prior to engagement in the research process, ethical approval was obtained. The researcher became aware of the participant through word of mouth and invited her to participate. A brief screening process via telephone and e-mail determined that the participant was appropriate for the study, also providing more information so that she was able to determine that she wanted to be involved. The screening interview took 15-30 minutes. The criteria that was covered are as follows:

- Current age
- Age of onset for depressive episode
- Self-diagnosis using DSM-IV criteria

- Current mental health status (i.e. no suicidal ideation, not in crisis)
- Recurring fantasies during depression
- Willingness to talk about experiences
- Ability to commit to the time frame

After this initial screening an orientation was given via the phone due to the participant living in another province. The orientation session included some information about daydreaming aimed at minimizing any stigma and more detailed information about the study itself. Informed consent was obtained from the participant. As a part of informed consent the participant was told that she could decide not to continue participation at any time and for any reason. The written material from the participant about her recurring fantasies was sent via e-mail for convenience, prior to the interview. The participant was also briefed on the structure of the interview and the amount of time that the study required of her (i.e., approximately 4-5 hours).

The interview used open-ended questions (see Appendix C) and took place in the participant's apartment. Initially, the participant was asked about the experience of writing about her daydreams. This was intended to build rapport with her and slowly open up the topic. Kvale (1996) recommends briefing and debriefing with the participant as part of the interview process. The briefing allowed for the participant to ask questions and build rapport with the researcher. At the completion of the interview a similar debriefing process occurred regarding the process of the interview itself.

The next phase of the interview was to create a lifeline representing the participant's life up until the present. Researcher and participant co-created this lifeline on a large piece of paper. The lifeline represented not only a chronology of the individual's life but

also her perceptions, feelings and relationships. The purpose was to provide a context for the depression and also the fantasy. The lifeline was reviewed and debriefed with the participant before moving on to the next phase.

Throughout the interview open-ended questions were used to focus the participant on experiences of depression. Questions were also utilized in exploring the impact of the recurring fantasies, and towards the end of the interview the relationship between fantasy and depression. This was a collaborative effort between participant and researcher. The researcher also clarified and verified information and thoughts as the interview progressed (Kvale, 1996, pp. 132-135).

As part of the debriefing at the end of the interview the participant was asked to review the work done and time was provided to ask questions, make clarifications or make changes to the work. The researcher also invited the participant to ask questions and explore the process of the research and any impact it may have had. The researcher provided the participant a draft of her written narrative for verification. After the participant read the narrative and suggested changes, the researcher changed the narrative accordingly.

### Analysis

Upon the completion of the interview the narratives were analyzed using Arvay's (2002) narrative method. The transcript was read four times each time with a different purpose. The first reading focused on the content of the transcript and was read for "coherence concerning the content of the research interview" (Arvay, 2002, p. 216). The second reading examined the transcript from the narrator's position with the purpose being "to bring to light the ways in which the participant constructs herself in the text"

(Arvay, 2002, p. 216). The third reading grounded the transcript back into the research question and involved a process of making meaning. Arvay (2002) stresses that this involves multiple layers of meaning making as the reader moves from the “story-as-told” to other possible interpretations of the meanings constructed in narrating lived experience. The last reading focused on issues of “power and culture” that were embedded in the construction of the narrative.

The narratives were written using what Yin (1984) terms a “chronological structure” (p. 131). The framework of the lifeline during the interview provided this temporal structure while the analysis phase provided a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the narrative.

The narrative produced was evaluated in terms of the qualitative standards of beneficence, coherence, and resonance. The issue of beneficence is addressed in a number of ways. In an immediate sense the participant benefited from the therapeutic value of the interview. In a broader sense, the field of counselling will benefit from the knowledge and interventions that result. This knowledge will be communicated either in written form (i.e. a journal article) or orally (i.e. presentations). The issue of coherence was met by having the participant read and comment on the narrative produced, as described earlier in this section by means of a member’s check. A check for resonance will be achieved through peer review of the narratives using “experts” in the field of counselling who are knowledgeable about depression.

The research provided a greater understanding of both fantasy and depression as well as filling some of the gaps in the literature. In particular, it explored depression from a narrative stance and updates and further explores our concepts about fantasy and

daydreaming. This exploration of the relationship between fantasy and depression also points to therapeutic techniques that can be used for the evaluation and treatment of depression.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

#### Julie's Narrative

##### Early Years and Parental Influence

Julie's life began in 1975, in London, England. Her mother had been chronically ill since she had been a teenager and Julie was born 3 weeks prematurely. The family was in England at that time while her father completed a Ph.D. and moved back to Ontario upon completion of the degree. Her cultural and religious heritage is Jewish and was an active part of her upbringing.

Many of Julie's childhood memories involve her parents yelling at her. She described it as a common occurrence. The yelling occurred for a variety of reasons including losing something, wanting to play with her friends, or doing something "wrong". Julie often felt that the reasons they yelled at her were unfair or simply did not understand why she was being yelled at. She also felt like she was made to feel "stupid" when her parents yelled at her for doing something wrong.

One occasion at three years old was particularly traumatic. Her parents wouldn't let her get up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom and usually yelled at her if she needed to go. She needed to pee very badly and had tried to hold it for a while before she decided to try to sneak to the bathroom. Her parents caught her and yelled at her and made her stand in the corner of her room in the dark. She was crying and scared. She cried until they let her go to the bathroom. Standing in the corner was not a usual punishment but yelling and spankings were.

Julie also recalled another incident of yelling at about four years old. The incident revolved around Julie accidentally throwing a smurf figurine up a tree. As they were yelling at her she can remember thinking to herself, "it was just an accident" and "I didn't try to hurt you guys by throwing this in the tree". It was at about that time that she started to piece together that her parents expected her to be somehow perfect. She never felt like she measured up to their standards and commented that she felt that "the love was conditional on me being perfect, and that I was never perfect, and therefore they'd never love me". This realization upset her very much and her imaginary world began to evolve during this period.

Her first memory of her fantasy life occurred after her mother had been yelling at her. She imagined that the TV character Mr. Rogers came to talk to her and introduced her to all of his TV friends. Mr. Rogers also validated how Julie was feeling. He told her that she had been right and that her mother was wrong. She described that the encounter made her feel better and said that she had been crying until he came to "console" her.

Julie "stepped through" a door with Mr. Rogers and entered a "new world". This imaginary world was full of TV characters as well as other characters that she made up. She believes that she started having imaginary friends to "escape" from her parents yelling at her all the time. The fantasy also helped her to feel less lonely as an only child because it provided her with "playmates" when there was no one to play with.

Later, she had "superhero" fantasies that initially involved a friend from Kindergarten. Together they were the two heroes who were on a TV show and would solve crime. Every night when Julie went to bed she would imagine, but also act out, the fantasies. At

one point in her fantasies she became a "superhero" whose parents had been shot by robbers on her fifth birthday. She described the fantasies from this period in more detail:

I imagined that I could fly over the city and carry people on my back (but not without seatbelts that were built into me). People loved to go for rides, either for crime battling purposes or just joy rides. I also had mental telepathy and x-ray vision, and with all of these things, I would keep the world safe. I was the smartest person in the whole world, and I kept telling all of the other people that they were just as smart as me, but they weren't trying. I could do anything I put my mind to—sing the best, dance the best, run the fastest, etc. There was an "announcer" in this world who sat on a cloud with a P.A. system like the one at school. He made announcements about crime, me, and other things. I started to go up to the cloud to make my own announcements from time to time. I took on new adventures every night. Usually they were in sequence and would follow whatever happened the night before...I would see something on TV and I would add it to my world, either a character, or a problem to solve, or a new situation. Often it would be a continuation of the show...only with myself added in. For example, I became very fond of solving "Scooby Doo" mysteries. I'd often lead a group of other "children" to prove to them that they were not useless, that children could do anything...they learned a lot from me.

When she was about 4 or 5 years old another event occurred which Julie carried with her into her university years. Her mother was pregnant and an incident occurred where the oven was smoking and burning. Julie was unaware of what was going on at the time. She had been watching cartoons and her mom just started yelling at her, telling her to get



out of the house. She didn't understand what was happening and her mother had to "drag" her out of the house. A few months later her mother had a miscarriage. Julie recalls her mother blaming her for the miscarriage: "she was crying and I asked what was wrong and she yelled at me and said it was my fault because I didn't get out of the house in time".

Years later while in therapy during university, Julie approached her mom about the incident. Her mother's response was dismissive saying that she was "just blaming anyone". Her mother's response didn't release Julie from feeling guilty and she continued to carry a "burden of guilt". Julie's feelings of guilt and responsibility went beyond this incident into her life later. She described it as follows: "I always felt like everything was my responsibility and everything was my fault and if anything went wrong it was because of me".

There was also a shift in her personality at about this same time. She described herself as "outgoing and very assertive" up until about grade one. After that point she became "meek". Also, in the first few years of school Julie began to be labeled as a "crybaby". She was teased for various reasons including mocking her last name or being short for her age. She responded by becoming very upset and crying. In addition to the teasing and sometimes bullying, she didn't have very many friends. Her imaginary world helped her cope with feelings of sadness and not feeling good about herself.

The yelling at home also continued throughout her childhood and adolescence. She found some sense of control in purposely doing things wrong. She knew that her parents would yell at her for something so if she did something wrong on purpose she wouldn't have to deal with the element of surprise and would gain some control and power in the

situation. Examples of this passive-aggressive approach were things like setting the table wrong or leaving an empty bag of milk in the fridge. She commented that “whenever I tried to be perfect, there’s always something I didn’t do right that they were upset about...they would never talk about the things I did right, they’d only talk about the things I did wrong”.

As mentioned earlier, she felt like she had to be the “perfect girl”, and more specifically she felt like her parent’s lives revolved around her. She commented on the pressure she felt, saying: “they were completely living through me so I had to be exactly perfect”. Sometimes Julie would make an effort to try to be this “perfect girl”. She knew that her parents cared “a lot of what other people thought of [her] and thought of them”. She would often “try” in front of other people like the friends of her parents and they would make comments like “She’s such an angel.” Her parents would quickly negate these positive comments.

Generally, Julie doesn’t remember many positive interactions with her parents. She does remember some happy times when she was younger and her dad would play with her. Things were also somewhat happy when she watched TV with her parents or they played board games together. She commented that: “I remember things were OK when I tried to do exactly what they told me to do and then they’d be happier”. The only positive feedback from her parents that she can remember came when she brought home “good grades”. During this time she commented that she only sometimes knew that she was loved. However, most of the time in her younger years she said that she doesn’t “really remember feeling loved too much”.

The same negativity was also present in the way that Julie's parents interacted with each other. She remembers them often fighting and insulting each other, and only occasionally showing affection for one another. However, their relationship seemed to work for them. Julie described their relationship saying:

I think they couldn't imagine it any other way. I think they grew up that way and I don't think they know how to be with people in a different way. I don't think they can imagine being without each other ... in a twisted way they like it.

Despite the negative tone of their relationship, Julie also described that they would go out and do "nice things" together such as going to concerts or more recently taking up bridge together.

During her childhood Julie describes her dad as a "workaholic" and said that her mom always has things to do. Sometimes they would play with her but often they were busy and she felt somewhat ignored. She felt as though they were either yelling at her or ignoring her. She remembers craving attention from her teachers and adults in general.

However, she said that it was "great" for her imaginary world when no one was paying attention to her. Also, she would get into trouble at the dinner table because she would go off into her head instead of participating in the conversations at dinner that she found to be very boring. She commented: "I just kind of learned to daydream a lot and even now, if things are boring it doesn't bother me because I just naturally daydream".

At the dinner table Julie would also do the planning for what she would fantasize about that night. She would decide the basic plot for her fantasies. Later when she acted them out, if she didn't like the way things went then she would go back and edit. She would either "rewind" events or cut portions of "fantasy" time, which varied from

minutes to days. She could also edit what she said and was a “great speaker” in her fantasy world. In her real life she was not as confident and wished that she could “edit” her conversations and make them “great”. She commented on the contrast between reality and fantasy by saying: “my conversations were very clear and assertive and powerful in my world and in real life they were not”. She said that her real life conversation skills were probably weak because her mother would “always” answer for her and thus she “had no need to speak”.

Her imaginary world was “one giant storyline” and Julie likened it to another life. When talking about how she planned her fantasies Julie realized that she was demonstrating planning and organizational skills that would become useful later in her life. She described another common plotline from her early years:

I would imagine that I was a prisoner in a dungeon with other prisoners for days.

When I grew tired of pretending I was captured I would plan and execute a brilliant escape ... so after a while it became a game of toying with the guards and just escaping when I felt like it because I was so good at it.

Themes of leadership, problem solving and control are prominent in many of the plotlines of Julie’s imaginary world.

Julie engaged in her fantasy world primarily at home when she was going to bed or when alone. She shared aspects of the fantasy world with a babysitter she really liked but said: “I kind of shared the world without actually saying that I was having imaginary friends or an imaginary world”. However, she associates the babysitter with her imaginary world memories rather than the real world.

In general Julie has separated her memories of her fantasy world from her real life. There are a few exceptions such as the start of her fantasies and some “key events” or major shifts in her life. It was at about 5 or 6 years of age that she began to be aware of fantasy as something that “you don’t talk about” or “shouldn’t have”. She had tried to introduce her “imaginary friends” to her parents when she was younger and they hadn’t responded either positively or negatively at that point. However, she thinks that it is likely that the idea that fantasies were “wrong” and “something to be ashamed of” came from her parents at some point. Julie said that she eventually felt “guilty” and that she was “this horrible, wrong person for having this world”.

In grade 2 Julie and her family moved and her pattern of crying and being teased continued. She was not allowed to cry about things that her parents caused. When she cried because she felt hurt by others, her parents would say, “See! That’s why they call you a crybaby”. However, she did become involved in practicing plays that the teacher organized, practicing at recess and making some friends. However, she continued to have problems with peers teasing her.

Julie’s pattern of crying continued through her elementary school years both at home and at school. Her parents tried to be supportive when she was teased but she didn’t find their advice to be helpful. Also, her crying was labeled as manipulative when it was in response to her parents and she recalls that any form of anger was not acceptable either. However, her parents were allowed to be angry both with each other and with her. In general, emotions came to be seen as manipulative by her parents. Julie felt like the only acceptable emotion for her to feel was fear. She often felt afraid of her parents. Fear played a major part in several episodes.

One example of this was when Julie left her boots at school and subsequently had become ill. She prolonged her illness for about two weeks out of fear that her parents would find out that she had forgotten her boots. She spent most of this time worrying, even staring in the mirror saying to herself "Oh my God, Oh my God". When her parents did find out about the boots she remembers her father jumping up and down while yelling at her.

Another incident occurred on a Saturday morning. Julie described watching Saturday morning cartoons as though it was a religious experience for her. She used the cartoons in her imaginary world and tried to never miss watching them. On this particular morning she started her usual routine of pulling up her blinds. On this occasion they were not working properly and ended up falling off partially. She was petrified of waking her parents so she held the blinds up, fearing that if she let go they would break completely. At some point hours later her parents finally went to her room to see why she wasn't watching cartoons. They found Julie still holding up the blinds at that time. Julie was very relieved to see them and said something like "thank god you're here!". They didn't get mad but Julie still sees this episode as an example of how afraid she was of them.

Fear was present in other ways. Her parents cautioned her about many things, which led to Julie feeling very sheltered. Later she would realize that she lacked many basic skills such as using an oven or knowing how to clean. In looking back at her childhood she would have liked to have had exposure to cultures other than her own.

Julie's parents had definite opinions about how she should live her life both in the present and the future. They instilled the value that money is very important in life and that going to school and achieving was the path to making money. Her parents also

stressed that “marrying a nice Jewish boy” was a part of the recipe for a good life. However, it was school that her parents cared about the most. Her parents emphasized, “doing her best” but when confronted with the question of whether she had done her best, Julie often felt like nothing was good enough.

### School & Social Isolation

There was a constant pressure to be studying and doing homework. Often this involved her parents yelling at her until her homework was complete. The pressure and yelling did little to motivate her. She spent a lot of time sitting and staring at her schoolwork procrastinating. She often engaged in her imaginary world rather than actually doing her homework. She would stare at her books and daydream. The imaginary world provided an escape and distraction for her.

Throughout her school years Julie felt like she struggled academically. She was born late in the year and was chronologically younger than most of her peers. Her mother told her that this was the reason why she struggled. Julie described herself as a slow worker and said that she often had difficulty understanding her work. Her parents, peers, and teachers helped her a lot. Despite her difficulties, Julie put a lot of effort into her schoolwork and achieved “good grades”.

Despite evidence that she was capable of achieving, Julie felt like she wasn’t as smart as her peers, “not worth much” and believed that “everyone else can do it but me”. She often took a long time to complete her work and in quizzes in which she was given a limited amount of time she did poorly because she was not able to complete the work. Any public reporting of such quizzes further affected her self-esteem negatively and made her feel “extremely stupid”.

Later in University she continued to feel like she was struggling and received testing to determine any possible underlying causes for her difficulties such as ADHD or a Learning Disability. The results of the testing indicated that she has extremely poor auditory skills and a poor short-term memory. However, it also revealed that she has very strong visual skills and “could remember things almost picture clearly”.

In general, she said she was never at the top or the bottom but noted that often “the kids in the middle kind of disappear”. However, an area where she excelled and was recognized for her achievement was language. She was in French immersion, enriched English, as well as Hebrew school. She received academic honours in all of these areas.

Despite the recognition for her hard work Julie never really felt like she deserved the awards she received. She remarked: “I felt like I didn’t understand most of the things I was getting awards for”. One exception to this was that she really wanted to be valedictorian for Hebrew school and felt that she deserved it because most of the other kids weren’t really even trying. There was one other girl who was proficient in the language because her parents spoke Hebrew at home and they each became co-valedictorian. However, Hebrew school was particularly awful for Julie and she hated it.

She excelled academically but eventually quit because she hated it so much. She gave the excuse that it was too much work with all of the demands of her regular schooling, but really she hated it because the kids made fun of her. Her parents had tried to give her strategies to help her cope such as “don’t let them walk all over you”, “don’t cry”,

“laugh with them”, and “don’t let them see that it bothers you”. Julie did not find these suggestions helpful but acknowledges that her parents were trying to be supportive.

Eventually they accepted her decision to not continue Hebrew school into high school.



Interestingly, like her fantasy world, Hebrew school was another facet of Julie's memories that she separated. In recalling Hebrew school she does not integrate the memories with events from the rest of her life.

Julie's fantasy world was also an outlet for her creativity and imagination. In her real life Julie began to be noticed for her creative abilities as well. In grade 5 and 6 the teacher noticed that her writing was "exceptionally good" and put her into an enriched English class. Julie felt great about it and enjoyed the class. She also excelled in the French Immersion program where a speech she gave on her drama lessons was noticed and subsequently she got the lead role in the class play.

The imaginary world was also a rehearsal space for Julie's dramatic and creative side. In her fantasies she would often imagine herself singing, dancing, or acting in front of an audience. She would use props such as a hairbrush for a microphone or her music stand. In her fantasies, though, she was the best in the world at whatever she was doing whether it was singing, acting or dancing. However, singing was what she did most and continues to be something that she would like to explore further in her life. She also still practices performing her poetry by sometimes imagining that there is an audience.

In reality Julie was given negative feedback for her singing abilities. She joined the school choir in grade 4 but was told by the other kids "you can't sing, be really quiet ... just mouth the words". Julie took the criticism to heart and began to believe to some extent that she couldn't sing. However, this did not deter her singing fantasies. The fantasies remained and may have even become stronger. She also took some solace in believing that she could sing better when she was alone than in front of others.

Guilt was a prominent theme in her school years. In one assignment the class was paired up with a child in grade one and the task was to write a story about their grade one “buddy”. Julie chose to write a “twisted fairy tale” for her grade one student as this was the assignment that the non-enriched part of the class had been working on in her class. In the story Julie made the family of the little girl as the “bad guys”. Later she decided that she shouldn’t have done that and felt very guilty about it.

That same year Julie also made up an Easter Bunny play to put on for the grade one class. She was supposed to put it on twice and both times she “just didn’t do it”, either not realizing that she was supposed to be there or deciding not to go. Her lack of motivation seemed to be fueled by a lack of confidence in herself. She remembers that she was nervous about performing the play and not sure of how “good” it would be. She reflected: “I think that it goes back to the perfectionism, that I wasn’t going to be good enough, and so it didn’t really bother me when I realized I was missing the time”.

In addition to feelings of guilt, Julie often felt lonely and socially isolated throughout her school years until university. She remembers that before grade one she was a confident child often taking the role of leader amongst her peers. She was the “popular kid” on her block. The other kids wanted to play with her and listened to her. In grade one she started to be made fun of by her classmates and the teasing continued after her family moved in grade two. Her self-esteem declined rapidly. She has pictures of “friends” who were at her birthday parties during those years, but she felt at the time like she didn’t have friends. She remembers a few friends during those years that she was close to, but the friendships were not stable. There were times when her friends wouldn’t

play with her, particularly in the wintertime when Julie did not want to engage in physical activities and preferred to do something creative like make snow sculptures.

Julie remembers trying to fit in but never feeling like she belonged. At recess or lunch she would float from group to group, listening and trying to engage but feeling like she was only on the periphery. The need to “fit in” continued for a long time but it is only more recently, as she no longer feels a desperate need to belong, that she now has a sense of contentment that she does “fit in”.

In high school Julie continued to feel lonely but also “scared”. After years of teasing and bullying she had become intimidated and afraid of her peers. She felt extremely self-conscious and still didn’t feel like she fit in. She didn’t wear make-up and always seemed to be a style behind in terms of her fashion sense. She isolated herself in various ways during her free time at school. She often spent time in the washroom at recess or simply tried to hide away from people. She also found solace in joining the library club where she spent time essentially hiding during breaks.

During those years of isolation Julie’s fantasy world helped her to cope with the lack of social connection. She describes the importance of the fantasy world at that time:

I don’t know if I would have gotten through without that. I would have had to have some kind of outlet, somehow, somewhere, because it was being an only child and then not having many friends at school, and often not being liked by anybody at school ... was kind of lonely, but I don’t think I had the world at school at that time at all. When I got home, that was sort of the safe place that I could kind of have my world.

She commented that feeling out of place in the first few weeks of high school “triggered” her to “dive” into her imaginary world in order to help her cope.

In grade 10 Julie said she started two hobbies which “in some ways replaced the fantasy world” because she was spending so much time on them. The two hobbies were computer programming and poetry. She had found that she really enjoyed the programming part of her computer science class. She liked to write games on her own. Her parents were pleased with her interest in Computer Science and were particularly happy that it would lead to university. In looking back she feels like it was her parents decision that she went to university rather than her own. Also, she would later find out as she pursued an education in computer science that it was not the right choice for her. Julie also began to write poetry at about this time. Initially, the poetry she wrote wasn’t very “intense” but later on it started to relate to things that were going on in her life. Occasionally she wrote poetry that was related to her fantasy world as well. In more recent times she has performed her poetry for audiences.

### Early Romantic Experiences

Julie’s early romantic experiences started in grade 5 with a boy that she was going out with at camp. The highlight of the relationship was that she asked him for a good night kiss and he kissed her on the cheek. She told her parents about the experience and they were very concerned and told her “doing things too soon would mean that things aren’t new and novel later and [she’d] need to do more and more bad things”. She didn’t want to return to the camp but had promised her boyfriend from the previous summer that she would come back. Initially she couldn’t find him at the camp and then later he seemed to be ignoring her. Julie found out that he was no longer interested in her when another girl

at the camp made a comment that it was too bad that this boy had broken up with Julie. Julie felt devastated and did a lot of crying.

Julie's parents provided her with information about sex. There were books and pamphlets and videos that her mom would go over with her. However, she remembers her mom becoming frustrated that Julie would read ahead while her mom was reading things to her. She also got a strong moral message that "sex was only for happily married, very loving couples".

Later, when she had more serious boyfriends her parents started to assume that she was having sex and would confront her on it. Her mother's style of confrontation was to yell at her and say, "I know you're having sex! You can't lie to us". Whereas her father calmly sat her down and explained "the first time that you have sex it has to be with somebody that you really love ... it's very special ... If it isn't special, with somebody you love, it will ruin it for the rest of the times for your life". Julie appreciated her father's calm approach but his message was somewhat overwhelming.

In grade 8 Julie found herself "making out a lot" with a guy she was seeing in the summer. She didn't actually enjoy it and described it as "gross". She explained that: "I kept going back and kept wanting to try again because I kept thinking it'd be good, and it kept not being good". She also said that "curiosity" and possibly "neediness" drove her to keep trying it. She continued to not enjoy "making out" and by grade 10 or 11 began to try to avoid it with boyfriends, although she continued to think: "I really should be liking this, maybe there's something wrong with me". She isn't sure where she got that message but thinks that television may have played a role in setting up her expectations. She also commented: "In my fantasy world it was great! It was quite a disappointment to find out

guys were just, you know, not as much fun". She had a similar reaction to sex when she began to explore further.

Julie also experienced other difficulties related to romantic relationships. Early in her relationships she would feel good about the relationship when she was in the presence of the person. However, when she wasn't with the person, she said: "it felt like everything was wrong in that I didn't like being with him". In later years this grew into a fear of commitment where most of her relationships have been relatively short. Longer relationships have resulted in her becoming anxious and fearful: "I'm just scared shitless the whole time, and unintentionally sabotage the whole relationship".

She believes that the way she reacts has been influenced by the relationship that she had with her parents. She feels like she was never emotionally close to her parents due to a lack of unconditional love. More specifically the idea that she isn't "good enough" or "worthy" translates into "when the guy really gets to know me, he won't love me anymore because I'm not perfect". Julie acknowledges that when feeling insecure she may blow something up, pick fights and decide that if she isn't "good enough" then they should break up. She acknowledged that she often is the person to initiate a break-up because she is feeling "gross" but has also been "dumped" as well. In her most recent relationship she has begun to realize that her partner "could be really upset with me about things, but he still really loves me and still wants to be with me".

Julie commented that her "imaginary world" would stop for a while when she had a real life boyfriend but would start up again when the real life relationship ended. She had several significant relationships in high school. One of the people she went out with had been seeing a close friend of hers. The friend moved away and although Julie felt guilty

about feeling a connection to him, she eventually began a relationship with him. However, she described the relationship as somewhat “distant” and not “affectionate”. She wanted to kiss him but said that the most affection she got from him was a “peck on the lips”. He was significant in that he was the first person who gave her compliments that she really believed. He eventually ended the relationship on Valentine’s Day, which was difficult for Julie to deal with.

Julie’s boyfriend started seeing someone else shortly after they broke up. He had broken up with her so he could concentrate on school to get into university. However, he asked Julie to go to the prom with him. Julie was confused by this and when she asked him why he chose her, he said that Julie “meant something to him” and the other girl didn’t. Julie wasn’t sure what to make of his comment and had suspicions that there was some overlap between his relationship with her and then the new girl.

Affection was an issue in another relationship that Julie had during high school. Again, Julie was interested in kissing but her boyfriend felt like there was “too much pressure”. He was more affectionate when Julie was upset and this led to Julie “being upset about things all the time and making a bigger deal out of things so that he’d cuddle”. Eventually, he broke up with her and one of the reasons he gave was that she was “too needy”. By the time that they broke up Julie described it as a “non-relationship” and he had started showing interest in another girl who he started seeing shortly after the relationship with Julie ended. She said that she wrote some poems full of anger about these relationships where there may have been some “overlap”.

The only other positive memory she has is of finally kissing a peer who was a family friend after years of having a crush on him. It was her first “French kiss” and she

described it as “amazing”. He was supposed to write to her as they didn’t live in the same place but her never wrote her back. She felt very hurt and thought about him all the time and missed him.

### Imaginary World

In grade 8 Julie underwent further eye surgery and it was her imaginary world that helped her to cope with the stress of the surgery. When she was born her eyes had been crossed but in grade 8 her eyes started to wander out and needed correction. The problem with her eyes caused major social problems because peers would get upset that she appeared to be not paying full attention because she could only focus with one eye at a time. She would try to explain the problem but it often didn’t help so she would just switch which eye she was using to appease the person.

She knew a year in advance that the surgery was to take place and in that year leading up to the surgery she had problems sleeping and had nightmares. Her “imaginary boyfriend” was a source of support during that time. He consoled her when she had nightmares and went with her to the hospital when it was time to have the surgery.

Her imaginary boyfriend was from a TV show about spies and was in his 40’s on the show. He was part of her imaginary world from grade 8 until about grade 11. She described him the following way: “He was very, very manly and rugged and very sexy...and kind of forceful”. She also said that he was “stubborn”, “strong-willed”, “very passionate”, “extremely smart” and “very talented at his spying job”. She also described herself as an “assertive, high powered character” in her imaginary world.

Julie described various aspects of their relationship. She described a connection that they shared as spies:



He was sort of the master of disguises and could imitate anyone. I also could fool anyone by pretending that I was someone I was completely not. So we had this talent together...

She described their relationship as mostly equals but thought that she may have been the more powerful one in public and he more powerful at home. She said that initially he had to "chase" after her and had been "pining" after her for a long time. She said: "He absolutely adored me".

He was also supportive of her singing. He would often be watching her sing in a place just out of her sight and she would notice that he was there afterwards. He was also generally very supportive of her. More specifically, she said that "often the world hated me and he would be the one person who didn't".

She said that he would describe her as "fabulous", "sexy", but "difficult to get along with". Julie noted that he often disagreed with her or challenged her in some way. There was a lot of fighting and getting back together in the relationship. Sometimes things would end "forever" but then the next day Julie would want the relationship to continue and she would have to figure out a way to "fix" it. Also, once she "discovered boyfriends" in her real life, she didn't want to be alone in her imaginary world. She commented that when she was alone in her imaginary world it was "this big suffering thing" that she would have to endure.

There were also plots full of conflict such as her boyfriend being brainwashed into hating her and much later in the fantasy world he would go "psychotic". She commented, "there always had to be some sort of drama because it was very boring just having a relationship".

There was a strong sexual element in her imaginary world. She would imagine having sex with characters from her imaginary world. However, there was also a sense that “sex was wrong”. Julie described it as “it [sex] would sort of happen, and then I would imagine that it was actually rape and that it didn’t actually happen, and that I didn’t actually want it”.

In grade 8 the dynamic shifted again and she imagined that it was “actually a real first time” (i.e. “consensual”) with her imaginary boyfriend who was a spy. He helped her get over “these rape situations”. Despite the sexual content of her fantasies at that time, Julie commented that she didn’t really know exactly what sex was at that point but refined her fantasies as she learned more. In her teen years she would occasionally have sexual fantasies that involved her imaginary boyfriend trying to “choke or hit” her. She commented: “I’d be outraged but really I liked it”.

Julie was able to relate her imaginary boyfriend to two of the men she dated in her real life. She said that they were similar in that they were “stubborn”, “hard-headed” and also “broad and muscular”. She would also label these real life relationships as “intense and passionate” but inherently flawed by different values. She felt that the support that these relationships provided her inspired her to be “better than I was and formed me into who I wanted to be possibly” and valued this aspect of the relationships.

In contrast to this, the support she received from other relationships supported who she was at that moment, but did not inspire further growth. She felt like these other men put her up on a pedestal and would do anything for her, not “having their own spine”. She described them as less “macho”. Physically, they were less muscular and either very

“skinny” or somewhat overweight. These men were not like any of the imaginary boyfriends that she had.

There was a transition phase from one boyfriend to the next where the former “spy” boyfriend went “psychotic”. They were living together at that point and somehow through gambling or something else her “spy” boyfriend lost all of her money and she was poor. Julie recalled that this happened repetitively. “I think that actually happened a lot over the last year because I really liked imagining that I was poor and getting by and buying food really cheaply and being creative that way”.

She had her next imaginary boyfriend from grade 12 into her early university years. She had a place that she went to in her imaginary world that was on a cliff overlooking the city lights. That is where she met the “vampire” boyfriend and started to go there every night. The spy boyfriend was becoming “crazier and crazier” and he was unaware that she had started seeing the new boyfriend. Eventually she decided that she preferred to be with the vampire boyfriend. The former boyfriend became “really insane and started to chase them with guns. Julie described the drama that ensued:

...But the vampire boyfriend was the only person who really understood me. I saw this episode on TV where he was leading this very lonely existence and no one could understand how lonely it was to be living this 800 year life and he could never get close to anybody because they would die off and he would have to keep living. I felt lonely and misunderstood just like him.

Julie isn't sure if she was mortal or not but she does remember dying a few times in her adventures and coming back to life in order to continue. The old boyfriend stopped chasing them thinking that Julie was dead. Much later, they would run into each other

and the relationship became somewhat amicable. Although, once in a while he would try to get her back.

The imaginary world with her vampire boyfriend was part of a secondary world to the original one she had been in and had been part of her fantasies since about grade four. She described: "I was from the real world and I was in like a real world placed in another dimension". She said it was "a very lonely existence" and:

Nobody ever connected with me except my boyfriend. In this world everyone always hated me...I had all of these powers and...everybody would just think I'm showing off and I would never really have friends for long in this world.

Julie stressed the connection that she felt to the vampire boyfriend. She felt understood by him and described him as "calm" and "loving".

In her real life Julie said that she had "never felt really understood by anybody". There isn't anyone in her real life that she relates as similar to the vampire boyfriend. She does feel that in the most recent couple of relationships she has felt more understood but the dark and mysterious element of the vampire boyfriend has not been echoed in any of her real relationships. The vampire fantasy was also less dramatic and vivid than her previous fantasies and Julie thinks that may be due to the fact that there was more going on in her real life at that time and she "didn't need it as much".

In contrast to the loneliness that she was experiencing in her imaginary world, Julie was actually starting to make more friends in her real life during the period that she was having those fantasies. In her real life she often found herself attracted to guys who were not Jewish, therefore "not allowed". She felt guilty for liking the other guys while she

was with her "nice Jewish boyfriend". Some of the "crushes" during that period were part of her dreams at night but not her imaginary world.

Usually her real world was not a part of her imaginary world but there were some exceptions to this. Early on she can remember one of her "playmates" from Kindergarten being part of her world. In her teenage years an imaginary boyfriend would occasionally enter into her real world. In university her imaginary world declined but whomever she was seeing would often be a part of it. However, she commented that was somewhat different and related more to masturbation fantasies about the person she was dating.

Her real world crept into her fantasy life in other ways. She can remember that if she went to a play then often her fantasies would involve her becoming the star of that play or at least a part of it. As mentioned previously, singing was a large part of her fantasy life and she was often the star of a musical. She also drew on TV shows a lot for material for her imaginary world. Sometimes her fantasy life would help her get through mundane things like chores or homework. She would imagine that she was a slave being forced to do those things or if she was alone she would have her "little characters" with her while she was working. Julie said that she still incorporates fantasy into doing boring things like chores.

Here fantasy life was also separate from the dreams that she had at night. She can remember a couple of occasions when her fantasies were part of a dream but she was very surprised by it because it was unusual. Throughout her high school years and beyond Julie wrote poetry. Sometimes, her poetry would be about her fantasies and the characters and stories she daydreamed about. The following is an example of a poem that is generally about her fantasy life-

### My Fantasy Place

I wish that someone would take me by the hand  
And lead me to a magical land  
Where everything is covered by a light, flowing mist  
Where everyone is happy, where problems don't exist

Where I don't have to worry about everyday things  
Where I can feel light and free like a bird with wings  
But I must deal with the problems I face  
Because I will never find my fantasy place

In some ways her fantasy world had a direct impact on her real life. An example of this is when she took her imaginary boyfriend to school with her. She was more confident, in part because she felt that she “had to show him I had all these friends” but also because she had him there with her for support. She said: “I’d definitely say ‘hi’ to a lot more people the days when he was with me”. The first weeks of high school were horrible for Julie because she was scared and had no friends. As mentioned previously, she coped by diving into her world more than usual.

Alongside the romances in Julie’s fantasies were plots involving solving mysteries or “saving the world”. Often in such stories she was an outcast or hated but this was often because she was misunderstood in some way. When she was younger the stories would centre on mysteries to solve and as she got older the stories were “elaborate, longer” and “more important”.

Julie described some of the kinds of fantasies that she was having in late elementary school and early high school:

I’d just be walking along and I’d see something horrible happen, like I’d see racism or I’d see a parent beating on a kid and I would be the one stepping in and making it all better. Often having to fight people. At first I’d try to talk to them and if I

couldn't talk them out of it I would fight. I was excellent at fighting; I could fight 10 people at once very easily. Imagine that I was kind of leveraging their power against me...I was the big charity person...I never wanted anything, I never needed any money, I didn't need any recognition, I was always wanting to give to people...but I would often get recognition anyway, but if I got money I would give it to charities...I would imagine that I founded some charities. One was a women's shelter, one was a food bank. She tried to stop engaging in her "imaginary world" when she was in high school because she felt ashamed for having it. However, when she stopped her friend gave her the feedback that she was "annoying" and trying too hard so she went back to using her world. Her friend indicated that she was back to normal after that.

### Emotions

At times Julie finds it hard to connect with her emotions. Taboo emotions such as anger often come out indirectly in "passive aggressive" ways. She would often hold in her anger, picking little fights, acting coldly, until she just "snapped". She also commented that when she is uncomfortable with the emotions she is feeling, she tends to isolate herself. She might excuse herself to go to the bathroom or go outside in order to try to process her emotions and then come back. She wrote this poem about her struggle to deal with her own emotions:

#### Excuse Me

If I go off by myself  
 It is not to stare at a wall and feel sorry  
 It is to feel the feelings I have inside  
 Be they  
     rage  
         fire

sadness  
desire

The feelings one can not feel in the company of others  
It is not respectable  
It is not presentable  
It is not the joviality that one must display  
It is true raw human feelings  
And I must be allowed to feel them  
In all their full glory and splendour  
So will you excuse me for just a moment?

She believes that her style of coping partially originated from her early years when her parents accused her of using her emotions to manipulate them. Despite isolating herself during these times, she really didn't want to be alone. She described that, "I always wanted people to notice that I was gone and come and console me but I was clandestine about it as well, so it was kind of this, I don't want people to see but yet I do want them to see". She also had a difficult time crying in front of anyone for a long time.

In her fantasy world there was also a metaphorical expression of emotions as "taboo". She described a particular plot that related to emotions:

I had all these clues and help from different people and eventually found out that there's this big powerful guy who wanted to create a new breed of people on earth and only the strongest ones would survive this thing ... if they [people] were arguing over a lawnmower, the argument would escalate into something bigger and bigger and eventually they would start throwing stones and killing each other in different ways ... and the people who were passionate just became too passionate ... all these emotions completely took over and it'd sort of be like whoever were left were the strongest people.



The message that “I’m only strong if I’m not showing emotion, or even feeling emotion” was a strong presence in Julie’s life. It would be something that was prominent when she went to see a therapist in university. She found it helpful to have the visual cue of using a piece of paper with faces expressing different emotions to aid her in identifying what she was feeling. Use of her fantasy world was often triggered by “certain needs or emotions”.

### Depression

In terms of depression Julie said that she always felt “really horrible” and it was a “constant” in her life. Since high school she has found that she would use sleep as a way to avoid things and at times of stress would sleep quite a bit. She has had feelings of loneliness and isolation in addition to feeling generally scared. The loneliness was a constant and she felt like she “was always the outsider looking in”. There were also periods of hopelessness and feeling like she didn’t matter.

She had thoughts about suicide in high school that continued into university. She said that she would think about suicide every so often but did not really have the intention of acting on it. Especially when she learned that suicide was “a cry for attention” and she did not want to be one of “those” people. The following excerpt is from her poem called “The Teenage Years”:

They say that the teenage years  
Are the best years of your life  
Well if these are my best years  
Someone please hand me a knife

There were other reasons that suicide was a less viable option for Julie. When she was dating someone suicide was not an option because she did not want to hurt someone else in that way. However, the biggest prevention factor was a future orientation. She really

wanted to find out what her life would be like and what her “fairy tale ending was going to be”. The following poem expresses Julie’s thoughts about suicide:

### Demons

I gazed into the one who gazed into the ball that gazed into my life  
And I said,  
Ya  
But will I be happy

You tell me what will happen in 2 hours 2 weeks 2 years  
But all I really want to know is  
When we reach Eventually  
When we skip to the last page and steal that guilty pleasure last line peek  
All I want to know is  
Am I Happy?  
Cuz if I’m not...  
What the hell am I holding on for?

It’s taken me years to struggle through shit  
And it will take me years more  
And I’ve watched the chapters of my life unfold

I mean really

To the day  
I can tell you when each ended and the next began  
And with the passing of each page I hoped that  
Someday  
The hero of my story would conquer the demons and find.... something

So what are you telling me?  
I’ll find an argument next week?  
Ok  
I’ll find love next year  
Fine  
But will I find happiness  
True happiness  
The kind that radiates from inside myself  
The kind that’s free from artificial flavours  
Cuz so far  
My light is covered in shadows  
That drown  
Bring me down  
To a big

trembling  
heap

And the reason I've held on for as long as I have  
Is a morbid voyeuristic curiosity  
Morbidity like plucking the wings off a fly  
Morbidity like sunlight, a lens, and an ant  
Morbidity like sitting back and watching the strands of my life tie and untie  
themselves  
tie  
...untie...  
tie  
...untie...

And all I really want to know is...  
All my self-growth shit  
All my "learning experiences" that make me Stronger  
All the energy I'm pouring into getting somewhere and finding something  
and overcoming stuff  
All I really want to know is

Will the hero win?

She wanted to find out who she would marry and what her life would be like.

However, she sees the ideal of girls growing up, getting married and having children as something that was driven by society rather than her own sense of hope. She also said that her hopes for the future were not part of the content for her fantasies.

Despite having reasons that she did not want to attempt suicide, there was often an internal struggle to fight the depression and thoughts of suicide. At times she felt like "life just wasn't worth living and things were so horrible" that she should "give up and not bother". There was also a sense of detachment from life: "I often felt like a person watching my own life happen ... it often felt like a fake world".

She can recall a conversation that she had with another girl about death when she was in her early adolescence. She remembers that the other girl thought death was "horrible"

whereas she thought that it would be “fine” if she died the next day. She explained: “I didn’t really see the point, I just really hated all the people and I hated myself and I thought it’d be a lot easier just to die”.

She also became “really obsessed” with near death experiences and experiences of death were a part of her imaginary world. She imagined that people hated her and were doing awful things like burning her at the stake or stoning her. Usually she would narrowly escape but on several occasions she didn’t escape and died. Then she would “see the light, go talk to god and come back”. She would also see which people in her life really cared about her and were upset and which ones were happy that she died. Later Relationships

In her first week at university Julie decided that she was going to have to be “very outgoing” if she was going to make friends. She said that she became “very cute and girly and charming” in order to accomplish this. It seemed to work and she met a lot of people during her first week there. She had the sense that she “belonged at university”.

She even started seeing someone that first week and was beginning to question her status as a virgin. She decided that she was old enough to lose her virginity and wanted to have sex with the guy she was seeing at the time. She knew that they weren’t particularly compatible i.e. he wasn’t Jewish, but told him that her plan was to lose her virginity. She began to enjoy the physical aspects of relationships at that time but having intercourse with him didn’t work out due to “medical reasons”.

Socially at this time the friendships she made were not all that she had hoped for. She had a few friends that she found to be very “clingy” and she had to set limits on them calling all the time. However, she was not able to directly confront these friends on their

behaviour and instead would suddenly shut them out of her life. On the other hand Julie was still trying “desperately to fit in” and some of the other people in her life gave her the feedback that she was opening up to them very quickly.

In university Julie dated quite a bit but there were some significant relationships that had a lasting impact on her. The first was with Daniel who she felt very connected with because he had health problems and she was accustomed to this because her mother had health issues that had always been a part of her life. She described him as “extremely forceful with sexual things” and said that she often would say no but he’d “make” her do things anyway. When she was feeling more ready sexually, he became more ill and then broke up with her. He had needed to go back into the hospital and didn’t want someone to worry about him. Additionally, he was already overwhelmed with his illness, the demands of school, and trying to get a job. She had a hard time getting over Daniel but started seeing someone fairly soon after the break-up.

The next person Julie dated was Eric and it was the relationship where she had intercourse for the first time. It had been a lot of work involving seeing doctors before Julie was ready to try to have sex. However, she eventually grew tired of the relationship because there was little connection other than sexual and eventually that began to fade.

While Julie was still seeing Eric she was involved in a school project with Daniel. Daniel was aware that Julie was dating someone else but started to push boundaries and touch Julie, eventually he tried to kiss her. She told her boyfriend Eric about the encounter and he labeled it as a “sexual assault”. She agreed with him but later had mixed feelings about what her part in the dynamic might have been.

The touching began with rubbing her shoulders to comfort her because her aunt was in the hospital and very ill. If he pushed things further than she was comfortable with then he would go back to touching her at the level that she was comfortable. She found it hard to stop the touching entirely because she felt like she really “needed” the comfort. Eventually though she did feel like she had been assaulted and withdrew physically from those around her including friends and her boyfriend Eric. In time, Julie was able to work through this and became very affectionate with her boyfriend Eric but eventually they broke up.

This was a very difficult time for Julie for a number of reasons. The first upsetting event was being sexually assaulted and working through her reaction to the assault. The second was that a friend from high school was diagnosed with cancer. Her friend was in a coma and only had a 25% chance of surviving. She got the news from her mother after having a wonderfully romantic evening with her boyfriend. She felt guilty because she had been having a good time while her friend had become so ill. Julie visited her friend often in the hospital and wrote a poem for her.

The news that her friend was sick came as a shock to Julie. Her friend was a person who never seemed to get even minor illnesses up until that point. Julie juxtaposed this with herself as often getting sick and having migraines. Julie described her friend as “extremely pretty” but also “down to earth”, sincere and “very, very nice”. Julie felt that her looks were such an asset to her that it would be particularly difficult for her to lose that during chemotherapy. In the end her friend did recover and Julie described that through the process her friend who had been somewhat “ditzy” “became much deeper and more dynamic” as a person.

Julie described this time period as “scary” and she found it difficult to concentrate on school. She became reflective about mortality in general. She saw this as another example in her life where she was having a good time and then found out that “something horrible happened to somebody”. She knew that she did not cause the bad things to happen but it clouded the positive memories that she had.

Thirdly, she had to deal with her aunt dying. She spent a period of time worried about her dying aunt with the pressure of having to travel and go to a funeral at a moment’s notice. She was also upset that her parents would not allow her to visit her aunt; their rationale was that they didn’t want people “parading in front of her “ as she was dying. Julie never had the chance to talk with her or say goodbye in any way and was deeply saddened by this.

Lastly, Julie’s parents were also very upset about whom she was seeing. They did not approve of Eric because even though he was Jewish, he was not “successful” Jewish because he did not have a prominent job. They also did not approve of him because he was bisexual. She had also been trying to have sex at that point and was feeling frustrated that something that is easy and natural for others was so difficult for her.

She started to feel very numb during this period, not even being able to cry or feel good in situations when she would have previously felt emotion. She described feeling like an “empty shell” and during the summer found herself involved in 5 or 6 casual relationships that were mostly sexual. A close friend suggested to her that she needed some help but at first she told her she could do it on her own. She had started seeing someone at the end of the summer that she really cared about and he also suggested that she seek help.

Things reached a crisis point when she was trying to prepare for a midterm and her boyfriend wanted to talk about their relationship. She couldn't think straight at all and she was shaking. Eventually she realized that she was only getting worse, not better, and decided to see a therapist. She was living at home and in order to cope she isolated herself in her room to avoid her parents. She began to read a lot and possibly started writing more. Even discussing that period of time now brings back the feelings of being overwhelmed. The following is a poem about that time:

Craziness

I turn around and there I am  
 Sporting the same smile as always  
 Practiced happy carefree smile  
 Life is but a bitter joke  
 And the men behind the walls are laughing  
 Ha ha ha  
 Ha ha ha  
 Laughing in their beige trenchcoats  
 The earth rotates around around  
 Around around it spins around  
 Spinning spinning everyday  
 I'm so dizzy I want off  
 Let me off this cruel cruel ride  
 Hey there Mr. Ticket man  
 Let me on another  
 This one wasn't worth the cost  
 I'm so dizzy I want off  
 Stop the ride  
 Stop the ride  
 Stop the spinnin 'round my chair  
 The kitchen's spinning 'round my chair  
 The city's spinning all around me  
 The room is spinning  
 The clock is ticking  
 The plant is growing  
 The oven's burning  
 The men behind the walls are laughing  
 Ha ha ha  
 Laughing laughing while I cry  
 Cry behind my carefree smile



If I close my eyes enough  
 I will float high up above  
 Away from chairs and clocks and plants  
 And burning ovens, men in trenchcoats  
 Spinning planets and fake smiles  
 Floating falling in the sky  
 Tumbling in between the clouds  
 I collapse into my bed  
 And shut the world out with my blanket

At some point during this time her fantasy life changed. It became somewhat stagnant in that the same stories were played out rather than creating new ones. The basic scenario was: "pick up a stranger at a party or a beach or some place and we don't really talk, we just go have sex". There was also some continuation with the "vampire boyfriend" but nothing new was added. Later Romantic relationships

The next serious relationship that she had was with Justin. They talked about getting married. There were problems in the relationship and Julie acknowledges that she was not able to confront issues directly, instead using a passive aggressive approach. He also did not deal well with conflict and "shut off", further contributing to an unhealthy dynamic in the relationship.

Things were not going well when she became interested in Andrew while still seeing Justin. Religion was an issue because Justin was not Jewish and at that time Julie wanted to raise her children as Jewish. Compromises were made but there was still conflict in the end. She broke up with Justin to be with Andrew but felt bad about hurting Justin, who was talking seriously about getting engaged prior to the break-up.

Julie had discussed issues about the validity of religion in her relationship with Justin and she continued to have those conversations with Andrew. While seeing Andrew she

came to the conclusion that: “this is a lot of brainwashing and I actually don’t want religion”.

From the beginning, Julie could see flaws in the relationship that limited its potential. Andrew and Julie had different futures in mind, and the issue about whether to live in the city or the country became prominent. Julie tried to imagine what it would be like to live in the country but often felt like she was “modifying her future dreams to fit with his”. She also felt that they needed “to grow in different ways that they just couldn’t do with each other”. She commented that there was a strong sexual attraction and that she was continuing to make progress with him in areas of her sexuality, particularly intercourse, which she previously had had difficulties. They broke up several times and got back together which was stressful and painful for Julie. In the end, he moved to Vancouver and Julie still had some hope for things working out but Andrew’s doubts led her to realize that it was really over.

Julie wrote a poem inspired by her relationship with Andrew, which also refers to fantasy indirectly:

Why didn’t Hollywood tell me about  
The fears that develop, the hurt and the doubt

Why don’t the fairytales show more than laughter  
Issues that come up in the happy ever after

People forgot to warn me that with love there’s pain  
That looking for something perfect will drive you insane

That looking for Prince Charming is a futile endeavour  
That the perfect relationship occurs almost never

Why can’t love be like in our every day fiction  
Where lovers find happiness with virtually no friction

Why can’t love feel like a day of perfect weather

And people who are meant for each other find solace together

My true love's arrow missed the mark of my heart  
And now there are forces that must keep us apart

It is not forces of the cold world outside  
Rather ourselves, and the parts from which we hide

Julie and Andrew remained friends after the relationship ended and she moved to Vancouver because she thought she would really enjoy living there and had found a job there. Julie had a relationship just before she moved to Vancouver. She felt like it was "safer" to get closer with him because she was leaving. The relationship was going well and Julie speculated that they may have gotten married eventually if she hadn't moved.

In her first week of work she started seeing/sleeping with one of her coworkers that she was very attracted to when they went on a business trip together. The relationship was hidden from others at work. The relationship ended when Julie talked to him about the relationship becoming more than casual and he told her that he was already seeing someone else. She found out later that he had been in a relationship before he met Julie. After the relationship ended he became her manager. She found it hard to get over him because they continued to see each other at work but she tried to date other people. She also tried telephone/newspaper ads as a way to meet people but found it to be "horrible". She had some minor and short relationships until just before she left when she started seeing someone. Again, she felt like it was "safe" to get close to him, but he was not comfortable with becoming closer just as she was leaving. However, she believes that the relationship would not have worked out anyway.

She came back to Ontario and in her first week of work slept with someone from her orientation class but nothing developed. She had some minor relationships and some time

alone until she met the Pascal, whom she had been seeing most recently. Initially, he had a girlfriend and Julie's relationship with him did not begin until Pascal's other relationship ended. She described the relationship with him as "intense, passionate" but also "casual". The relationship was very sexual but later he stopped wanting to have sex and the relationship became more distant.

She also had a relationship with someone else for about 4 months when things with Pascal seemed to be not going well. Her feelings about this relationship were positive and she commented that the relationship felt "right" and was serious. However, there was a lack of "chemistry and passion", which became a big problem. Additionally, she found herself continuing to casually see Pascal and think about him even when she was with the other person.

The other relationship ended and most recently she has been having a more serious relationship with Pascal. There continues to be issues in their relationship that they are actively working on, and at times the conflict can be tiring. She finds that he tends to "internalize" things when they talk about the relationship and that some of the previous distance had been due to personal issues that he brought with him to the relationship. However, she really appreciates that Pascal is a creative person and that she can be creative with him. She feels like their "creativity feeds off each other" which Julie sees as the ideal.

Julie found that, although she was "happier" in some ways with the other guy, the lack of "conflict" resulted in her feeling bored. In contrast to this, the conflict in her relationship with Pascal can be overwhelming and tiresome. She believes that for her

conflict and chemistry “are one and the same” and the ideal would be to find a happy medium between constant conflict and boredom. University, Career, Future

Julie hated the first two years of university but persevered through it because people told her that you don’t get into the “real topics” of your program until third year. By third year though, she wanted to quit completely and drop out. She thought that maybe computer science in college would be more interesting because it would be less theory and more practical application.

Her parents were extremely upset and told her that she either had to stay in computer science in university or find something else in university. Her only choice was university and they solicited her boyfriend at the time, Justin, to support them and talk to Julie. Julie felt like she had no options so she stayed in the program deciding that she would just fail out of it.

Her friends at university wouldn’t let her fail and provided her with lots of help and even answers for assignments. She ended up with good grades but continued to hate it for the most part. She did like her co-op jobs and found optimism in thinking that she would eventually enjoy her work after university.

Since graduating from university Julie has had several jobs in the field of computer science. Unfortunately, her hopes of enjoying her jobs more than she was enjoying school were not fulfilled. She feels like she has never really been “happy” at any job, including early experiences with work such as babysitting. She has noticed a pattern where: “at first I’d be really a go-getter, do everything, and then my head would be just be cloudy and I wouldn’t be able to think and I’d just kind of sit in almost a catatonic state”. She wonders

if it is her own ideas of perfectionism that immobilize her with the message that if she can't do something perfectly then she isn't even going to try.

Recently Julie has been looking at her future and has been engaging in courses that look at personal development. She has taken training and become involved in "Life coaching", specifically in the area of helping people to quit smoking. She has realized through her previous work experiences that it is important to her that her work is people-focused and that she needs direct feedback. Without feedback, Julie commented "I always think that everything is bad until I hear from other people that they're good".

She is really enjoying the work she is doing as a "Stop Smoking Coach" where she provides support for people who are trying to quit smoking. Most of her work is done over the phone, which works well for her because her memory is poor, but she has good listening skills and can take notes without distracting the client. She has also found that the problem solving skills she used in computer science are applicable to her work as a Coach. She appreciates the collaborative and immediate nature of working directly with people as well as the flexibility to set her own pace and hours. In addition to her work as a stop smoking Coach, she has also been doing some freelance website work.

Eventually she may like to effect change in the world in bigger ways. One possibility is "working with teenagers and helping them use their creativity to work through their problems and use that as a tool and...help them think for themselves and not be led by media". Other ideas that she has are more global involve the environment, animal rights and commercialism. She wants to do something "big" and "make a lot of money and be very successful".

Her parents do not approve of her change in careers because they are concerned that she will not be able to support herself financially. Her response to that was "my role now is to prove them wrong". Julie doesn't feel particularly close to her parents now but has learned to look at her relationship with her parents differently.

She feels that she is in a major transition in her life right now and is exploring herself and her options in life. She is more "strong-willed" in her "real life" and has also worked at improving her communication skills. She has also renewed her dreams of singing and plans to take voice lessons. Eventually, she hopes to settle down, get married and have children. She described her ideal career life:

I see myself as a very, very successful businesswoman having this huge home office that's very simple but decked with the highest of whatever things I need at the time: great computer, great telephone system. I'll be affecting people's lives all the time, getting a great ocean view. I'll be in a suit.

In terms of her personal relationships she hopes for "a very passionate and chemistry filled relationship" where the chemistry does not fade eventually as this has been her experience until now. She feels hopeful that she may have found such a relationship with Pascal.

In the future Julie doesn't think that she will need her "imaginary world" because she envisions a "rich, full life". When she went to counselling in university she "got over" feeling ashamed of her fantasy life. Her therapist was able to present it as normal. Julie believes that her fantasy life may be a product of the negative experiences she had combined with a great imagination.

She does believe that her fantasy life served many purposes in her life. Her fantasy life was a source of entertainment that fought the boredom and isolation she felt growing up. She also thinks that it provided an outlet for escape and helped her to cope. She commented: "It was a place where all the things I was feeling bad about in my real world didn't exist anymore ... and it would have been a lot harder to deal with life if I didn't have this outlet". The following excerpt is from a poem by Julie entitled "Unstoppable Imagination" and conveys the powerful nature of fantasy:

The power of my unstoppable imagination  
Tramples on everything in its path  
Decrees its reign over the land  
Sets down its flag and declares all territory its own  
I can imagine  
Wild unimaginables  
New laws of Physics  
New rules of Society  
New worlds  
New places  
New things

### Commentary on Julie's Narrative

#### Themes

There are several themes that emerge from Julie's narrative which are interrelated: feeling like she needs to be perfect, not feeling good enough, passive aggressiveness, avoidance, fear, guilt and excessive responsibility. These themes also relate to feelings of sadness, loneliness, and isolation that in turn contribute to depression. Furthermore, these themes and depression can also be related to Julie's fantasy life in a variety of ways. The connections and interrelatedness of the themes, the depression and the fantasy form a complex and dynamic relationship with one another. The connections are not discrete and linear; instead they form a complex web of interconnections.



The expectation of perfectionism has been a powerful influence on Julie's life. She indicated that the need to be "perfect" originated with her parent's expectations of her from a very young age. She believes that this expectation that she be perfect resulted in her feeling that they did not love her, or at least that the love was conditional. She never felt like she could live up to her parent's expectations of her and constantly felt like she was disappointing them.

She felt an enormous amount of pressure to make her parents happy because they seemed to have so much invested in her. As an only child she felt like her parents were living through her. Her parents also sheltered her in many ways and she would only realize the extent of this when she became more independent as an adult and did not know how to do common tasks related to daily living.

Another aspect of this "sheltering" related to her parent's emphasis on Jewish religion and culture. There was pressure to date Jewish boys and she wished later that she had been exposed to other cultures. Later, she questioned her belief in Judaism as well as many of the values that her parents insisted on. In many ways her parents values eclipsed her own and she didn't really start to forge her own identity until she moved out of her parent's house.

The influence of Julie's parents was powerful. There was frequent yelling when she did something wrong but also a lack of positive feedback. This combination eroded her self-esteem. Julie was often chastised or blamed for things that she did that were unintentional or that she didn't actually do. The most significant example of this was when Julie's mother blamed her for having a miscarriage. Julie carried this episode with her for most of her life. This dynamic led to her feeling excessive guilt and responsibility

when something went wrong around her. In university she would feel guilty that she had been out having a good time on a date prior to hearing that her friend was extremely ill. She could discern that she was not responsible on an intellectual level but not an emotional one.

The message that she had to be perfect affected other areas of her life as well. It prevented her from feeling good about her achievements in school and later would immobilize her at work. In school she struggled due to working slowly and having a different style of learning. However, she was also recognized for achievement as well, maintaining good grades and excelling in languages in particular. Despite the accolades, she focused on the negative and the pervasive message was that she was not smart, not good enough and not worthy. This often resulted in an "all or nothing" stance where if she didn't feel like she could do something well enough then she wouldn't even try.

Feeling like she was never good enough contributed to her coping style. The two main coping strategies she used were a passive aggressive approach or avoidance. She took control by purposely doing things wrong as a child. This allowed her to anticipate what her parents would be upset about rather than the surprise of thinking that she would please them and then being yelled at. This control made her world more predictable and therefore safer for her. It also afforded her some power in situations that she felt powerless in. Another example of this occurred in university. Her parents would not let her quit so she decided that she would just fail out of university.

She also utilized a passive aggressive stance in more equitable relationships such as romantic ones. She used it when she felt vulnerable, such as in times of conflict. Low self-esteem and the message that she had to be perfect contributed to this indirect style of

communication. Ultimately, she believed that she would be rejected because she was not perfect.

Her behaviours included holding in her anger, behaving coldly, instigating conflict and even ending relationships due to her own insecurity that ultimately she would be rejected by her partner. She described feeling anxious and fearful when engaged in long-term relationships, waiting to be exposed as not perfect. More generally, she acknowledged that this response and behaviour led to a general “fear of commitment” which has resulted in most of her relationships being short because she becomes scared and “sabotages” her relationships. She believes that the origins of this insecurity resulted from the “lack of unconditional love”, related to perfection, that she experienced in her childhood.

A passive aggressive approach was effective in many ways, but negative in others. It is likely that she continued to use such an approach, despite any negative results, because she was familiar and comfortable with it. Low self-esteem and feeling unequal to her partners may have also fueled this approach, continuing to provide a sense of safety for Julie. It afforded some distance between Julie and any conflict without exposing her true feelings of insecurity and hurt.

However, this distance may have also prevented her from enjoying the connection of being with another person. It allowed her to avoid her own emotions and avoid communicating directly in her relationships. At times she also used avoidance or escape as a way to cope. She would physically isolate herself in order to cope with her feelings and then come back to a given situation. However, she did not really want to be alone but

was not able to communicate her needs directly. She hoped that someone would come after her and console her but was not willing to show her vulnerability.

Julie acknowledged that both in the past and in the context of our interview that she finds it difficult to connect with and identify her emotions. She described her parents as intolerant of any emotion from her except for “fear” and they gave the message that emotions were associated with weakness and or manipulation. One of her fantasies mirrored this belief in that the only people to survive were those who had control over their emotions.

In university she found it helpful when a therapist had her use visual cues, pictures of faces expressing different emotions, to aid her in identifying her own emotions. As well, during our interview Julie acknowledged that she continues to find it difficult to identify and talk about her emotions. Often during the interview Julie’s affect was incongruent with the content that she was talking about. As the interview went on and she appeared more comfortable, there were moments when her emotions were at the surface.

Julie’s discomfort with her own emotions likely resulted from messages that she received from her parents. Growing up, Julie’s parents openly expressed anger both with each other and towards Julie. However, Julie was not permitted to express her own anger and frustration openly. As mentioned previously she began to utilize passive aggressive ways to express her anger. The only emotion that she felt was accepted at home was fear.

Fear combined with guilt seemed to provide a way for her parents to attempt to control Julie. This can be seen in the in anecdotes from her early childhood where she was afraid to tell her parents when she made a mistake because they would become very upset and

yell at her. It can also be seen in the message that she received about sex: “if it isn’t special with somebody you love, it will ruin it for the rest of the times for your life”.

This message may have contributed to Julie having difficulties having sex even when she felt ready. It also seems to be reflected in her fantasy life where initially in her imaginary world the introduction of sex was as rape because “sex was wrong”. She described it as “it [sex] would sort of happen, and then I would imagine that it was actually rape and that it didn’t actually happen, and that I didn’t actually want it”. She also had sexual fantasies that involved violence but again indicated that she protested this treatment but actually enjoyed the interaction. The rape fantasy may indicate a need for lack of control and thus responsibility due to the idea that “sex is wrong”. The violence combined with sex may also indicate the need for punishment. In both scenarios there is discord between the way that Julie is actually feeling and what she is conveying.

### Depression

There are several features of Julie’s narrative that are indicative of depression. During her childhood Julie described sadness and loneliness as constants in her life. She also experienced hopelessness and thoughts of suicide at times. Several of the themes previously mentioned contributed to the way she was feeling and she coped through avoidance, passive aggressive behaviour and the use of her imaginary world.

Julie often expressed the sadness and loneliness that she was feeling as a child through crying. However, crying became problematic for her because her parents viewed the crying as manipulation and her peers played on her vulnerability. At home, her parents yelling at her or ignoring her coupled with a lack of positive feedback also had a negative impact on her self-esteem. She felt that she could never live up to what they wanted. She

felt that her parents' love was conditional, and did not have a clear sense that her parents loved her while growing up.

In addition to negative experiences she had at home, there were also negative experiences at school. She had difficulty making and maintaining friendships and described repeatedly that she never felt like she "fit in" and was later given the feedback that she was "trying too hard". Significant teasing and bullying by her peers also lowered her self-esteem. She was labeled a "cry baby" and suffered significant teasing. She was afraid of her peer group and would often hide and isolate herself during free time in order to cope.

In high school she continued to feel the same way and also experienced some of the normal but painful feelings of betrayal and rejection associated with romantic relationships. She began to have thoughts of suicide in adolescence that would continue into her university years. She described feeling detached from her life and hopeless at times. She also became very interested in near death experiences and at times felt indifferent about living or thought it would be "easier" to be dead. Thoughts of death and imagining her own funeral were also a part of her imaginary world. However, her fantasy life also helped her to cope: "It was a place where all the things I was feeling bad about in my real world didn't exist anymore ... and it would have been a lot harder to deal with life if I didn't have this outlet".

While feelings of depression played a part throughout her life, Julie was affected by depression most acutely in her second and third years of university. There were multiple circumstances which contributed to the decline she experienced: her aunt becoming very ill and then dying, feeling assaulted by an ex-boyfriend, her parents disapproval of her

current boyfriend, stress from school, as well as frustration over difficulties having sex. She felt numb during this period, was unable to cry, and lost pleasure in previously enjoyable activities. She had difficulty concentrating, was isolating herself, and during an intense conversation about a relationship she was in, began to shake uncontrollably. Eventually she sought help and saw a therapist. The therapy covered her current concerns as well as many of the themes mentioned earlier.

### Fantasy

Julie's imaginary world was a major part of her life as a child and an adolescent, tapering off into her adult years. Even in her childhood she experienced guilt and shame about having her imaginary world but continued it, probably out of need. When she saw a therapist she sought affirmation that she was not abnormal for having such a vivid fantasy life and stopped feeling guilt and shame.

Julie's fantasy life reflects a developmental progression. Her first fantasies were fairly simple and involved imaginary friends. As she became older her imaginary world grew into more complex stories that focused on adventure and discovery. In her adolescent years her fantasies continued to focus on adventure but added romantic relationships. In more recent times her fantasy life has diminished in that the content is not new or reflects more adult themes such as sexuality (masturbation).

Fantasy played a major part in helping Julie to cope with the aspects of her life that contributed to depression. Her fantasies helped her cope in a number of ways: her fantasies provided social connection, replaced aspects of her life that were lacking, entertained her when she was bored and lonely and provided a creative outlet for her

imagination. There were many ways in which Julie's imaginary world had a positive influence on her life but there were also some negative aspects as well.

Julie's fantasy life seemed to provide some substitute for what she may have been lacking in her real life. She commented several times that her real life had an impact on her fantasy and that when there was more going on in her real life her fantasies diminished.

Her earliest fantasies seem to indicate needs that were not fulfilled by her parents. Her first fantasies involved a parent-like figure, Mr. Rogers, who validated how she felt in relation to her parents i.e. her parents were unfair. He was kind and supportive of her and introduced her to "friends" in her imaginary world, another aspect of her life that was missing. Later, Julie would eliminate her parents completely by having them killed in her imaginary world. Perhaps this was Julie's metaphorical way of taking control and eliminating them, or their influence, from her life. She also acknowledged that she generally "craved" adult attention and would seek it out.

Julie's fantasy life reflected many of the concerns of her real life. There are themes of being held prisoner and escaping, lonely, misunderstood, hated by others and having no friends. These themes were either directly or indirectly present in her real life. Her fantasy life seemed to be a venue for her to explore her feelings and help her to process them.

Her fantasy life also served as an escape in several different ways. In her early experiences she described her imaginary world as a way to escape from her parent's yelling at her all the time. It also provided a cure for boredom whether it was at the dinner table, doing chores, homework or even at work. She described "diving" into her



imaginary world at the beginning of high school as a way to cope with feeling afraid, lonely and out of place.

However, the use of fantasy as an escape may have also had a negative effect in that it supported avoidance and procrastination. Similarly it may have prevented Julie from confronting her feelings about a situation. For example, it may have been productive for her to confront her feelings of boredom regarding her choice of focus for career and school instead of using the fantasy to cope.

Julie's fantasy life served a social function in several ways. As an only child it mitigated the loneliness of not having siblings to play with. The imaginary world provided a playground for her imagination complete with friends and thus a form of social connection. The fantasies helped her to cope with feeling lonely throughout her childhood and adolescence. She described that her imaginary boyfriend was the only one who understood her and was very supportive of her when others (in her imaginary world) hated her and persecuted her. The effect of this supportive relationship can be seen most poignantly when she brought her imaginary boyfriend to school and it provided her with the social confidence that she usually lacked. This is a powerful example of where her fantasy life had a positive impact on her real life.

The connection between real life and fantasy was present in the romantic partners she chose. She could identify similar traits between her imaginary spy boyfriend and two of the men she dated more seriously. Her fantasy life also diminished when she had a real life boyfriend but resumed when she didn't have a boyfriend.

Her fantasy life had a negative effect on her romantic life. She described being disappointed by her romantic experiences because they did not live up to her elaborate

fantasy life romantic experiences. Her fantasies were dramatic and full of conflict, passion, and tension; real life did not live up to those standards when she compared the two. Julie described needing some of that conflict to be present in her real life relationships otherwise she would get “bored”. Julie’s fantasy life may have set up unrealistic expectations for romantic relationships and interfered with her enjoyment of her real life romances.

Her fantasy life also provided a source of empowerment for Julie in many instances. She was the smartest, best, most eloquent, most skilled, most talented, powerful person in her fantasies. This contrasts heavily with her real life where she was often feeling awkward and lonely. In addition to her achievements and status as a leader in her fantasies, Julie was also compassionate to the insecurities of others and provided support and encouragement for other characters, particularly children, in her fantasies.

Many of Julie’s fantasies had an altruistic element where she was able to help people in need and did not want any reward in return. She proudly gave up any money that she received to charities and was able to live a humble existence. This contrasts with her parent’s value that making money was an important part of being happy. Interestingly, her altruistic goals of “saving the world” still exist in the dreams that she has today (she has also renewed her interest in singing). She has shifted her career focus from computer science, to helping people stop smoking. She aspires to go further in helping people i.e. on a larger scale but has not determined how she will proceed with these higher goals. She wants to help people but also make lots of money and be successful, which can prove to be contradictory in our society where helping people is often undervalued.

Julie's aspirations for her romantic life are equally idealistic. She hopes for a passionate relationship where the chemistry doesn't fade. She envisions getting married some day, having children. There is, perhaps, an air of fantasy to Julie's future plans as they are vague and idealistic with no mention of any obstacles. It is unclear if this idealism helps motivate her to achieve her goals or whether it sets up unrealistic expectations. Perhaps, like the use of her imaginary world, there is a bit of both.

#### Structure, Narrative, Society

The structure of Julie's fantasies is also of some interest. She separated her fantasy world from her real life. So much so that it was difficult for her to relate the two in our interview. Similarly she had separated Hebrew school into separate memories as well. Perhaps, compartmentalizing the various aspects of her life was a way for her to cope: reality being separated from fantasy so as not to ruin the escape and pleasure of her imaginary world.

She also spent time planning and preparing her fantasies and described them as though she had another life. She organized them as narratives that were ongoing and malleable. She used television as a springboard for the stories of her imaginary world. The influence of television can be seen in her use of terms such as "editing", "rewinding", and "cutting". She also used other forms of media that she was exposed to such as plays.

The influence of society and the media can be seen in other ways. There are several aspects of Julie's story that are indicative of gender stereotypes and they can be derived from messages she received from her parents, media or society at large. For example, when attempting to make friends at university Julie described that she became "very cute

and girly and charming". The underlying message is that there is a socially acceptable role to play if you are female.

There is also a socially prescribed path to happiness for girls that include getting married and having children. This idea is mentioned several times in the narrative beginning with Julie's parents. Her parents want her to marry a "nice Jewish boy" and Julie's own thoughts reflect marriage as an important ingredient in her happiness. It had a powerful effect in preventing her from more seriously considering suicide because she wanted to find out what her "fairy tale ending was going to be". She attributes this future orientation to society's drive for young girls to idealize getting married and having children, not to her own drive and resiliency.

Similarly when projecting an ideal future she continues to use the same standards for happiness. It is unclear whether she has decided that these are now her goals or if she is continuing to be influenced by society's goals for her. There seems to be conflict in what Julie wants as an individual and society's standards. The following quote is indicative of that conflict:

I see myself as a very, very successful businesswoman having this huge home office that's very simple but decked with the highest of whatever things I need at the time: great computer, great telephone system. I'll be affecting people's lives all the time, getting a great ocean view. I'll be in a suit.

Julie's values are apparent in wanting to help people but the definition of success seems generalized rather than specific to her own goals.

The interview itself was debriefed upon completion and Julie expressed that the process prompted her to make connections that she had never thought of before and view

things from a new perspective. She appreciated the feedback that she received in the interview in the form of questions and connections that were made. Also, it was interesting for her to revisit many of the memories that she had. In particular, her imaginary world, which had been separated from her other memories. She also realized that depression “was kind of just there all along, just part of life and it wasn’t something I thought about because I was just always unhappy”.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

#### Comparative Findings

There are many aspects of Julie's narrative that are represented by the literature on fantasy and depression respectively but there are also features that contradict the literature or seem to go beyond it. As noted previously, the literature on the interaction between fantasy and depression is minimal and comprised of isolated references or indirect ones. Therefore the narrative presented examines the relationship between depression and fantasy with more thoroughness and complexity than any previous works. Similarly, the narrative presents specific parameters that have not been examined together i.e. the recurring fantasies of an adolescent female affected by depression. The literature examines these elements in isolation but not as a whole.

There are multiple functions of fantasy presented in Julie's story that present a complex and interactive portrayal of fantasy. It is not possible to simply state that her fantasy life was a negative influence or a positive one because it was both. Therefore, points presented in the literature that only allow for either a negative or positive function of fantasy are flawed. Similarly, definitions of fantasy and daydream should allow for both possibilities.

Julie uses the term "imaginary world" rather than "fantasy" or "daydreaming". The term "imaginary world" aptly describes "recurring daydreams" as opposed to fantasy in general. Singer's (1975) description of recurring fantasies as "extensive," "well-crystallized," "creative", complex and more story-like is an appropriate description of Julie's imaginary world. Julie describes her imaginary world as an ongoing storyline, full

of adventure that involves complex characters and plots. This contradicts Streissguth, Wagner, and Weschler's (1969) finding that women tend to have concrete, passive and practical daydreams that are unimaginative. In contrast to this Julie believes that her daydreams helped to develop her imagination and provided her with a creative outlet.

Person (1995) also addresses the nature of recurring fantasies stating that they are "familiar friends (sometimes enemies) that have an enormous impact on how we act and how we think about ourselves" (p. 94). This suggests the comfort that Julie's imaginary world provided as well as the dual nature of such fantasies as both a positive influence and a negative one.

Much of the literature found that people who daydream found it to be a pleasant experience (Singer, 1975; Taylor, Fulcomer, & Taylor, 1978) and this was true for Julie. However, the theme of shame is present in both the literature (Freud as cited in Person, 1995; Singer, 1975) and in Julie's narrative. Fantasy is often associated with the naiveté and immaturity of childhood or conversely with mental illness and pathology. However, fantasy is not accepted openly beyond childhood despite the literature indicating that the use of fantasy reaches a peak during adolescence. Also as most of the literature suggests, daydreams are not indicative of pathology (Singer, 1975; Streissguth, Wagner, Weschler, 1969) but beyond childhood fantasy is often seen as abnormal.

Despite evidence that fantasy is a normal part of the human experience, there is "shame" associated with fantasy and it often becomes secretive and hidden. This echoes Julie's experiences. She felt shame and guilt about her fantasies and did not share them openly with anyone. In fact, she separated her fantasies from her other

memories and sought reassurance that she was normal to have had fantasies when she was seeing a therapist in university.

The literature that explores fantasy from a developmental point of view seems to agree that fantasy reflects developmental themes (Singer, 1975; Klinger, 1971; Caughey, 1984) and increases as the play of childhood decreases (Freud as cited in Person, 1995; Singer, 1975; Klinger, 1971). Julie's narrative supports this finding. The TV shows that she used for inspiration for her imaginary world reflect her growth and changing interests. Her childhood fantasies began with Mr. Rogers and imaginary friends that she played with as a child and progressed into more complex action oriented storylines. In adolescence, her fantasies continued to include many of the same themes but added the element of romantic relationships, developmentally appropriate for adolescence, which became central in the fantasies.

Also, Julie's fantasies in childhood and adolescence reflect Singer's assertion that fantasies in adolescence help "develop a sense of power and autonomy, not only over parents but in general over one's life situation" (1975, p. 161). Her fantasies involve power dynamics; at times specifically involving her parents, and also reflect the development of her identity over time. Singer asserts that "the inner experience serves to buffer the stress of adolescence" (Singer, 1975, p. 160) and this is true for Julie most prominently in the adolescent period but also in her younger years when she struggled with feelings associated with depression.

The use of her imaginary world also seemed to peak in adolescence as the literature suggests. Julie's need for and involvement in her imaginary world was most prominent in her early teens. Her fantasy life declined rapidly in university and



changed. Her occasional use of her imaginary world yielded no further new content when revisited and adult fantasies used for the purpose of masturbation became more prominent.

There are many aspects of Julie's fantasy life that are represented by the literature and others that are not. Freud (as cited in Person 1995), Caughey (1984), and Klinger (1971) present the idea that fantasy relates to something that is missing or lacking in a person's life. Specifically Freud (as cited in Person 1995) refers to "wish fulfillment" and an "unsatisfying reality" in reference to the function of fantasy. Klinger (1971) focuses on goals that have not yet been achieved and Caughey posits that fantasy is "the product of the individual's psychological needs" (1984, p. 163). These concepts can be seen in Julie's narrative. Her "unsatisfying realities" included her home environment with her parents yelling at her as well as the school environment where she had no friends and felt sad and lonely. She wanted her parents to be more understanding, supportive and accepting. She also wanted to have friends to play with at school. Her earlier fantasies where she visited with Mr. Rogers, had friends or even imagined herself as an orphan are representative of wanting some of those things that she didn't have. She also displayed the compassion she wanted from others in the way she provided support to other children in her fantasies.

Julie often portrayed a better version of herself in her fantasies, which is consistent with comments made by both Singer (1975) and Caughey (1984). She was confident, well spoken, talented, and respected as a leader. She aspired for all of those traits in her real life. She also acknowledged that when she had a boyfriend in her real life she would temporarily stop using her fantasy world and resume it when the real life relationship

ended. This can be seen as the idea of “wish-fulfillment” but can also be seen as an exploration of herself. However, there is clearly a link between fantasy and reality.

Singer (1975), Klinger (1990) and Caughey (1984) strongly support the idea that fantasy and reality are related. There are several examples of this more direct relationship in Julie’s narrative. For example, there are aspects of Julie’s values and identity that are clearly portrayed in her fantasy life which are eventually enacted in her real life. The confidence and leadership abilities that she formerly longed for have become a reality for her now. The altruistic values that began in her fantasy life have now been integrated into the career path she has chosen of helping people.

Julie’s imaginary boyfriends also had an impact on her reality. This is evident in Julie’s account of “bringing” her imaginary boyfriend to school with her and her own insight that she felt more confident and outgoing when he was with her. She was also able to relate the traits of her imaginary boyfriend to two of the real men that she had dated more seriously.

Caughey’s perspective that “imaginary worlds are social worlds” (1984, p. 29), is an extension of the ideas presented thus far. The idea that fantasy relationships “often fill gaps in the individual’s social world” (Caughey, 1984, p. 49) can be seen prominently in Julie’s narrative. Many of the examples previously mentioned support this idea but there are two aspects of Julie’s fantasies that exemplify this concept. The first is the friends that she creates in her early fantasies to alleviate the loneliness and isolation that she was feeling. The second is the boyfriends that become a central part of her adolescent fantasies. Again, the boyfriends helped her to cope with feeling like an outsider, not feeling understood and generally feeling isolated.

There are a variety of other ways that fantasy can be used to cope. Singer (1975) mentions the use of fantasy and daydreaming as a way to cope with boredom and a prelude to sleeping. The majority of Julie's fantasizing occurred at night before bed and she also admitted to using fantasy as a way to cope with boredom. She engaged in the planning of her imaginary world at the dinner table when bored, and used fantasy scenarios to get through chores.

Several authors (Singer, 1975; Klinger, 1990; Caughey, 1984; Goldstein and Baskin, 1998; Taylor, Fulcomer and Taylor, 1978; Mueller, 1990) refer to the use of daydreams as a tool for problem solving, particularly in relation to rehearsal for future events. This did not seem to be a function of Julie's fantasies. Perhaps this feature of daydreams is more indicative of fleeting short-term fantasies than the recurring type examined in this study. Julie's daydreams were also not future oriented although aspects of her future direction in life were reflected indirectly in the content of her fantasies. For example, her interest in singing evolved out of her fantasies and has become a renewed current interest in adulthood.

Generally, Julie's daydreams helped her to cope but there were also negative aspects to her use of fantasy. Singer (1975) and Caughey (1984) both mention the possibility of fantasies setting up unrealistic expectations for reality that can lead to disappointment. Julie seems to get caught in this negative aspect of fantasy in that her romantic fantasy life surpassed the reality of romance and the two did not compare favourably. She was disappointed by many of the physical aspects of romantic relationships. Similarly, Julie's fantasy life was dramatic and full of conflict whereas her real life often was not. In particular, she craved the conflict and drama she experienced in her fantasy relationships

in her real life relationships as well. At times this need for conflict seemed to have a negative impact on her relationships.

Singer's assertion that fantasy can be used as an "evasion of responsibility" (1975, p. 182) is seen in Julie's use of fantasy to procrastinate or avoid working. Caughey (1984) also suggests that people can become "lost" in their fantasies to the exclusion of the outside world and Julie's narrative suggests that this may have been a problem for her. She used her imaginary world to cope with feeling lonely isolated and rejected but in some ways retreating into her imaginary world also perpetuated this loneliness.

However Julie did not seem to use her imaginary world to replay negative events or anticipate the future in negative ways such as the concept of ruminative thoughts (Martin & Tesser, 1996) would suggest. Her fantasies did reflect some of the negative content of her life i.e. Loneliness, sadness but did not seem to perpetuate those feelings. Instead the fantasy seemed to provide an outlet for her to process what she was feeling in reality, as she was often able to overcome those feelings in her imaginary world.

The relationship between fantasy and depression in Julie's life is complex and multilayered. The depression that she experienced was grounded in feelings of sadness, isolation, loneliness, low self-esteem and thoughts of suicide. At times she felt numbness, hopelessness and a sense of detachment from her own life. These symptoms are endorsed by Beck (1970) as indicative of depression. He also posits that depressed people have a desire to escape in some way and suicide can be seen as the most extreme form of escape. This is consistent with Julie's use of her imaginary world as a form of escape. An example of this is Julie's description of "diving" into her imaginary world at the beginning of high school in order to cope with feeling awkward, lonely and isolated.

However, Beck (1970), Freud (as cited in Person 1995) and Klinger (1990) believed that individual's who are affected by depression have negative fantasies that contribute to the depression. Although, both allow for the possibility that fantasy can be used in a therapeutic way to help alleviate depression. Primarily, Julie's imaginary world helped her to cope with feelings of depression and occurred without therapeutic intervention. Aspects of Julie's depression such as feeling hated, lonely, sad and isolated were a part of Julie's fantasies but provided her an avenue to explore and work through those feelings rather than encouraging a ruminative cycle. Also, as mentioned previously Julie's fantasies were not future oriented and therefore did not contribute to a negative perception of the future as suggested by Beck (1970), Segal, Huber, & Singer (1980), and Starker & Singer (1975) or a positive one as suggested by Person (1995). However, she did have a future orientation that related to her depression and was indicative of resiliency. Her curiosity about her own future prevented her from considering suicide more seriously. Although, societal expectations were embedded in her curiosity about who she would marry and what her life would be like, and this is consistent with Stoppard's (2000) findings that society and gender have a powerful influence on depression.

Julie's experiences are also consistent with Milne & Lancaster's (2001) findings that "...adolescent females are more vulnerable to symptoms of depression when they perceive low levels of maternal care, experience feelings of dependency, experience self-criticism, experience feelings of guilt, have poor attachments to parents, or have poor attachments to peers. (2001, p. 218). Stoppard (2000) and Baron & Campbell (1993)

argue that gender stereotypes influence the manifestation of depression. Julie's "crying" and feelings of excessive guilt may be seen as stereotypically "female".

The findings represented by Julie's narrative are consistent with Singer's assertion "that daydreaming is a neutral skill available for adaptive enrichment of the life of otherwise ordinary persons as well as a manifestation in many persons of escape, evasion of responsibility, or self-dissatisfaction" (Singer, 1975, p. 169). There are multiple functions of fantasy presented in Julie's narrative. There are negative aspects to Julie's use of fantasy but primarily engaging in fantasy was a pleasant experience that provided an important way for Julie to cope with feelings of depression.

#### Implications for Counselling

The grounding of fantasy in reality offers the potential for the therapeutic use of fantasy. An exploration of fantasy in a therapeutic context allows another avenue for the therapist to understand a client. Similarly, the process of examining fantasies may inherently provide insight for an individual. Klinger supports this idea saying "people come to know themselves in part through the content of their fantasies" (1971, p. 142). The research presented here also supports the idea that an examination of fantasy may reveal aspects of a person's life that are lacking or missing. However, the exploration should be a co-construction rather than didactic.

Singer (1975), Klinger (1990) and Caughey (1984) all support the potential for fantasy to be a powerful tool for coping. Klinger summarizes this potential stating that "all this means that daydreams reveal something about what daydreamers are after and something about the way they perceive, think about, and act about their world" (1990, p. 37) and "they are in the main an essential personal resource for coping with life" (1990, p. 307).

The literature and this study supports the idea that fantasy can help individuals cope with depression. Depression, like fantasy is largely based in cognition and the literature suggests that fantasy may be a contributing factor to depression or may help to alleviate it. The case study presented shows fantasy as a way to cope with feelings of depression and demonstrates the power that fantasy can have over depression. This can be used in a therapeutic setting to further empower the fantasy over the depression or conversely individuals can be encouraged and taught to engage in fantasy as a tool to fight depression. Similarly, in clients who have fantasies that contribute to depression, a therapist can work with those fantasies just as one would work with more overt cognitions, to make the fantasies more positive and helpful.

#### Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As mentioned previously, there are numerous advantages to the use of a case study approach in the study of fantasy and depression. However, there are limitations to such an approach. Foremost, the sample is limited because there was only one participant. In this case the parameters for that individual included being female, experiencing depression during adolescence, and also having a recurring fantasy life at the same time as the depression. In this particular case study the individual experienced feelings of depression throughout her life as opposed to only in adolescence. Also in examining the phenomena of recurring fantasy, other forms of fantasy are either omitted or not explored fully. Finally, due to the limited sample size in case study research, the findings are not generalizable

Due to the lack of research on the interaction between fantasy and depression, there are many avenues that have not yet been explored. In terms of methodology, a

quantitative approach studying the interaction between fantasy and depression has the potential to reveal trends in terms of the function of fantasy as well as looking at a multitude of factors such as culture, gender, socio-economic status, education etc.

There are a variety of ways that the study presented could be modified slightly to explore different populations. It would be interesting to examine the interaction between fantasy and depression from a cross-cultural perspective, particularly in the context of cultures that may view fantasy and/or depression differently. It would also be interesting and informative to examine a psychiatric population with a diagnosis of major depressive disorder. Similarly, an approach that differentiates between individuals who use fantasy to cope with depression as opposed to those who use it to ruminate would provide valuable therapeutic information. Also, the literature suggests sex differences for both depression and fantasy, which indicates that a similar qualitative study focusing on male experiences is necessary.



## Appendix A

### Lifeline Procedures

The following procedures will be explained to the participant prior to commencement of the activity and all writing will be done by the participant if possible.

The lifeline will begin by drawing a line across a large piece of paper with the left end representing "earliest memories" and the right end as "present".

1. The participant will be asked to recall their earliest memories.
2. The lifeline will be continued chronologically until their present status and possibly beyond into the future.

Birth-----Present

3. Depression and Fantasy will be interwoven into the lifeline during the process or afterwards.

## Appendix B

## DSM IV Criteria for Dysthymic Disorder

- A. Depressed mood for most of the day, for more days than not, as indicated either by subjective account or by observation by other, for at least 2 years. Note: In children and adolescents, mood can be irritable and duration must be at least 1 year.
- B. Presence, while depressed, of two (or more) of the following:
  - (1) poor appetite or overeating
  - (2) insomnia or hypersomnia
  - (3) low energy or fatigue
  - (4) low self-esteem
  - (5) poor concentration or difficulty making decisions
  - (6) feelings of hopelessness
- C. During the 2- year period (1 year for children or adolescents) of the disturbance, the person has never been without the symptoms in Criteria A and B for more than 2 months at a time.
- D. No Major Depressive Episode (see p. 356) has been present during the first 2 years of the disturbance (1 year for children and adolescents): i.e., the disturbance is not better accounted for by chronic Major Depressive Disorder, or Major Depressive Disorder, in Partial Remission.
- E. There has never been a Manic Episode (see p. 362), a Mixed Episode (see p. 365), or a Hypomanic Episode (see p. 368), and criteria have never been met for Cyclothymic Disorder.
- F. The disturbance does not occur exclusively during the course of a chronic Psychotic Disorder, such as Schizophrenia or Delusional Disorder.
- G. The symptoms are not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., hypothyroidism).
- H. The symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions

The following can be considered samples of the kinds of questions or prompts that may be used in the interview. It is important to note that the interview is semi-structured and will utilize open-ended questions as much as possible. Most of the structure for the interview will come from the use of a lifeline format. The following is intended to provide an idea of the types of questions used as well as the scope of topics. It is in no way exhaustive, as the researcher will be responding to the participant throughout the process.

When did you first notice depression in your life?

In what ways was depression present?

How did different aspects of your life contribute or fight against the depression?

What were the important relationships during this time?

How did the depression progress?

What were some of the emotions that you were feeling?

What was your role during the depression?

When did you first notice that the depression was becoming less powerful?

What role does depression play in your life today?

What was it like for you to write about the daydreams?

Tell me about the fantasies that you were having during that time?

What role did fantasy play in your life?

What kinds of emotions were you feeling while engaged in daydreaming?

What role did the fantasies take before and after the depression?

How did the fantasies interact with the depression?

How does it feel to revisit both the fantasy and the depression?

Is there anything that you have learned about yourself through the process of writing or in this interview?

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