

THE SO-CALLED “DEVIANT” SEXUALITIES: PERVERSION OR RIGHT TO DIFFERENCE?

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet became one more vehicle where people, occasionally or routinely, may enjoy or accomplish sexual fantasies and desires, often unconfessable and frustrated in their love and sexual relationships, safely and anonymously, without their real identities being revealed. Similarly, the Internet provides opportunities for men and women, regardless of sexual orientation, marital status or age, and with distinct sexual preferences, to make come true, in the “real” world, a contact started and kept through online communication (Martins & Grassi, 2001). Starting from the premise that the definition of “normality” is historically and culturally built, concepts such as “normal”, “healthy” and “pathological” are being questioned by all professionals who are interested in the study and comprehension of human sexuality. The innumerable manifestations of human sexuality, so as the most varied searches for pleasure, confirm once more that, for the human being, sexuality is not linked to procreation. The dynamics of human sexuality – what leads an individual to have the sexuality one has – has been an object of study since ancient times, without a consent being reached, which has led to the search of new paradigms for understanding the so-called “deviant” sexual behaviors. One of the reasons that

make the comprehension of unconventional sexual interests difficult is that the traditional sexual paradigm, based on psychology and psychiatry, as well as on popular opinion, assumes that procreation is the most important biological function (Fog, 1992). Most collected and studied data about so-called “deviant” behaviors were based on cases considered pathological. Such studies were made under the legal medical view, or having as reference people who sought for psychiatric and/or psychological treatment because their sexual preferences “deviated” from “normal” sexual behavior (Ceccarelli, 2000) – understood as heterosexual relationship, ending on genital penetration and with the intention of procreating. Certain so-called “deviant” practices, such as Sexual Sadism and Masochism and also Fetishism, are categorized as “paraphilias” and dysfunctional behaviors in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (Fourth Edition), DSM-IV, by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) and in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems – 10th revision (1999), by the World Health Organization, which has generated many debates regarding diagnostic criteria, with which many professionals who are interested in the study of “alternative” sexual practices do not agree.

This study aims to explore human sexuality in its most diverse variations such as BDSM (Bondage/Discipline, Dominance/Submission, Sadism/Masochism) or SM, and Fetishism, through an online questionnaire sent to a group of people who describe themselves as BDSM and Fetish practitioners, and who have in the Internet their referential for the exchange and search of information, as well as the search for partners who share the same sexual fantasies.

This study has no intention of encouraging or condemning the choice of sexual practices, but of exploring the diversity of adult human sexuality of a group of people in the context of the contemporary Brazilian society.

METHOD

An e-mail was sent to the various discussion groups and classified ads posted on websites directed to consensual BDSM and Fetish practitioners in Brazil, and who use the Internet as a means of exchanging and obtaining information and contact with people who share the same sexual fantasies. The exploratory character of the study was explained, that it would be conducted basically via e-mail, and that the real identity of the participants would be preserved. Those who were interested should be over 18 years old, their sexual orientation or marital status notwithstanding. It was asked to the volunteers that they got in touch by replying the sent e-mail. One hundred and eleven people from various Brazilian states manifested their interest in participating. They were sent, then, a questionnaire with questions such as why they used the Internet, which sexual practices they were involved in, how and when they became interested in sexual activities that were considered “different” and how they felt about having pleasure with practices that are considered unconventional.

Information on their age, religious formation, sex, marital status, education and sexual orientation were also the object of interest for the research. It was not the aim of the present study to establish diagnostic criteria of the researched sample, or describing in details the unconventional sexual practices.

DISCUSSION

In spite of the growing evolution observed along the years in human sciences and in the technologic and scientific fields, sexuality is still the object of much speculation, prejudice and taboo. If we observe the diverse current reactions in face of sexual manifestations, we will see how much such reactions remain unchanged throughout History. Although the sixties' "sexual revolution" and the innumerable movements aiming at the recognition of human rights (especially the feminist) have changed the social scenery, sexuality is still an enigma for the human being and the object of many discussions since antiquity.

From the 5th Century on, due mainly to the leading Christian Fathers - Augustine, Jerome and Thomas of Aquinas - sexuality was linked to and procreation: the unquestionable example that follows is the "naturally heterosexual" life of animals. All sexual practice that falls out of that norm would bring what is known as the "negative pleasure stigma". Then, a form of morality that is essentially a sexual morality appeared. Practices "against nature" – considered offensive to decency, to custom and to public opinion – bring out severe sanctions, so that "normal" may be kept. However – History shows that – such an objective was never reached: sexuality always escaped all attempts of normatization (Ceccarelli, 2000).

In the late 19th Century, the contemporary psychiatric discourse appears, marked by the same moralistic view; it maintains the theological and juridical positions, bringing to the medical order what was, until then, from the juridical. The great psychopatologists of that epoch, among them Havellock-Ellis (1888) and Krafft-Ebing (1890), classified and labeled the sexual practices that escaped moral rules. A detailed inventory of the so-called "deviant" sexualities was traced, in which new forms of sexual practices (those which use the other for obtaining pleasure and in

which the natural finality of sexuality – procreation – is subverted) were created: homosexuality, voyeurism, exhibitionism, sadism, masochism, joining the endless psychiatric nosography of that time. It is also when some terms, that later became classical, are introduced: perversion (1882, Charcot and Magna), narcissism (1888, Havellock-Ellis), auto-erotism (1899, Havellock-Ellis), sadism and masochism (1890, Krafft-Ebbing) [Ceccarelli, 2000].

In the late 19th Century and, in a stronger way, in the early 20th Century, Sigmund Freud, in his most important text on sexuality, the “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality” published in 1905, sustains that subordinating sexuality to the reproductive function is “a too limited criterion”. In Freudian perspective, sexuality is against nature, that is, as far as sexuality is concerned, there is no “human nature” (Ceccarelli, 2000).

Joyce McDougall and the concept of “Neo-Sexuality”

Contemporary author Joyce McDougall (1997) made an important and innovative reading of Freud, regarding perversion. According to the theoretical perspective of the author, the word “perversion” has a depreciative connotation and points towards negativity, since one never hears of someone who was “perverted” to good. The author maintains that, besides the moralistic implication in the vernacular use of the word, the current standard of psychiatric and psychoanalytic classification is equally questionable. When labeling and diagnosing someone as “neurotic”, “psychotic”, “psychosomatic” or “perverted”, the innumerable variations of psychic structures of each clinical category are not taken into account, losing sight of the most remarkable aspect of human beings in their genetic structure, which is their “singularity” (McDougall, 1997, p 186). Regarding the so-called perverted sexualities

like fetishism and sadomasochist practices, she verifies that those occur in the quality of erotic games in sexual activities of non-perverted adults, be they heterosexual or homosexual, so that such practices do not provoke conflict, for they are not experienced as compulsive or as exclusive conditions for sexual pleasure. But heterosexual or homosexual adults who only have fetishist or sadomasochist erotic scripts, for whom those sexual practices are the only means of access to sexual relations, there must be care as to want those people to lose their heterodox versions of desire, simply because they may be considered symptomatic. Instead of “perversion”, McDougall (1997, p 188) prefers to name them “neo-sexualities”. According to the author, the term “perversion” would be more appropriated as a label for acts in which an individual imposes personal desires and conditions on someone who does not wish to be included in that sexual script (as in the case of rape, of voyeurism and exhibitionism) or seduces a non-responsible individual (as a child or a mentally disturbed adult) [McDougall, 1997, p 192].

The Manuals of Mental Health and Project ReviseF65

Svein Skeid is one of the responsables for the Project ReviseF65 or Project ICD (www.revisef65.org) that aims to mobilize, through a website and a discussion group on the Internet, SM/Leather/Fetish groups and professionals in the field of mental health in all the world, with the purpose of taking away the psychiatric diagnoses (“paraphilias”) of Fetishism, Transvestism and Sadomasochism from the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (www.revisef65.org/ICD10.html), published by the World Health Organization (WHO). The diagnoses of “paraphilia” may serve as a justification for stigmatization and violence against sexual minorities. Several reports of violence against

Sadomasochism and Fetish practitioners may be found in the ReviseF65 website (www.revisef65.org). The U.S. Leather Leadership Conference reports that thirty to fifty percent of the SM population suffers discrimination, violence or persecution due to their sexual orientation. Project ICD states that “Stigmatizing minorities by diagnosing their sexual orientation is on the contrary as disrespectful as discriminating people because of their race, ethnicity or religion (www.desejosecreto.com.br/revisef65.html)”. It is, undoubtedly, a legitimate proposal in defense of the human rights of sexual minorities.

Countries as Denmark, in consonance with the legitimate needs and rights of sexual minorities, have totally withdrawn the diagnoses of sadomasochism from their health manuals in 1995.

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder – Fourth Edition (DSM-IV, 1995, pp 495) also classifies Fetishism and Sexual Sadism and Masochism as “paraphilias”, in which, besides the existent recurring and intense fantasies and sexual impulses or behavior involving those practices (Criterion A), those fantasies, sexual impulses or behaviors must cause a clinically significant suffering or damage in social or occupational functioning or in other important areas of the individual’s life (Criterion B) [DSM-IV, 1995, p 495]. In case Criterion B is not met, the sexual variants above are not considered pathologic or symptomatic, configuring only a variation of adult human sexuality.

Due to the lack of information and knowledge of what consensual erotic practices are about, their practitioners are erroneously classified as victims or perpetrators of coercitive acts of violence and sexual abuse.

BDSM Concepts and Practices

Consensual fetishist and sadomasochist practices are not easily defined, for they include a wide range of behaviors from which many practitioners do not appreciate all roles and activities, being the detailed description of each BDSM or Fetishist practice beyond the scope of the present study. We will focus, however, on the most general terms.

The term “BDSM”, that refers to the sadomasochist universe as a whole, involves all its aspects – dominance, submission, bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism, while SM means “sadomasochism” (Paschoal, 2002, p 14). However, the relationship between them is analogous to the distinction between the terms “homosexual” and “gay” (Moser, 1996, p 24).

According to this author’s theoretic perspective, “Dominance and Submission (DS) implies the deliberate transference of psychological and sexual control from one partner to the other without, necessarily, elements of physical pain or humiliation”. The term “Bondage and Discipline”, “B&D” or “B/D” refers to sexual practices with various kinds of immobilization or physical restraint, while “Discipline” indicates the acting out of fantasies that relate to punishment/penalties like, for example, the “teacher/student” fantasy. “Humiliation” refers to role-playing scenes in which the dominant partner detains control of power over the submissive partner, inflicting and ritualizing psychologic tortures, like verbal insults of a sexual conotation. Regarding the terms “sadist” and “masochist”, there is a more physiological conotation, in which people experiment pleasure sensations in giving and/or receiving carefully controlled spanking with slippers or whips (Moser, 1996, p 25). The word “leather” is used in the sadomasochist community by gays and lesbians (Moser, 1996, p 63).

Other behaviors also generally included in the sadomasochist practice are “age play”, a fetish that demands a partner to act as being of a different age, sometimes

older, sometimes younger (playing as a baby, for example); forced or voluntary feminization of male submissives who wear high heel shoes, lingerie and female dresses (“crossdressing”), and also sexual plays involving urine and excrements. Paschoal (2002, p 16) maintains that “each of these concepts has personal, individual and unique aspects, like the people who practice them... Each one is free to choose which and how they prefer them... It is impossible to follow them in a literal way, since human creativity and individual freedom are what is the most precious in the human being”. With the same creativity, the BDSM community created the term “vanilla”, for referring to conventional sexual practices that do not involve any SM component (Scott, 1997, p3). The “Safety, Sanity and Consensuality” triad (Brame G, Brame W & Jacobs, 1993, p 49) is considered a basic norm for consensual unconventional practices and may never be ignored or neglected. Paschoal (2002, p 22) states that the non-existence of any of the SSC aspects makes any and all BDSM relationship totally inviable.

By “Consensuality”, Moser (1996, p 31) understands the voluntary agreement firmed between the participants of the erotic play, in which the limits of each participants are honored. He explains that domestic abuse that occurs between a couple cannot be named “SM”, for SM is consensual, and abuse imposed on a partner is not. We may use as an example sexual intercourse and rape, where the former is consented and the latter is imposed by coercion. Therefore, the difference between sadomasochism and true violence is to be found in “informed consent” (Moser, 1996, p 31). “Sanity” refers to being aware of what the participants are doing in an SM scene: it is a *fantasy* that does not correspond to reality. Certain BDSM practices imply considerable risk. In this sense, the knowledge of the partner, the establishment of limits and knowing the risks inherent to each practice are very

important factors for the erotic BDSM play to be safe and pleasant. It is also worth saying that safety involves some prohibitions. As it is extremely important that one has complete awareness of what one is doing, the use of alcohol or any kind of drugs is severely unadvisable before or during the BDSM scene or play (Paschoal, 2002, p 27). In case any physical or psychological limit is surpassed, the use of a “safeword” reestablishes the limits of physical and emotional safety of the participants and the play is immediately interrupted (Paschoal, 2002, p 25).

According to Brame, G, Brame, W & Jacobs (1993, p 358), the word *fetish* comes from the Portuguese word *fetiço* and it is said to be used for the first time by Portuguese explorers in the 15th Century, for describing sacred images. In its anthropologic meaning, fetish is linked to sacred artifacts that are invested of spiritual powers. For fetishists, the erotic fetish is the symbol of the divine itself, being able to arouse and even to induce their devotees to ecstasy. Examples of erotic fetishes are found in those who admire a pair of shoes, instead of the feet that wear them; or the feet are considered extremely arousing, in detriment of the human body as a whole. All human beings are fetishists to some degree. In Brazilian culture, buttocks are the object of national adoration, while in American culture, breasts are extremely valued. In China, small female feet are extremely sexy. This demonstrates that different cultures elect their own fetishes. As Paschoal (2002, p 68) illustrates very well, “a fetish would be a specific preference in a universe of possibilities... BDSM is more like a fantasy full of fetishes. So as a masochist prefers (or has the fetish of) receiving pain, or being tortured exclusively with ropes, or with candles, or with ice, or with all alternatives, or with none of them, the sadist prefers (or has the fetish of) causing pain. They are all fetishes”.

Regarding Brazilian reality, the Internet became a powerful vehicle for the search of information and contacts for people who are interested in the erotic sadomasochist and fetishist practices, largely contributing for the formation of a “virtual” subculture of sexual minorities. The Brazilian BDSM movement is at an embryony state, but growing, with hundreds of websites (see www.associacaobdsm.com.br) and discussion groups (www.yahoo.com.br and www.msn.com.br), trying to form a gathering movement that provides recognition, visibility and contacts outside “virtual” reality, following an international tendency proposed by American organization “The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom” (NCSF), that fights for equal rights in the legal, political and social fields for adults who are engaged in the practice of alternative sexual expressions. According to articles on SM available in their website (www.ncsfreedom.org), NCSF explains that Sadomasochism is not abuse or domestic violence, being the latter “a pattern of intentional intimidation of one partner to coerce or isolate the other partner without consent” (www.ncsfreedom.org/what.htm), as opposed to what happens in BDSM practices, in which the partners involved agree on everything that will happen in the erotic play, besides being well informed about possible consequences of the erotic power exchange game. It also explains that domestic violence may occur in any group of people, including SM practitioners, but with the difference that within the sadomasochist community domestic violence is not forgiven, and victims as well as abusers are encouraged to look for specialized help.

RESULTS

Table 1

	Quantitative data from the researched sample (<i>n</i> = 111)	%
Sex	Male	93,7
	Female	6,3
Age	18-25	18,9
	26-35	41,4
	36-45	30,6
	46-55	8,1
	+55	0,9
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	84,7
	Bisexual	9,9
	Gay	5,4
Marital Status	Married	31,5
	Single	52,3
	Separated/Divorced	16,2
Education	Senior High School	16,2
	Graduation	70,3
	Post-Graduation	13,5
Religion	Catholic	53,2
	Protestant	2,7
	Spiritist	12,6
	Agnostic	5,4
	Atheist	5,4
	None	14,4
	Other	6,3
Practices	Dominance/Sadism	32,4
	Submission/Masochism	43,3
	Switchers (role reversal)	15,3
	Crossdressing	1,8
	Foot Fetish	4,5
	Other	2,7
Participation of partner	Yes	36,1
	No	25,2
	No steady partner	38,7

As we may see from table 1, the great majority of the total sample (*n* = 111) is composed by heterosexuals, but only seven (6,3 %) respondents are female, being four (4) officially married and three (3) single. The number of people who have partners and practice the same sexual fantasies, 36,1%, was larger than expected.

It is interesting to point out that in sexual practices involving Submission and Masochism (43,3%) only six (6) are heterosexual women, while the rest of the group are males, regardless of sexual orientation. Catholic religion (53,2%) has more representatives (which reflects Brazil's religious proportions). The education level is high, 70,3 being graduated and 13,5% post-graduated.

CONCLUSION

We will quote below excerpts from some reports for illustrating the qualitative part of the study, in which respondents talk about how they feel regarding their sexual experiences and the topics that were approached in the questionnaire they answered.

- SS, post-graduated, fetishist, 35, married: "When I was about five years old, I remember getting aroused by wearing satin gowns, I liked to urinate on them and feel the smell of urine for many days... Since I was a child I realized I had 'different' desires, but I was only able to understand that in fact these fetishes are not an 'aberration of nature' three years ago, with the Internet... on the net I saw, talked to and knew there are people with the same tastes".

- S., enterprise administrator, masochist, 34, married, remembers: "There was this game of police and thieves and the girls were always the police and the boys were the thieves. Girls ran after, caught and arrested the boys. I remember that when I was arrested, I always asked to be tied up, or I would run away; so I developed, unnoticed, my instinct of submission to females... A fantasy that impressed me in my child and teen years was 'Catwoman' from the Batman series... Today, seeing it again with experienced eyes, I can perceive a very explicit fetishist citation. Catwoman was beautiful, that latex suit tight on her body... Whenever she captured the heroes, they were tied up and were at her feet... She was always shown, in her

hideout, sitting on a throne on a pedestal, and her helpers sat on the floor at her feet... sometimes she found a way to step on a helper... pure fetish”.

- Fbond, importer, bondage fetishist, 31, married: “I take bondage and fetishism very seriously, I don’t like anything that causes pain, but I like the seduction allied to bondage, underwear, insinuating clothes (but not vulgar), I am cultured... I found out I was a fetishist at age 8 watching a Jerry Lewis movie and now I have more than 150 tapes of that kind... I consider myself a very friendly person, so I think it’s absurd that a fetishist should be put in the class of “abnormals”. Maybe there are even cases like that, but it’s not the majority”.

- Al Z, dominator, post-graduated in System Analysis, 38, married, reports: “Since I was a child, I appreciated scenes with bound or spanked women (generally in movies), when I knew nothing about sex... I think it was instinctive... I awoke to my fantasies five or six years ago, when I accidentally entered a site... at that time, I was 32 or 33 and that fact totally changed my life... Bondage and spanking (female buttocks) arouse me a lot, and also other forms of physical and psychological domination like, for example, transforming my partner into a dog, putting on her a collar and a leash... My relationship with my spouse is ‘standard’, that is, it follows religious and social rules for marriage... She doesn’t know about my incursions into the virtual world, not even that I look for someone to make my fantasies come true in the ‘real’. I feel like an absolutely normal person... What I think is that society is really afraid to admit that who likes BDSM (within the erotic context, of course) is a normal human being. People always look forward to living with more pleasure and BDSM is one more alternative form of reaching it fully... I never opened up to someone as much as I’m doing to you now, but I feel very good, because it was suffocating me”.

- J., System Analyst, submissive, 32, single: "I feel perfectly normal and even – why not – privileged, for knowing how to explore my sexuality in a different and much more intense way than most people do. I'm very happy to have enough capacity to understand my fetish and to enjoy it in a healthy, safe and very peculiar way".

- N., administrative assistant, bondage, 26, single: "I like to be bound and completely immobilized, to feel completely vulnerable in the hands of my partner, not being passive but struggling because I was tied up, as if I was forced to be in that situation, not accepting passively that the other ties me up, but trying to 'escape', to get free, and end up being 'defeated' by his strength and technique... the deprivation of senses, like vision and speech... this way they become sharper, but not knowing what the other person is going to do is an incomparable sensation... being gagged is an indescribable sensation... Putting all that together is an inexplicable sensation... Sincerely, I feel more normal than other people, I accept myself. I think what is abnormal is people neglecting themselves, or even living a façade relationship and looking beyond for the fulfillment of their fantasies... I believe that people can only be totally happy when they look for a relationship that fulfills them totally... (that is) difficult, but living a double life is still more difficult... in one of them you will be acting out... The society in which we live in is hypocrite... everyone has fantasies, but to fit the 'normal' standard, they don't recognize it and even criticize and get shocked with other people's opinion. I believe that each one owns their life and owe no explanation to others about what they like or dislike within four walls; better yet, I think we must be free to live out our fantasies and other quotidian things too; of course, respecting the other's limits and space. For me, BDSM is a form of pleasure, it is a vast world with many branches and each person chooses among those what really gives them pleasure... I chose mine and I am not

bothered by the fact that society does not accept it or thinks I am an aberration... I feel more normal than everyone, for I am sincere with myself, I recognize and accept myself like that and it makes me happy..."

- M.H., dentist, crossdresser, submissive, 39, married: "I am married and my wife takes part in everything and has dominated me for over one year... As you may see, I'm a submissive crossdresser and I behave accordingly. I'm my wife's sissy. I dress as a woman everytime I can, do all housework and I'm a woman for my wife. I'm totally passive and she is active... I often get spanked and humiliated, and I love it... I found out that what I felt and did was in tune with the BDSM universe when I was 18. But not knowing it was a BDSM attitude, ever since I can remember... since 6 or 7... I loved to play house with my cousins and I was always the housemaid, always working and humiliated. This was the role I chose. It gave me pleasure and, in my point of view, it fits BDSM. When I was 10 I came for the first time, when putting on an aunt's skirt... I came without even touching myself. Since then I was always out of standards, but at 16 I noticed I was 'different'. Would I be gay? But how would I be gay if I never had interest in men? But if I wasn't gay, why would I fantasize myself in the female role?... Unfortunately, people live in a standard, hypocritely proposed by this machist and repressive society we live in."

- ZZ, billing assistant, submissive foot fetishist, 34, married: "My relationship with my wife is the best possible, in all senses. She knows about my attraction for feet, so much that she began taking more care of them and sometimes, when we make love, she spanks me with her slippers and I like it a lot. Since there is no physical or emotional damage to anyone and both agree on it, any practice is worth it, between a couple. The way society sees or judges my acts is not at all relevant to me."

- JP, lawyer, sadist, 38, married: "I feel privileged for having certain sexual interests that are different from most people's and for always being able to make them come true. BDSM is very complex, for there are different levels of SM and I'm in an intermediate one... some practices are indigestive for me, like coprophagy, public humiliation, cuts or burning, but as the word goes, 'if done with their consent, the problem is theirs'..."

We may suggest that the people that took part in the researched sample, far from representing the totality of individuals with unconventional sexual practices in Brazilian society, feel in tune with their diverse sexual preferences, which are experienced as pleasant, and also feeling privileged for having a "differenced" sexuality from those who see in sex and in conventional roles the only form of expression for love, intimacy and fulfilling their sexual fantasies. We cannot affirm, by the collected and reported data, that BDSM and Fetish practitioners who took part in this study may be called "paraphilic". We would rather describe them as aware and well informed practitioners, and conscious of what we consider as variants in the complex adult human sexuality expression.

The use of the Internet is clearly important in the formation of a consensual BDSM subculture in Brazil, not only for communication and obtaining information among similar practitioners, but also as a mechanism of social inclusion, gathering thousands of people who share the same unconventional fantasies and practices. This study was made possible exactly because of the easy access, anonymity and the facility that the Internet provides to its users. Cooper et al (2000, p 6) states that the Internet offers the opportunity for the formation of virtual communities, in which the isolated and discriminated, like, for example, gays and lesbians, may communicate about sexual topics that interest this community.

When they realize the number of “equal” people, the sensation of isolation and of being “different” decreases or disappears and a new sense of “belonging” and identity appears for those who, before the advent of Internet, felt “abnormal” and “out of standard” for not having someone to share their longings and fantasies due to the prejudice and stigma regarding everything that deviates from the “norm” or “standard”. We may suggest that the Internet may serve as a virtual “life-boat” for, when giving the opportunity to BDSM and Fetish practitioners and other sexual minorities to “come out of the closet”, it provides them an environment with no repression, prejudice, and where everything is possible in the fantasy world, and also giving the opportunity for those fantasies to come out of “virtuality” and be made true in the “real” world. According to Bader (2002, p 259), the question why some people act out their fantasies, while others do not, has no easy answer. In his theoretical perspective, it is easier to understand why someone develops some sexual fantasy or practice, but one can rarely affirm why this person acted it out or simply kept it in the fantasy level.

The world has gone through technological changes that are almost impossible to keep up with in the field of human life conception: the “test-tube” baby and artificial insemination are now current practices, once impossible to be imagined and made true, as is now the possibility of human cloning in laboratories. Novelty is frightening, provokes fears and feelings of unprotection. But it is undeniable that changes in mentality are on their way, in this new millenium. Judeo-christian tradition, that has shaped the basis of Brazilian society for centuries, shows to be anachronic before the mentioned facts and what is yet to come. The propagated “naturally heterosexual” animal life, that served as justification for the imprisonment of sexual desire and pleasure by religious institutions, begins to fall down with the latest

scientific researches about the animals's sexual life, which demonstrate that the "practices against nature" are also part of animal sexuality (www.subversions.com/french/pages/science/animals.html). Where are we going to, since psycho-social, religious and cultural concepts and norms, that once defined the notion of "normality", no longer apply to the pluralist society that we see? Our traditional sexual ethic, followed for a hundred years, no longer fits socio-cultural changes and the new challenges of the 21st Century. We live in a plural society, in which the most diverse expression of adult human sexuality are becoming visible and want to be accepted, recognized and legitimated. Sexual expressions that demonstrate maturity, respect and awareness among those who practice them. It is worth pointing out that feeling comfortable and in ego-syntonia with their sexual practices may have been the reason that took these individuals to take part in this study. The line that separates consensual BDSM practices and the so-called "perverted" practices is very thin. But is important that one knows how to distinguish one another.

And, based on that distinction, the present study has demonstrated that, in spite of its limited range, it is a human right to be "different" from majority and, consequently, to have that "difference" respected and accepted by all others.

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