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The Psychology of Gay Men's Cuckolding Fantasies

Justin J. Lehmiller^{1,2} · David Ley³ · Dan Savage⁴

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Abstract Cuckolding (also known as troilism) is a sexual interest in which one obtains sexual arousal from the experience of a romantic partner engaging in sexual activity with someone else. The present study investigated fantasies about and experiences with cuckolding in a large and diverse sample of predominately gay-identified men ($N = 580$). Compared to previous research focusing on heterosexual men's cuckolding fantasies, our results indicate that gay men's cuckolding fantasies share many common elements; however, they differ in some important ways. Most notably, interracial and BDSM themes do not appear to be as common in gay men's cuckolding fantasies as they are among heterosexual men. Our findings also indicate that frequent fantasies about cuckolding are linked to several overlapping sexual interests (e.g., voyeurism, group sex) and, further, the content of these fantasies is associated with a number of individual differences (e.g., agreeableness, sensation seeking, sociosexuality). Finally, this study also suggests that gay men who act on their cuckolding fantasies tend to report positive experiences; however, the likelihood of reporting positive outcomes appears to depend upon one's personality and attachment style.

Keywords Cuckolding · Sexual fantasy · Gay men · Consensual non-monogamy · Troilism · DSM-5

Introduction

Troilism is a little studied paraphilia described as the “sharing of a sexual partner with another person while one looks on, after which the onlooker may or may not share the sexual partner” (Smith, 1976, p. 586). “Cuckolding” is the colloquial term for one contemporary form of troilism in which a man obtains sexual arousal from the sight or experience of his wife or girlfriend engaging in sexual activity with another man. Whereas the term *cuckold* historically referred to a man unknowingly married to an adulterous woman, the modern cuckold is aware that his wife is having sex with other men and offers his consent and encouragement. This behavior is not a form of cheating; rather, it is a variant of consensual non-monogamy (Rubin, Moors, Matsick, Ziegler, & Conley, 2014). However, the practice and fantasy of cuckolding are distinct from other forms of consensual non-monogamy (e.g., swinging, open relationships), as well as the practice of group sex, due to the cuckold taking on a submissive, disempowered, and largely voyeuristic role in both the experience and fantasy. Those other practices tend to involve more egalitarian sexual interactions or mutual physical participation by all parties, even if one partner is the center of attention.

An entire sexual subculture has emerged that celebrates and explores cuckolding fantasies. Ley (2009) interviewed dozens of different-sex married couples that were practicing cuckolding, most of whom reported that it enhanced their relationships. Ley's work revealed several distinct characteristics and themes of this subculture. First, the predominantly White participants Ley interviewed commonly described the desired third party in these scenarios—colloquially referred to as the “bull”—as a man who is Black and has a large penis. Thus, these fantasies often feature an interracial element. The bull's semen tends to be emphasized, too: the cuckold may be aroused by having intercourse with his partner while another man's semen is inside her, or he may wish to participate in removal of the bull's semen

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from his partner's vagina with his own mouth (a practice known as "creampie") in an act of forced submissive bisexuality. Other elements of BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism, and masochism) are common in these scenarios, especially humiliation of the cuckolded man (e.g., being ridiculed by his wife for having a small penis). Finally, much importance is typically ascribed to the wife's sexual pleasure. Seeing her achieving complete sexual satisfaction—a kind that she does not receive from sex with her husband alone—is a critical element.

The themes identified by Ley (2009) in the practice of cuckolding are reflected in the vast world of cuckolding pornography. According to some estimates, "cuckold" has become one of the most searched terms on the world's most popular porn sites (Ogas & Gaddam, 2011). Author Dan Savage, a sexual advice columnist since 1991, has witnessed the rise of interest in cuckolding through correspondence with his readers. Over the last quarter century, he has received letters from "growing legions of cuckold fetishists," a phenomenon he documented in his column more than a decade ago (Savage, 2006).

Savage suggested that cuckolding fantasies are popular because they represent an eroticization of a common fear—specifically, they allow heterosexual men to transform fear of their wives' infidelity into a sexually arousing fantasy. In light of this reasoning, Savage argued that gay men were unlikely to find cuckolding arousing (Savage, 2008). Because same-sex activity lacks reproductive potential, he argued, gay men are not necessarily threatened by their partners having sex with other men. Following publication of his eroticization hypothesis, however, numerous gay men began writing to Savage to express their interest in cuckolding, which suggests that if eroticized fear is at the root of this fantasy, it is not specific to fear of a partner becoming pregnant by another man.

The response to Savage's column suggests that cuckolding is not a uniquely heterosexual phenomenon. Seeking corroboration, we requested data from Pornhub regarding the frequency of cuckolding searches on pages featuring gay male material. They reported that, from August 2014 to August 2016, monthly searches for cuckold porn increased linearly (B. Hall, personal communication, August 10, 2016). When the number of searches per month was indexed against the 2-year search average, searches went from 34% below average in August 2014 to 46% above average by August 2016, suggesting that cuckolding is an increasingly popular porn genre among gay men.

Interest in cuckolding among gay men makes sense through the lens of sperm competition theory. This theory has been proposed to explain why heterosexual men find the prospect of a female partner engaging in sex with other men arousing (Goetz & Shackleford, 2006). The idea is that men evolved to experience biological and behavioral changes that give them a competitive reproductive edge whenever multiple men compete over the same mate, such as by releasing more motile sperm (Baker & Bellis, 1993) and engaging in more vigorous thrusting during intercourse to displace rival males' semen (Gallup

et al., 2003). Though sperm competition principles have not been tested among sexual minority men, this theory provides a plausible mechanism that could explain why men, regardless of sexual orientation, might find cuckolding scenarios arousing.

While sperm competition theory and recent porn search trends offer evidence of sexual minority men's interest in cuckolding, little is known about the qualitative nature of their cuckolding fantasies or how they compare to heterosexual men. For instance, are interracial and BDSM themes as common in gay men's cuckolding fantasies, or do their fantasies emphasize other elements? More generally, how much commonality is there in cuckolding fantasy themes among gay men? Does the focus of a cuckolding fantasy vary according to individual differences or personality traits? Furthermore, while the actual practice of cuckolding is linked to relationship enhancement in different-sex couples (Chuba, 2015; Ley, 2009), it is unknown whether the same is true for sexual minorities.

The goal of the present study was to explore the nature of cuckolding fantasies among sexual minority men. We sought to examine not just whether the predominant themes in heterosexual cuckolding fantasies emerge among gay men, but also the broader psychology behind gay men's cuckolding fantasies (e.g., How are they linked to other sexual desires? To what degree do individual differences, demographic factors, and relationship variables predict who has cuckolding fantasies and the elements of those fantasies that are most arousing?). In addition, we consider how gay men say the practice of cuckolding has affected their romantic relationships and whether certain personality traits predict better or worse cuckolding outcomes.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ 1: What are the major elements of gay men's cuckolding fantasies? We asked participants to describe their cuckolding fantasies in their own words, which we content-coded for the major themes identified in Ley's (2009) analysis of heterosexual men's cuckolding fantasies (including interracial, large penis, creampie, BDSM, and partner satisfaction). In addition to this qualitative data, participants quantitatively rated the importance of several elements of their own cuckolding fantasies in order to provide further insight into what gay men find most arousing about these scenarios.

RQ 2: How many gay men with cuckolding fantasies have shared and/or acted on their fantasies, and what were their experiences like? We asked participants to report whether they have ever shared their cuckolding fantasies with a partner and how their partner reacted. In addition, we asked whether they had acted on their cuckolding fantasies and, if so, whether the experience met expectations and how it affected their relationship. We sought to examine whether, like different-sex couples, the practice of cuckolding is also linked to relationship enhancement for men in same-sex relationships.

H1: Frequent cuckolding fantasies will be associated with having more frequent fantasies about voyeurism, group sex (threesomes, gangbangs, and orgies), and several aspects of BDSM (particularly bondage, masochism, humiliation, and submission). According to the DSM-5, a paraphilia is “any intense and persistent sexual interest other than sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physically mature, consenting human partners” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013, p. 685). Though not specifically mentioned in the DSM-5, cuckolding would appear to meet criteria for a paraphilia. Paraphilias tend to co-occur, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as *paraphilic diathesis* (Blanchard, 1991). Persons who have one paraphilia therefore tend to have other uncommon interests, and those interests tend to align in related “clusters” (Krueger & Kaplan, 2001). We expected cuckolding to cluster with several conceptually related desires, including voyeurism, given that both activities usually involve obtaining arousal from watching others have sex, or fantasizing about others’ sexual behaviors. We also expected a positive correlation with group sex fantasies, given that cuckolding has elements in common with threesomes (both acts often involve three partners) and gangbangs (both acts usually involve one person having sex with multiple male partners in succession). Lastly, we expected positive associations with several types of BDSM fantasies, given that watching one’s partner having sex with another person could be perceived as painful or humiliating in a culture that promotes monogamy as the norm. Given the general submissive role that cuckolds tend to take, we expected that cuckolding would be closely related to bondage, submission, masochism, and humiliation fantasies.

H2: Frequent cuckolding fantasies will be associated with higher levels of sexual sensation seeking, openness to experience, self-esteem, relationship investments, relationship satisfaction, and relationship commitment, as well as an unrestricted sociosexual orientation. Cuckolding fantasies will also be associated with higher levels of attachment avoidance, but lower levels of attachment anxiety. Though eroticization of fear was initially proposed as an explanation for cuckolding fantasies, there is reason to suspect it may not be true. Research by Birnbaum, Simpson, Weisberg, Barnea, and Assulin-Simhon (2012) suggests that we tend to construct sexual fantasies so as to avoid content that could potentially be threatening to the self: when primed with attachment anxiety, for example, people are more likely to fantasize about being irresistibly desired, which may serve as a coping mechanism by buffering against feelings of rejection. In light of this, we believe that cuckolding is likely more appealing to those who are confident in themselves and their partners’ love, as well as those who are comfortable with casual sex. Such individuals are probably less threatened by their partner having sex with others. Thus, we predicted that cuckolding fantasies would be more common among persons who (1) have an easier time separating sex from emotion (i.e., they have an unrestricted

sociosexual orientation and an avoidant attachment style), (2) do not have abandonment issues (i.e., they have lower attachment anxiety), (3) are in more stable relationships (i.e., they are more invested, satisfied, and committed), and (4) feel more self-confident (i.e., they have higher self-esteem). We also expected that people interested in cuckolding would be open to trying new things in general and have a preference for thrilling and risky sexual activities (i.e., they should be higher in the Big Five trait of openness to experience and sexual sensation seeking).

H3: Gay men’s personalities will predict which elements of cuckolding fantasies are most arousing to them such that (1) higher agreeableness will be associated with placing more importance on partner pleasure, (2) greater sensation seeking tendencies will be associated with placing less importance on safe sex and more importance on the bull having a large penis, and (3) lower attachment anxiety, greater attachment avoidance, and a more unrestricted sociosexual orientation will be associated with placing less importance on whether the bull is known to them. Those higher in the Big Five trait of agreeableness should be more concerned with whether their partners are enjoying themselves in a cuckolding scenario, given that agreeable persons have more care and concern for others’ well-being (Graziano & Tobin, 2009). In addition, those who prefer more thrilling sexual activities (i.e., sexual sensation seekers) should be drawn to cuckolding scenarios that offer more visual excitement and risk, such as those that feature supranormal sexual stimuli (e.g., very large penises) and condomless sex. Lastly, those who have an easier time separating sex from emotion (i.e., an unrestricted sociosexual orientation and more attachment avoidance) and who have fewer abandonment issues (i.e., lower attachment anxiety) should place less importance on who the bull is in their fantasies, while those who are more anxious are probably more inclined to have a specific bull in mind—one who is unlikely to pose a relationship threat.

H4: Gay men’s personality traits will be linked to whether acting on a cuckolding fantasy was a positive or negative experience: (1) higher agreeableness and conscientiousness will be associated with more positive outcomes, while (2) higher neuroticism, attachment anxiety, and attachment avoidance will be associated with worse outcomes. Those high in the Big Five traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness will be more inclined to say that acting on a cuckolding fantasy was better than expected and improved their relationships, given that these traits signify care and concern for others’ well-being and a tendency to put more thought into one’s actions. This would be consistent with research finding that those who have agreeable and conscientious partners are more satisfied with their relationships (Botwin, Buss, & Shackelford, 1997). By contrast, people higher in the Big Five trait of neuroticism (i.e., emotional instability) and those higher in attachment anxiety (i.e., fear of abandonment) and avoidance (i.e., difficulties getting close to others) will find cuckolding worse than expected and say it had a more negative effect on their relationship. Highly

neurotic and anxious persons might ruminate about the future of their relationship after cuckolding, whereas avoidant persons may fail to communicate adequately with their partners beforehand. Among those who have practiced cuckolding and other forms of consensual non-monogamy, strong communication skills appear vital for continued relationship success (Ley, 2009).

Method

Participants

We conducted an online survey of men who have sex with men who have fantasized about being cuckolded by their male partners before. The final sample consisted of 580 self-identified adult men who responded to an advertisement for a survey of “gay men’s cuckolding fantasies.” Approximately one-half of the participants were referred through the social media site Tumblr, one-quarter through Dan Savage’s column and podcast, and the remainder through various social media channels (primarily Reddit, Twitter, and Facebook).

A total of 1164 people began the survey; however, 584 were excluded from the final sample because (1) they identified their gender as something other than male ($n = 8$), (2) they indicated being under age 18 ($n = 4$), (3) they reported never having had a cuckold fantasy before ($n = 23$), or (4) they answered too few questions to yield usable data (e.g., providing responses to just one or two questions in total; $n = 549$).

Procedure

Data were collected online between August 2016 and September 2016. Following the collection of informed consent, participants were prompted with the following question: “For purposes of this study, a cuckolding fantasy is a sexually arousing thought or mental image of watching your partner have sex with someone else. With this definition in mind, have you ever had a cuckolding fantasy before?” The operational definition of cuckolding used in this prompt was derived from Ley’s (2009) description of the phenomenon among heterosexual men. This very general behavioral definition was utilized in order to allow us to identify the themes present among those who identify with the label/behavior, as opposed to imposing a thematic element, such as humiliation, into the definition. Those who said no were automatically skipped to the end of the survey, while those who said yes advanced to complete a battery of questionnaires about their demographics, their personalities, their sexual fantasies in general, and the nature of their cuckolding fantasies in particular. This research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ball State University and was conducted in accordance with all institutional ethical standards and the American Psychological Association’s ethical guidelines.

Measures

Demographic Characteristics

In addition to standard demographics (gender identity, racial identity, sexual identity, nationality, and age), participants were also asked about the highest level of education they have completed, annual income level, as well as current relationship status and whether their relationship (if they have one) is sexually exclusive or open.

Cuckold Fantasy Characteristics

Participants were asked a range of questions about their cuckolding fantasies (all of which were developed specifically for purpose of this study, given the dearth of previous research on this subject), including how often they have these fantasies, the percentage of all of their sexual fantasies that involve cuckolding, the number of years they have had cuckolding fantasies, whether they have ever shared these fantasies with a partner and—if so—how their partner reacted, as well as whether they have ever acted on these fantasies and—if so—what the experience was like and how it affected their relationship. In addition, participants were asked to rate the importance of various elements that might be present in their own cuckolding fantasies, including familiarity with the bull, the bull’s race, the bull’s penis size, their partner giving/receiving anal sex, their partner giving/receiving oral sex, the use of condoms in the cuckolding scenario, as well as own/partner sexual satisfaction during the event. The specific fantasy elements we surveyed participants about were selected on the basis of Ley’s (2009) analysis of heterosexual men’s cuckolding fantasies. Lastly, participants were given an open-ended question, which asked them to “please describe in your own words what your cuckolding fantasies are like.”

Frequency of Sexual Fantasies

In addition to collecting detailed information on participants’ cuckolding fantasies, we asked how frequently participants fantasize about the following: voyeurism (defined as watching others undressing or having sex without their knowledge), masochism (defined as deriving sexual pleasure from receiving pain), sadism (defined as deriving sexual pleasure from administering pain to others), bondage (defined as being physically restrained, such as with ropes or handcuffs), being the dominant partner in a sexual encounter, being the submissive partner in a sexual encounter, being sexually humiliated, leather, threesomes, orgies, gangbangs, and creampie (which, in a male–male context, involves semen dripping or seeping from the anus, sometimes followed by removal via a partner’s mouth). These were all single-item measures with a response scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*a few times per day*).

Personality, Individual Differences, and Relationship Characteristics

Participants completed the short form version of the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale in order to measure attachment anxiety and avoidance ($\alpha = .78$; Wei, Russell, Mallinckrodt, & Vogel, 2007). They also completed the 10-item version of the Big Five Personality Inventory, which captures the personality dimensions of openness to experience, conscientiousness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism (Rammstedt & John, 2007). In addition, we administered abbreviated versions of the following scales (these scales were shortened in order to reduce participant burden and to enhance the rate of survey completion): five items from the Sexual Sensation Seeking Scale ($\alpha = .67$; Kalichman, 2013), four items from the Sociosexual Orientation Inventory ($\alpha = .75$; Penke & Asendorpf, 2008), four items from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ($\alpha = .84$; Rosenberg, 1965), as well as two items each to assess relationship commitment ($\alpha = .81$), relationship investments ($\alpha = .77$), and relationship satisfaction ($\alpha = .71$) (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). All of the above measures were completed on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Analytic Strategy

Qualitative Analyses

In order to determine the primary themes present in gay men's cuckolding fantasies (Research Question 1), we began by analyzing the open-ended responses to the question in which participants were asked to describe the nature of their cuckolding fantasies. In total, 434 participants (74.8%) responded to this question. Each fantasy was read and content-coded by two independent raters. Raters first determined whether each fantasy did indeed reflect male same-sex cuckolding (i.e., a scenario in which one watches, listens, or hears about a male partner having sex with another man). If so, it was then coded on a series of 18 dimensions inspired by the previous literature on heterosexual cuckolding (Ley, 2009). For each dimension, coders simply noted whether the theme was present or absent. There was substantial agreement between raters on 16 of the 18 dimensions (mean Cohen's $\kappa = .74$); however, two dimensions ("rough sex" and "sadoomasochism") yielded poor agreement and, as such, were dropped from consideration. For the 16 dimensions we retained (shown in Table 1), discrepancies between coders were resolved by a third rater.

Quantitative Analyses

In order to address participants' experiences sharing and acting on their fantasies (Research Question 2), we report descriptive statistics, followed by a MANOVA that compares actors/non-

actors with respect to how the experience lived up to their expectations and how it affected their relationships. Lastly, in order to test our hypotheses, a series of multiple regression analyses was performed.

Results

Below, we present demographic information for the sample, followed by a few preliminary analyses. Afterward, we provide basic descriptive information about the frequency with which our participants reported having cuckolding fantasies, followed by a few exploratory analyses that focus on the link between cuckolding fantasies and demographic characteristics. Lastly, we address each of the research questions and hypotheses in turn through a series quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Sample Demographics

Participants in the final sample ranged in age from 18 to 73 ($M = 36.37$, $SD = 11.24$), were predominately from the USA (68%), and most identified as White (85.3%), with the remainder identifying as Latino (6.9%), Asian (3.1%), Biracial/Multiracial (2.2%), Black (1.0%), or Other (1.4%). With respect to sexual orientation, most participants identified as gay (73.6%), mostly gay (16.0%), or bisexual (5.3%), with the remainder reporting other sexual identities (e.g., queer, pansexual, mostly heterosexual). Consistent with the sexual identity data, participants' Kinsey Scale scores (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) revealed that the vast majority of them were either a Kinsey 6 (exclusively homosexual; 55%) or a Kinsey 5 (predominately homosexual; 30%). Most participants (86.9%) reported current involvement in a romantic relationship, of whom a majority (68.6%) indicated that it was sexually open (i.e., consensually non-monogamous) to some degree.

Preliminary Analyses

We assessed the frequency with which participants had twelve distinct fantasies other than cuckolding. Given the fact that (1) some of these fantasies had moderate to strong correlations with one another (see Table 2) and (2) the items we used did not come from a previously validated scale, we performed an exploratory factor analysis with principal axis factoring and promax rotation. This analysis yielded a three-factor solution explaining 60% of the variance. Interpretation of the pattern matrix revealed the factors to be: voyeurism-group sex (consisting of voyeurism, threesome, orgy, gangbang, and creampie), masochism-submission (consisting of masochism, submission, bondage, humiliation, and leather), and sadism-dominance (consisting of sadism and dominance). All variables loaded on

Table 1 Results: Qualitative analysis of same-sex cuckolding fantasies

	κ	Appeared in fantasy (%)	Did not appear in fantasy (%)	Exemplar of code
Clearly described a cuckolding scenario in which one watches, listens, or hears about their partner having sex with another man	.72	83.0	17.0	I am turned on thinking about my husband being completely pleased by another man. I could watch or have him tell me later about it
Described watching partner having sex	.71	74.4	25.6	I fantasize about my partner bringing home someone I don't know. Someone very new to both of us. I may not even be attracted to them myself. I like to watch them on our bed. Sometimes I'll join in. Most of the time I'll just watch and masturbate
Described listening to partner having sex	.65	5.9	94.1	My long-term (13-year) partner and I have been occasionally non-monogamous since about 2 years into our relationship, and I have been aroused by picturing the times he has had sex with other men without me present. I've fantasized about him calling me and leaving the phone on during his sexual encounters so I could hear it, and I've pressed him for details of the encounters so I can imagine them better
Described hearing about partner's sexual activities after they took place	.71	10.9	89.1	Having my husband flirt with other guys and have sex with them either in front of me, or by taking pictures to send me. I particularly like when he does it without my knowledge and then tells me about it. I like for him to tell me how much better the other partner is and how much more attractive they are
Described a cuckolding scenario that turned into a threesome	.72	9.8	90.2	The idea of watching my partner pleasing another man and then I join in—that is my ideal fantasy
Described feelings of humiliation	.78	7.8	92.2	I have a cuckold fantasy that my husband brings home a stud/bull who is hotter than me, and hung, and the bull forces me to move into the guest room. The bull fucks my husband anytime and any place he wants. And I have to hear their sex but do not get to join in. The only way I get to interact is shaving hubby's asshole and sucking the cum out of [his] ass after [the] bull has ejaculated in him. They have romantic dates in our home and I watch as I'm getting aroused. I'm forced to clean up after meals and serve them beer as they are fucking but do not get to watch. They call me fat pig or fat boy and as I'm in the guest room jerking off listening to them fuck, I drink beer and eat a half dozen cream filled or jelly donuts
Described themes of dominance and/or submission	.67	10.9	89.1	My cuckolding fantasies (and relationship) revolve around orgasm denial while my boyfriend enjoys multiple sex partners and frequent ejaculation. This establishes his dominance over me. I'm not permitted to sleep with other men. I find in most arousing for him to top other guys, but he'll occasionally bottom. I love to lick the cum from a guy's ass after my boyfriend has ejaculated there
Described bondage	.72	5.6	94.4	My preferred scenes involve me in bondage/chastity, more-or-less forced to watch my partner and a mutual friend... going at it, as they have a good time and taunt me for it
Oral sex takes place	.89	15.3	84.9	I fantasize about my husband performing oral on another man, typically in a sex club or public place
Anal sex takes place	.70	59.9	40.1	Almost all [of my fantasies] involve watching my partner as the bottom with another top, and me getting left out
Emphasized semen (e.g., bukkake, creampie, felching)	.71	6.7	93.3	I love the idea of my husband coming home with a man's load in him and telling me all about the guy
Emphasized bareback/condomless sex	.69	11.3	88.7	Having an Alpha breed my bf with his huge dick. BB
Involved a bull who was known (e.g., a friend, acquaintance, or former partner)	.71	7.8	92.2	I like to fantasize about my boyfriend having sex with his previous sexual partners in front of me while I masturbate and then, eventually, join in with them

Table 1 continued

	κ	Appeared in fantasy (%)	Did not appear in fantasy (%)	Exemplar of code
Involved a bull with a very large penis	.89	10.6	89.4	Fantasy is to come home to see my husband bottoming for a hung muscular guy, being submissive. Or to get picture texts of their action
Described an interracial theme	1.00	1.1	98.9	I want to watch my white boyfriend get fucked by large raw black dicks. I'm black and he's very attracted to black men, and I'm happy to watch him live out all his sexual fantasies with other black men. It has to be bareback. I want no condoms involved at all. I want to watch my boyfriend take loads from them. Their identities are unimportant
Emphasized partner's pleasure	.66	12.6	87.4	I enjoy imagining, hearing about, and witnessing my partner having sex with other men. I am turned on by my partner receiving physical and emotional pleasure with other men because each human being has different qualities and each can form unique and interesting relationships; I feel that a life fully lived incorporates diverse relationships with others, be they passing, distant, intimate, emotional, or physical. I want my partner to experience pleasure and happiness in whatever way he deems fit for living the fullest life he can

Minor edits were made to some of the exemplar fantasies for clarity. Only fantasies that were clearly described as being about cuckolding were coded on all dimensions listed in this table. Also, most of the exemplar fantasies reflect additional themes other than the category under which they are listed. Because each fantasy was independently coded for each theme, a given fantasy could therefore be categorized as reflective of multiple thematic elements

their respective factors at levels greater than .30, and no variables loaded on more than one factor.

Descriptive and Exploratory Analyses

For the most part, those who participated in this study reported having frequent cuckolding fantasies. Just over one-third reported having them daily (35%) and almost one-half said they have them at least monthly (49%). The remainder reported having them a few times per year (11%) or a few times ever (4%). On average, participants reported that they have been fantasizing about cuckolding for just over 7 years ($M = 7.25$, $SD = 7.81$) and that most (52.59%) of their sexual fantasies involve cuckolding in some way.

We considered whether the frequency of cuckolding fantasies was related to any demographic features of the sample via a multiple regression analysis. The overall model featured six demographic predictor variables. Though statistically significant, it explained only a small portion of the variance, $R^2 = .03$, $F(6, 530) = 3.05$, $p = .006$. Just one demographic variable was significantly related to cuckolding: involvement in a sexually non-exclusive relationship, $b = .13$, $t(530) = 2.95$, $p = .003$. Specifically, those in open relationships reported fantasizing about cuckolding with greater frequency than those who were monogamous. The nonsignificant demographic variables in this model were age, education level, income level, racial majority/minor-

ity status (i.e., White vs. non-White), and relationship status (partnered vs. single)

RQ1: What Are the Major Elements of Gay Men's Cuckolding Fantasies?

To address this research question, we examined the themes that emerged from our qualitative analysis of participants' fantasy narratives. As shown in Table 1, most participants clearly described fantasies that could be categorized as cuckolding; those that did not were excluded from the rest of the analyses that follow. Excluded fantasies were either ambiguous (i.e., it was unclear whether cuckolding was taking place) or described sex acts that definitely did not involve same-sex cuckolding (e.g., a generic threesome, watching one's partner have sex with a woman). Of those who described same-sex cuckolding fantasies, the vast majority indicated wanting to physically observe their partner have sex with others; by contrast, approximately one in ten participants indicated a preference for hearing about the act after it had already taken place. Approximately 1 in 20 expressed a preference for listening while their partner has sex in another room.

Anal sex and—in particular—receptive anal sex was an especially common theme in these fantasies. Overall, 67.6% of participants mentioned anal sex in their fantasy descriptions. Among those who did, 62% mentioned their partner in a receptive/“bottom” role, 21% mentioned their partner in an insertive/“top” role, 9% mentioned their partner being versatile (both

Table 2 Bivariate correlations between sexual fantasies

	Cuckolding	Voyeurism	Masochism	Sadism	Bondage	Sexual dominance	Sexual submission	Sexual humiliation	Leather	Threesomes	Orgies	Gangbang	Creampie	
Cuckolding	—													
Voyeurism	.21**	—												
Masochism	.16**	.10*	—											
Sadism	.08	.56**	—											
Bondage	.12*	.32**	—											
Sexual dominance	.12**	.49**	—											
Sexual submission	.12**	.41**	.00	—										
Sexual humiliation	.12**	.41**	.33**	-.03	—									
Leather	.27**	.27**	.45**	.15**	.15**	—								
Threesomes	.09*	.56**	.27**	.46**	.17**	.16**	—							
Orgies	.27**	.33**	.48**	.24**	.17**	.16**	.04	—						
Gangbang	.29**	.37**	.48**	.19**	.12**	.12**	.04	.19**	—					
Creampie	.27**	.33**	.48**	.19**	.12**	.12**	.04	.19**	.24**	—				
	.31**	.28**	.23**	.50**	.69**	.73**	.54**	.73**	.50**	.43**	—			
	.29**	.15**	.18**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	—		
	.15**	.11**	.18**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.11**	.11**	—	
	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	.18**	—
	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	—
	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	.20**	—
	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	—
	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	.14**	—
	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	.29**	—
	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	.43**	—
	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	.54**	—

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

receptive and insertive role), and 8% did not mention their partner taking a specific anal sex role. Oral sex was explicitly mentioned with relatively low frequency; however, this may be at least partially due to the fact that many participants did not clearly define what “sex” meant to them in their fantasies.

Beyond watching a partner participate in anal sex, no other pervasive themes emerged from this analysis. Indeed, the next most common theme to emerge involved expressions of dominance/submission, bondage, and/or humiliation; combined, however, these three themes were present in just 13.1% of all fantasies. It is worth noting that cuckolding fantasies that included one BDSM element often included multiple others. For instance, the following fantasy included aspects of bondage, submission, and humiliation: “I fantasize about being locked in a chastity cage. My husband still fucks me but I am only capable of achieving orgasm through anal stimulation. When he has an urge to bottom he brings in a bull to fuck him while I watch and am unable to pleasure myself. The bull in my fantasies is almost always someone I know: an ex-boyfriend usually, with a much larger cock than my own and much larger muscles. I am permitted to foot and muscle worship the bull and clean up spent semen after they come. They humiliate and mock me while having sex. Recently I have begun fantasizing about having their sexual relationship transform into an emotional one where he becomes the primary partner and I am left out entirely.”

Compared to BDSM, mentions of semen, bareback sex, knowing who the bull was, the bull’s penis size, and partner pleasure were included in even smaller numbers of fantasies. However, the least common theme we coded for was the presence of an interracial scene, which is interesting in light of the great frequency with which Ley (2009) observed this in heterosexual men’s cuckolding fantasies. Just 1.1% of our participants described an interracial scenario. Interestingly, one of our coders observed that age discrepancy themes (e.g., a bull who was much older than one’s partner or much younger than oneself) were about four times more common than interracial themes.

In addition to this qualitative analysis of gay men’s cuckolding fantasies, we also asked participants to rate the importance of ten specific elements that might be present in their cuckolding fantasies. Results from this quantitative analysis are presented in Table 3, which reveals that a majority of participants reported that it was not at all important for them to know who the bull was, for the bull to be of a particular race or ethnicity, or for condoms to be used during the sexual encounter, which is consistent with the low prevalence of these themes in our qualitative analysis. In comparison, most participants said that it was moderately to extremely important for the bull to have a very large penis, for their partner to receive anal sex, for their partner to both give and receive oral sex, and for both the self and partner to be sexually satisfied. These results suggest that although penis size, oral sex, and partner pleasure did not emerge with great frequency in the qualitative analysis, they still appear to be important elements of gay men’s cuckolding fantasies. It is possible that

they did not emerge in our qualitative analysis because participants did not elaborate enough on their fantasies in their descriptions.

RQ2: How Many Gay Men Have Shared and Acted Upon Their Cuckolding Fantasies?

A sizeable majority of participants (76.7%) had shared their cuckolding fantasies with a partner before. Of them, most (80.8%) reported that their partner agreed to the idea. When comparing the actual outcomes of fantasy sharers to the expected outcomes of those who had never shared them, the never sharers expected a partner response that was significantly worse than the actual response received by the sharers, $F(1, 496) = 68.19, p < .001$. In fact, among those who had not previously disclosed their cuckolding fantasies, a slight majority (52.7%) said they did not think their partner would be open to the idea.

Just under half of all participants (45.8%) reported having acted on their cuckolding fantasies previously, with the remainder saying they either hope to act on them in the future (42.2%) or that they never want to do so (11.9%). Of those who had acted on their cuckolding fantasies, most said that the experience was better than expected (65.5%) or about what they expected (29.5%); very few (4.9%) reported that it was worse than anticipated. In addition, most (73.9%) said that acting on this fantasy improved their relationship; by contrast, 17.8% said it had no effect on their relationship one way or another, and 8.3% reported that it harmed their relationship. To compare the actual outcomes of those who had acted on their fantasies to the expected outcomes of those who had not, a one-way MANOVA was conducted. The independent variable was whether one had acted on one's cuckold-

ing fantasies, and the two dependent variables were the degree to which cuckolding met/was expected to meet expectations and the degree to which cuckolding harmed/was expected to harm the relationship. A significant multivariate main effect of fantasy enactment emerged, Wilks' $\lambda = .857, F(2, 446) = 37.13, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .143$. Inspection of the univariate main effects indicated that—compared to those who had acted on their cuckolding fantasies—those who had not anticipated a lower likelihood that the fantasy would meet expectations, $F(1, 447) = 47.62, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .096$, and a greater likelihood of relationship harm, $F(1, 447) = 53.75, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .107$.

H1: Cuckolding Fantasies and Paraphilic Diathesis

Next, we analyzed how frequency of cuckolding fantasies was related to the frequency with which participants reported having other kinds of sexual fantasies. Bivariate correlations between the individual fantasy variables are presented in Table 2. In light of the moderate to strong correlations seen in this table between many of these fantasies, we tested Hypothesis 1 with a multiple regression analysis in which the three higher-order fantasy groupings that emerged from our factor analysis were entered as simultaneous predictors of cuckolding fantasies. The overall model was statistically significant and explained a sizeable portion of the variance, $R^2 = .17, F(3, 568) = 37.76, p < .001$. Consistent with predictions, both the voyeurism–group sex, $b = .36, t(568) = 8.98, p < .001$, and masochism–submission fantasy groupings were significantly and positively associated with cuckolding, $b = .13, t(568) = 3.19, p = .001$. By contrast, the sadism–dominance factor was unrelated to cuckolding.

Table 3 Most and least important aspects of same-sex cuckolding fantasies

	Mean (SD)	Not at all important (%)	Slightly important (%)	Moderately important (%)	Very important (%)	Extremely important (%)
You know the bull	1.95 (1.21)	52.9	17.0	16.4	9.2	4.5
The bull is of a certain race	1.64 (1.03)	64.9	15.9	11.9	4.9	2.4
The bull has a very large penis	2.55 (1.31)	22.7	9.9	18.3	26.5	22.8
Partner gives anal sex	2.51 (1.50)	39.7	14.6	16.5	14.0	15.3
Partner receives anal sex	3.17 (1.47)	22.7	9.9	18.2	26.5	22.8
Partner gives oral sex	3.26 (1.36)	16.6	11.6	23.0	27.2	21.6
Partner receives oral sex	2.66 (1.40)	30.8	15.4	23.6	17.7	12.5
Condoms are used	2.33 (1.57)	50.8	9.0	13.4	9.6	17.2
Partner is sexually satisfied	4.42 (.98)	3.3	2.9	7.1	21.5	65.2
You are sexually satisfied	3.34 (1.44)	17.0	12.2	19.6	22.6	28.6

Numbers in parentheses represent standard deviations. Means are reported on a scale ranging from 1 to 5

H2: Cuckolding Fantasies and Individual Differences

Following this, we examined how frequency of cuckolding fantasies was associated with several personality traits, individual differences, and relationship characteristics. Bivariate correlations between all of these variables are presented in Table 4. Due to the moderate correlations observed between many of these variables, we performed a multiple regression analysis in which all 13 individual differences were entered as simultaneous predictors of cuckolding. The overall model was statistically significant, but explained a rather small amount of the variance, $R^2 = .07$, $F(13, 522) = 2.87$, $p = .001$. Just two variables emerged as unique predictors of cuckolding fantasies: sexual sensation seeking, $b = .15$, $t(522) = 3.28$, $p = .001$, and attachment avoidance, $b = -.13$, $t(522) = -2.32$, $p = .021$. As expected, sensation seekers fantasized about cuckolding more often; unexpectedly, however, persons with a more avoidant attachment style fantasized about cuckolding less often. Also, contrary to expectations, none of the 11 other variables in this model were significantly linked to cuckolding. Though the bivariate correlations presented in Table 4 suggest support for more of our individual difference hypotheses, it appears that the small correlations that cuckolding had with sociosexuality, relationship commitment, and relationship investments in particular were a function of shared variance with sexual sensation seeking and attachment avoidance.

H3: The Link Between Personality and Preferred Elements of Cuckolding Fantasies

Targeted multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the hypothesized links between specific personality traits and characteristics of one's cuckolding fantasies. First, agreeableness was regressed onto the importance of partner sexual satisfaction, $R^2 = .01$, $F(1, 544) = 5.15$, $p = .024$. Consistent with predictions, persons who were more agreeable thought it was more important for their partners to be sexually satisfied in their cuckolding fantasies, though the association was small, $b = .10$, $p = .024$. Second, sexual sensation seeking was separately regressed onto the importance of condom use, $R^2 = .06$, $F(1, 542) = 31.76$, $p < .001$, and the importance of the bull having a large penis, $R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 542) = 14.67$, $p < .001$. As expected, sensation seekers placed less emphasis on the use of condoms, $b = -.24$, $p < .001$, and more emphasis on the bull having a large penis in their cuckolding fantasies, $b = .16$, $p < .001$. Third, attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and sociosexuality were simultaneously regressed onto the importance of knowing who the bull was, $R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 538) = 4.93$, $p = .002$. As predicted, persons with a more unrestricted sociosexual orientation cared less about whether the bull was known to them, $b = -.14$, $p = .001$; contrary to expectations, though, neither attachment anxiety, nor avoidance was linked to a desire to know who the bull was.

H4: Individual Differences and Outcomes of Acting on Cuckolding Fantasies

Next, we explored the associations between personality and actual experiences acting on cuckolding fantasies in two targeted regression analyses. Agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, attachment anxiety, and attachment avoidance were entered as simultaneous predictors of (1) the degree to which acting on one's cuckolding fantasies met expectations, $R^2 = .12$, $F(5, 249) = 6.84$, $p < .001$, and (2) the degree to which acting on one's cuckolding fantasies harmed/improved one's relationship, $R^2 = .16$, $F(1, 249) = 9.60$, $p < .001$. As expected, the first model revealed that cuckolding fantasies were more likely to live up to expectations for persons high in conscientiousness, $b = .22$, $t(249) = 3.23$, $p = .001$, and low in attachment avoidance, $b = -.19$, $t(249) = -2.99$, $p = .003$; unexpectedly, however, agreeableness, neuroticism, and attachment anxiety were not uniquely related to whether acting on the fantasy met expectations. Likewise, the second model revealed that, as expected, cuckolding fantasies were more likely to improve the relationships of persons who were low in both attachment anxiety, $b = -.21$, $t(249) = -3.35$, $p = .001$, and avoidance, $b = -.23$, $t(249) = -3.69$, $p < .001$. Contrary to predictions, though, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism were not uniquely related to whether acting on the fantasy helped or harmed their relationship.

Additional Exploratory Analyses

Lastly, for exploratory purposes, we correlated participants' Kinsey Scale scores with the preferred elements in their cuckolding fantasies in order to determine whether being relatively more male or female attracted was linked to differences in fantasy content. Two intriguing associations emerged. Specifically, the lower men's Kinsey Scale scores were—that is, the more they were attracted to women—the more likely they were to say it was important that the bull was both of a particular race, $r(569) = -.12$, $p = .006$, and had a very large penis, $r(570) = -.10$, $p = .015$.

Discussion

The results of this investigation offer insight into the content of sexual minority men's cuckolding fantasies, as well as their underlying psychology. First, combining the results of the qualitative fantasy analysis with the quantitative importance ratings given to specific fantasy elements, the modal gay cuckolding scenario appears to involve watching one's partner experience sexual satisfaction while engaging in receptive anal intercourse with a well-endowed bull. Of course, there was a lot of individual variability in how participants wanted these fantasies to play

Table 4 Bivariate correlations between cuckolding fantasies and individual difference variables

	Cuckolding anxiety	Attachment avoidance	Attachment anxiety	Unrestricted sociosexuality	Sexual sensation seeking	Openness	Agreeableness	Extraversion	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Self-esteem	Relationship commitment	Relationship investment	Relationship satisfaction
Cuckolding	–	–.14**	.09*	.17**	.07	–.08	–.01	.05	.02	–.02	.09*	.13**	.05	
Attachment anxiety	–	.30**	–.21**	.07	.02	–.15**	–.16**	–.27**	.35**	–.48**	–.22**	–.11*	–.32*	
Attachment avoidance	–	–	–.14**	–.01	–.20**	–.15**	–.20**	–.23**	.14**	–.28**	–.57**	–.50**	–.47**	
Unrestricted sociosexuality	–	–	–	.36**	.02	–.03	.15**	.03	–.14**	.15**	.03	.05	.04	
Sensation seeking	–	–	–	–	–.03	–.09*	.14**	.03	–.03	–.01	–.01	.05	.00	
Openness	–	–	–	–	–	.06	.12**	.11**	.02	.02	.13**	.16**	.09*	
Agreeableness	–	–	–	–	–	–	.15**	.23**	–.32**	.32**	.07	.10*	.13**	
Extraversion	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.25**	–.34**	.29**	.14**	.17**	.12**	
Conscientiousness	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–.26**	.37**	.17**	.18**	.18**	
Neuroticism	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–.50**	–.02	–.03	–.16**	
Self-esteem	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.19**	.11*	.28**	
Relationship commitment	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.60**	.55**	
Relationship investment	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	.42**	
Relationship satisfaction	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

out; overall, though, this modal fantasy shares much in common with the modal cuckolding scenario desired by heterosexual men, in that both emphasize watching penetrative intercourse performed by a bull with a large penis and a desire for one's partner to be satisfied (Ley, 2009). That said, there appear to be some important differences in these fantasies across men of different sexualities. In particular, unlike heterosexual men, interracial themes seem to be uncommon in gay men's cuckolding fantasies. Participants saw the bull's race as largely unimportant, and race only emerged in a small number of fantasy narratives. This may reflect differences in racial attitudes between gay and heterosexual men; however, it might also reflect the fact that same-sex relationships are more likely to be interracial (Gates, 2012), something that might make race a less novel fantasy element for gay men. It is also interesting that our exploratory analyses revealed that men with lower Kinsey scores were more likely to say that interracial themes were important (and also that the bull's penis size was more important). This suggests that bisexual men's cuckolding fantasies may be more similar to those of heterosexual men than those of gay men.

BDSM themes emerged infrequently in our qualitative analysis, and the association between cuckolding and masochism–submission fantasies was small. This suggests that perhaps BDSM plays a less prominent role in gay men's cuckolding desires relative to heterosexual men. One possible reason for this stems from the fact that BDSM is more commonly practiced among sexual minorities to begin with (Richters, De Visser, Rissel, Grulich, & Smith, 2008), perhaps making it a less novel fantasy element for them. On a side note, in lay usage, the term cuckold necessarily connotes an element of eroticized humiliation to some. In fact, when themes of humiliation and sexual inadequacy are not present, some refer to this phenomenon by another name entirely. Among heterosexuals, that name is “hotwifing.” In hotwifing scenarios, rather than emphasizing the male observer's humiliation, emphasis is placed on the wife's pleasure or the knowledge that other men find her to be attractive (Ley, 2009). Given that humiliation and BDSM themes were relatively uncommon in gay men's fantasies while partner pleasure was seen as important, some might argue that gay men's partner-sharing fantasies are more akin to hotwifing than cuckolding.

With respect to the psychology underlying these fantasies, results were consistent with the notion of paraphilic diathesis (Blanchard, 1991; Krueger & Kaplan, 2001) in that cuckolding fantasies were linked to several overlapping fantasies, namely those that comprised the voyeurism–group sex and masochism–submission factors. This suggests that there may be commonality in the mechanisms that generate these sexual interests. An alternative interpretation, however, is that persons with frequent cuckolding fantasies simply fantasize more about everything, both paraphilic and non-paraphilic. However, the lack of

an association between openness to experience and cuckolding fantasies argues against this idea, given that one of the items used to assess openness was “I see myself as someone who has an active imagination.” If cuckolding fantasies were simply a product of daydreaming tendencies, one would expect these variables to be associated. The fact that they were not points to a more specific association between cuckolding and paraphilic fantasies.

Our results also indicate that demographic, personality, and individual difference characteristics have little to do with the frequency with which one has cuckolding fantasies. Sexual sensation seeking, avoidant attachment, and current relationship agreement were the sole exceptions. Those who often fantasized about cuckolding were more thrill seeking by nature, tended to be closer to their partners, and tended to be in sexually open relationships. As for the large number of predicted traits that failed to yield an association with frequency of cuckolding fantasies (e.g., unrestricted sociosexuality, openness to experience, self-esteem), we suspect that these traits might be useful for distinguishing those who have cuckolding fantasies at all from those who do not, but not for distinguishing between people who already have a strong interest in cuckolding. Given that having cuckold fantasies was a participation requirement for our study, this explanation cannot be ruled out.

That said, while individual differences revealed little about how often cuckolding fantasies occurred, they did say something about the content of those fantasies. Highly agreeable persons emphasized partner pleasure, sensation seekers emphasized bareback sex and large penises, and those with an unrestricted sociosexual orientation placed less importance on familiarity with the bull. These findings suggest that the vast diversity present in gay men's cuckolding fantasies is there for a reason: cuckolding scenarios are contextualized to meet the psychological needs of a given individual. As a result, overarching theories such as sperm competition may not be sufficient to fully explain the nature and origin of these fantasies; rather, our fantasies are perhaps better thought of as a complex interaction of biological, psychological, and sociocultural forces.

Lastly, like different-sex couples who have practiced cuckolding (Chuba, 2015; Ley, 2009), gay men tend to report positive outcomes and experiences. Most participants who had acted on their cuckolding fantasies said the experience was better than they expected and that it enhanced their relationship. However, there was an important caveat: the quality of one's experiences depended on one's personality: conscientious persons tended to report better outcomes, whereas anxious and avoidant persons tended to report worse outcomes. This pattern makes sense in light of the numerous emotions these scenarios have the potential to evoke. It is likely that feelings of security, a close and intimate relationship, and a willingness to plan and

prepare before acting are crucial for achieving mutual pleasure and satisfaction when acting on any consensual non-monogamy or multi-partner sex fantasy, whether it involves cuckolding or not.

Strengths and Limitations

This study is unique in being the first to explore cuckolding fantasies exclusively among sexual minority men. Strengths of the study include the fact that we recruited a large and diverse sample of men who have sex with men, as well as our collection of both quantitative and qualitative data. This allowed us to explore several different aspects of these fantasies, including the link between fantasy and reality—something that is not often addressed or explored in studies of sexual fantasy.

That said, there are some important limitations, including the correlational nature of the data, which precludes us from making statements about cause and effect. Another limitation is that when we asked participants how often they fantasized about sex acts other than cuckolding, we did not provide detailed definitions of those sex acts. This was intentional because we wanted participants to construe activities such as humiliation broadly, given that there are a number of ways this act can play out. For example, a man might want to be humiliated for having a small penis, ejaculating prematurely, or failing to please his partner. However, by virtue of measuring humiliation so broadly, it prevents us from establishing whether some types of humiliation are more closely related to cuckolding than others. It is also possible that different people might have different definitions of humiliation, which means one could potentially be aroused by a humiliation scenario without consciously labeling it as humiliation. In light of the fact that people may interpret and define humiliation and various other sex acts (e.g., dominance, submission) in different ways, it would be worth further exploring how these fantasies are related to cuckolding with more precise measurement in the future.

This research is also limited due to the fact that we advertised this as a study of cuckolding fantasies and recruited participants from sources where men with this sexual interest may be over-represented. As such, it is unclear whether the results are generalizable. In addition, our sample consisted primarily of men who identified as gay or mostly gay. Consequently, we described our hypotheses and results in terms of “gay men” because we believe this is the group our findings say the most about. Because few participants identified as bisexual or anything else, we lacked the power to perform subgroup comparisons; however, participants of all sexualities were retained in the interest of inclusiveness. It would be interesting to explore the nature of cuckolding fantasies among bisexually identified men in the future and consider whether the nature of their fantasies differs based on the gender of the partner they are fantasizing about.

It is also worth noting that while most hypotheses were supported, many of the correlations were small. We believe this is because cuckolding fantasies are complex and multi-determined.

As mentioned above, these fantasies appear to be highly idiosyncratic and reflective of one’s personality traits and approach to relationships.

Future Directions

This study was only open to sexual minority men who reported having cuckolding fantasies. As such, it cannot speak to the overall prevalence of this interest among men who have sex with men. An important direction for future research is therefore to explore how common cuckolding fantasies are. Cuckolding has long been considered a paraphilia; however, we lack the data to state definitely whether cuckolding is indeed an unusual sexual interest or practice. This is a worthwhile area of inquiry in light of research finding that many of the sexual fantasies and desires that have long been considered unusual are not as rare as once thought (Joyal, Cossette, & Lapierre, 2015). For example, many of the fantasies associated with cuckolding in the present study, such as voyeurism and masochism, are technically classified as paraphilias despite the fact that they are too common to be considered atypical (Joyal, 2015).

These data also cannot speak to whether cuckolding is a newer fantasy and/or behavior among gay men, or whether it is something that has existed for a long time, but is only now being commonly disclosed and discussed due to changes in societal permissiveness. Exploring connections between this sexual practice and the rapid rate of social changes affecting gay and bisexual men—especially the legalization and growing acceptance of marriage equality—is fertile ground for future research. Research connecting the actual practice of cuckolding to sexual health outcomes is also needed. We suspect that the consensual nature of this activity and high degree of communication required would result in fewer health risks than infidelity, a secretive sexual practice linked to high rates of condomless sex and low rates of STI testing (Lehmiller, 2015).

Because this study focused on the psychology of sexual minority men who have the desire to be cuckolded, the results cannot speak to the psychology of the cuckolder, or the one who desires to have sex with others while being watched by a partner. There are probably differences in sexual psychology based upon one’s preferred role in a cuckolding fantasy. For instance, given that the cuckolder is in a position of power and control, fantasizing about cuckolding one’s partner would likely be linked to having more fantasies about dominance and sadism (fantasies that were unrelated to the desire to be cuckolded in the present investigation). In addition, whereas those who want to be cuckolded tend to have more fantasies about voyeurism, we predict that cuckolders would have more fantasies about exhibitionism, given the performative nature of this sexual role. Despite these expected differences, there would probably be a lot of similarity with respect to other fantasy (e.g., group sex) and individual difference correlates (e.g., sexual sensation seeking) regardless of one’s preferred cuckolding role.

Finally, it would be worth exploring all of these ideas further not just among sexual minority men, but among persons of other gender and sexual identities in order to determine which aspects of cuckolding fantasies transcend gender and sexual orientation and which do not. Virtually all research and scholarly writing on cuckolding that has included women has focused on them in the role of the cuckold (e.g., Ley, 2009); however, women can and do fantasize about being cuckolded, a phenomenon known colloquially as “cuckqueaning” (Reid, 2016). Cuckquean pornography and erotic fiction indeed exist and can be readily found online. As such, it would be worth assessing the prevalence and nature of this phenomenon among women of varying sexual orientations.

Conclusions

The present study explored the phenomenon of cuckolding in a large and diverse online sample of predominately gay-identified men. The results reveal that gay men’s cuckolding fantasies share much in common with heterosexual men, but differ in some important ways, including a seemingly lesser emphasis on interracial and BDSM themes. Findings also suggest that cuckolding fantasies tend to cluster with several related sexual interests (e.g., voyeurism, group sex, masochism, and submission) and, further, that the content of these fantasies can be predicted by many individual difference characteristics. Lastly, this study suggests that acting on cuckolding fantasies is largely a positive experience for gay men; however, some of these men appeared more likely to experience positive outcomes based on their personalities. This study represents an important, but preliminary step in better understanding the psychology of cuckolding desires. More research is needed, especially data that can speak to the prevalence of these fantasies. This could serve to inform the question of whether cuckolding is truly a paraphilic desire or if, as the popularity of cuckolding pornography suggests, it is normophilic.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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