# Sex and Psychology Podcast: Episode 129, “When Sexual Thoughts Become Sex Crimes”

[jazzy music]

**Dr. Justin Lehmiller:** Welcome to the Sex and Psychology Podcast.

I am your host, Dr. Justin Lehmiller. I am the social psychologist and research fellow at the Kinsey Institute...and author of the book, Tell Me What You Want: the science of sexual desire and how it can help you improve your sex life.

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Interest in forensic psychology has grown massively in recent years...coinciding with the rise of television shows like Criminal Minds and Mind Hunter, which depict criminal profilers who really try to get inside the brains of serial killers and other violent criminals.

While these shows are undoubtedly fascinating, they only present one small facet of what forensic psychologists actually do.

The field of psychology has a lot to offer to the legal arena. This is true for all kinds of criminal proceedings, including sex crimes. And this has increasingly become part of my own work. I've been asked to consult on a number of legal cases in this area and participate as an expert witness.

These cases raise a lot of complicated questions. For example, let's say someone has a fantasy that involves doing something non-consensual, and they share this fantasy online or over text. Should this be used as evidence of criminal intent?

Or what if someone makes an accusation of sexual abuse, but the other person claims that they were engaged in consensual kink?

How do you determine whether consent was or was not present?

Also, if someone is convicted of a sex crime, how do you determine whether that person is likely to offend again?

The intersection of sex, psychology, and the law is truly interesting and really fascinating. So, let's talk about it.

For today's show, I am joined once again by Lucy Neville, a lecturer in criminology at the University of Leicester.

She is a feminist and activist whose research explores sex and sexuality in different forms, as well as how sex intersects with violence. She is also author of the book, “Girls Who Like Boys Who Like Boys,” which we discussed on a previous episode of this podcast.

This program will contain discussion of sexual crimes, but at a pretty general level. We're not going to get into graphic details of specific crimes or anything like that. Just wanted to mention that, in case this is a sensitive subject for you.

This is going to be a fascinating conversation. Stick around and we're going to jump in right after the break.

[jazzy music]

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**Justin Lehmiller:** I've always found forensic psychology to be fascinating.

I've been interested in the intersection of psychology and the law ever since high school. My two favorite courses were psychology and criminal justice. And...I don't know if these were standard course offerings at other schools. I went to a public school and they were electives that we could take. And I just sort of found a love for both of these subjects.

And for a while, I thought I actually wanted to be a lawyer, but my parents talked me out of that and said that it would probably be more boring than I thought. [laughs] And I'd just be sitting at a desk, greeting contracts, pushing papers.

But...now I have a career where I get to combine both of those interests because I'm a social psychologist and I do a fair amount of work consulting on sex crime cases and serving as an expert witness.

So, Lucy, let me ask you what it is that drew you to forensics in the first place. How did you get into this world of forensic psychology?

**Lucy Neville:** Really similar to you. When I was little, I also wanted to be a lawyer and pretty much the same story.

And then as I read more about it, I was like, it's going to be a lot of reading about tax, isn't it? And helping rich people not pay tax. [laughs]

And even if you go into criminal law, it's really not how it looks on television, and there's a lot of paperwork...and very little of that sort of high drama that we see portrayed in the media.

And so...then I was like, oh, well, how can I still have that focus on that intersection between why people do things and how then we, as a society and our legal systems, respond to that.

So, I decided quite early on, I think I was about 11 or 12, I was like, “I want to be a forensic psychologist.” I think actually I wanted to be Jodie Foster in “Silence of the Lambs,” but obviously that job doesn't really exist. [laughs]

But yeah, so that was just always what I wanted to do.

So yeah, I did psychology at university and then went on to do a master's and a PhD in Forensic Psychology. I just found it really, really interesting.

I think now I’d lecture in criminology. So I've perhaps moved slightly away from...that...very...clear...psychological focus into a more sort of sociological focus on why crime happens, why it happens in our societies, what is it about our broader societies that make { that give us such high rates of crime, as opposed to what makes this particular individual do these terrible things. But that's still a bit of that, obviously, as well.

**Justin Lehmiller:** Thank you for sharing that.

And you're actually the second guest on the show to say that she wanted to be Clarice from the “Silence of the Lambs,” from a very young age. I remember Dr. Kristen Mark, a previous guest on the show, talked about that as one of her inspirations early on as well.

So, my next question for you is what a forensic psychologist actually does.

And I think a lot of people associate forensic psychology with TV shows like “Mindhunter” and movies like “The Silence of the Lambs,” and they think it's all about...criminal profiling and getting into the mind of people who commit, usually, violent crimes.

But what's the reality?

Yknow, what does the work of a forensic psychologist entail?

**Lucy Neville:** Yeah...so...obviously I was quickly disavowed of that notion.

I think when I was doing my masters in the UK, there were five full-time behavioral investigative analysts, or criminal profilers, where that was their full-time job. So obviously that's intensely competitive and you're very unlikely to get that job. So, a lot of forensic psychologists get called in to consult on individual cases.

For example...one of my colleagues is an expert on arson, gets called in to consult on arson cases quite a lot because that might not be the sort of expertise that the criminal justice system has in-house.

But a lot of forensic psychology work is instead...in prisons, probation, and working with offenders in those sorts of settings.

Or it's offering advice around how juries work and how juries make decisions, the reliability of eyewitness testimony, [laughs] how useful expert witnesses are, no shade Justin. [laughs]

(( )). So, it's sort of looking at the broader legal system and then obviously you've got forensic psychologists who look more at volume crime, at burglaries, and how we can link burglaries together, and understanding why burglars might target a specific house on any given street as opposed to any of the other houses, and shoplifting; a lot more of the mundane everyday volume crimes that we experience, as opposed to serial killers. And it's very thankfully very { very rare, but very high profile violent and sexually violent crimes.

**Justin Lehmiller:** Yeah, and I think it makes total sense why you don't have a lot of people who are dedicated to that sort of profiling of serial killers because fortunately they're rare. [laughs] You know, there aren't a lot of them.

And so that means, necessarily, you're not going to have a lot of those jobs that exist, but certainly, there are plenty of other fascinating things to explore within this world of forensic psychology.

So, I'm knee-deep and listening to a podcast right now that's called, “Crime Show." And if anyone is looking for other shows to listen to, it's fantastic and I highly recommend it.

And the latest season has a lot of relevance to forensic psychology, because it's all about the satanic panic that gripped the United States in the 1980s and ‘90s. And people all around the country thought that there were these devil worshipers who engaged in ritualistic abuse of children. And there were these psychologists and psychotherapists who were working with law enforcement to try and help kids recover memories of their abuse.

And the prevailing theory at the time, which has long since been debunked, was that when people endure really traumatic things, their brains will repress them or cover them up with positive memories as a protective mechanism. And so, with the aid of a therapist and sometimes under hypnosis, they would try to help them dig deep into their mind and unearth these memories of sexual abuse and other traumatic things.

But it turned out that the therapists were really just implanting new memories of things that never happened. And in their attempt to protect kids from abuse, they actually ended up psychologically abusing these kids in a way and sending a lot of innocent people to jail.

Now, I mentioned all of this because I think it's an example of how psychology and the law have at times, had kind of a troubled history, because if you're taking an unscientific approach or an unscientific concept like recovered memories...you know, and you're using that as a tool to seek justice, it can have potentially disastrous consequences.

So, I think this is an important reminder that when we as psychologists are applying our work to criminology, we have to do so with the utmost care and dedication to science, because people's lives are on the line. Wouldn't you agree?

**Lucy Neville:** Absolutely. I feel sort of similarly about the use of polygraphs. I kind of think, you know, that's something that obviously has support from certain psychologists. And...I { I think people get caught up in this idea that, you know, you could measure something like that.

And certainly, you know, polygraphs do measure stress in any given situation. ((They record)) a lot of galvanic skin response, and heart rate, and all sorts of things that are going on.

But I think it is quite irresponsible to then sort of say this can actually tell us if somebody is lying.

I think perhaps part of the problem with forensic psychology, is because it is the sort of “rock and roll” of the social sciences, that I guess there is a potential for individual psychologists or groups of psychologists to get kind of caught up in their own myth and their own legend of it.

And sort of really...you know...[laughs]...pin their colors to the mast on a specific theory and really pursue that doggedly in a way that's just not good science.

There's a quote, I think it's by...a sociologist called Donald Foster, and he said, “anybody who cannot delight in his own mistakes does not deserve to be called a scholar.”

And I think sadly, in many areas of academia, not just in psychology, people...are afraid of changing their minds or saying there might be some flaws in their argument. And, I mean, there's so much pressure to put forward definitive responses and to create this new theory that solves everything, and is world-leading, and fixes crime!

But I think some people succumb to that, and get caught up in it, and I do agree with you. (( )) I think stuff around like false and recovered memories, and that controversy...is problematic because as you say, it resulted in...children, ((and, you know)) adults being damaged, and also innocent people being prosecuted for crimes they didn't commit.

**Justin Lehmiller:** Yeah, you bring up so many important points there and I think that, you know, that issue of being definitive, you know, when people are asking you, you know, when you're on the stand and being cross-examined or questioned by a lawyer, you know, it's this high-stress situation and you want to look credible, and I think one of the ways that people try to look credible, is to...be very authoritative in what they're saying.

And you know, me as a scientist, my approach is to...always provide a nuanced answer.

And so, [laughs] you know, something I found in sort of the cross-exam proceedings is that they're trying to get you to say yes or no, you know, 100% or not, to everything.

And for most things, you can't just give those 100%, yes or no, definitive answers. You know, there's some nuance when you're talking about science, and especially when you're talking about something like sex or sexual behavior.

So, my answers are much more tentative than I think a lot of other expert witnesses’ are. And so, for that reason, you know, I might not be seen, maybe, quite as credibly by some juries just because, you know, I'm hedging a little bit in my answers because you know, with science, with research, with data, it's hard to say things with 100% certainty.

I'm also really glad you brought up the thing about lie detectors, [laughs] because I've always found lie detectors to be a fascinating thing. And I think their value comes in when people believe that a lie detector will work and can tell the truth. And so, there have actually been some interesting...sex studies where they've used lie detectors as one of their conditions.

So, for example, in one condition, they’ll ask people how many sexual partners they've had. In another condition, they'll ask people how many partners they've had while hooked up to a lie detector and you know what? You get different responses.

[laughs]

And, you know, even though the lie detector was something that doesn't work in, you know, terms of telling the truth, it compelled people to change their answers.

So, I think that's where you can potentially see some value of it.

But in terms of like, “oh, this is a thing that is ultimately going to get at the truth.”

Nope, not so much.

**Lucy Neville:** Yeah, no, absolutely. But I think it's amazing how many people still think that it is { that it works, again, it genuinely works! Just really surprises me. And ((I)) was like, “you really think that?! [laughs]

Why even have a legal system at all then?!

We should just { just have polygraphs because they can fix everything! [laughs]

**Justin Lehmiller:** Right? If it were only that simple to tell the truth. [laughs]

**Lucy Neville:** Yeah!

**Justin Lehmiller:** Now, I find expert witness work to be both fascinating and really stressful.

And in the cases that I'm involved in, they often center around questions of whether something that occurred was an act of sexual assault, or an act of consensual kink, or BDSM.

And we like to think that these things are totally cut and dry, you know, either consent is present, or it isn't. But that's not always perfectly clear to outsiders who weren't there to witness it.

And so my job as the expert is not to make judgments of guilt or innocence, but basically to provide sex-ed in the courtroom and talk about things like diverse sexual practices and how different models of consent work.

So as both a sex researcher and a forensic psychologist, can you speak a bit about what sex scientists can bring to legal cases that center around sex crimes? And if you've ever done any work in this area with cases like this, can you tell us what your experiences were like?

**Lucy Neville:** I think that's super interesting. No { no, I haven't done any sort of work with cases around that.

But I do, obviously, with having a background looking at sex work, have sort of spoken or researched a lot around this concept of consent. Because again, in sex work, it becomes quite a woolly concept because...there's people who sort of say, well, nobody can consent to commercial sex because that's not meaningful consent.

But, you know, by that definition, you can say, well, nobody can consent to any kind of work because, you know, I like my job, but I wouldn't do it if I wasn't being paid. [laughs] And if I was like a billionaire, I'd probably spend most of my time lying on a beach [giggles] drinking ((mojitos)) and, you know, [giggles] reading romance novels, not [giggles] turning up and giving lectures! [giggles]

So, I think then you've got this idea of consent becomes...so problematic, because actually we define consent really poorly in society, and it is such a complex issue. And obviously, as you're saying, consent is much more { much more complex than just saying yes or no to something.

So, it's something I do talk a lot with the students about when I'm teaching in these areas. And then, particularly with regards to sex, it becomes really tricky because...we...assume that... suddenly when it comes to sex, people are automatically going to be giving good, clear consent and waiting for that, whereas in most social situations, that doesn't happen.

So, there's a really great book by independent scholar called Milena Popova, called “Sexual Consent,” which I just adore, and they talk about how...in normal situations, we're not very good at saying yes or no, it can (( )) something.

So they give the example of somebody asking you to get coffee after work and you don't want to, but you don't just say, “no!" [laughs] because that would be rude!

Instead, you're like, “oh, do you know what? I'm super busy this week, but why don't I give you a text next time I'm free?”

And then both parties kind of know that was a tacit no, without being a hard no, and there's this understanding. And suddenly when it comes to sex, there's this expectation that people should be super clear with their yeses or noes, but also that it's really hard to read other signs of nonverbal consent or nonverbal like, “no back off.”

Well, it's actually in day-to-day life, we're pretty good at understanding when somebody's giving us a soft no or when somebody is saying, “no, but actually, maybe yes,” we're quite good at understanding that.

And suddenly when it comes to sex, all these things seem to go out the window and people just lose their minds a bit.

So it sounds like the work that you're doing is super interesting and really important.

But as you're saying, I think this needs to be something which is embedded in sex education and embedded more in general media, and things that people see on TV or like read.

So that awareness is coming into our society before it gets to the point where people are in a courtroom, and somebody's being hurt.

**Justin Lehmiller:** Right.

I mean, this is such a complex subject that, you know, on the surface again, it sounds so cut and dry like, “was consent present or not?”

And then if you layer in something like kink and BDSM, and this is going through the legal system, that's a whole different issue because in the US and UK, consent is not considered a valid defense for...consensual BDSM where somebody gets hurt, where there's an injury or some other bad outcome that happens in some way.

And so, you know, it becomes this really complex and messy area, particularly with that edition of kink, and that's where a lot of my cases come into play.

And I read this really fascinating book a while back when I was doing my very first case in this area, and it's called “Consensual Violence,” and it's all about consent in the legal system. And it's super fascinating because...under the law in the US and in the UK, you can consent to violence in certain contexts and circumstances.

For example, if you're a mixed martial arts fighter, you know, that's the example they often use in this book, you can consent to going out into a ring and getting the shit beaten out of you and maybe getting concussions and, you know, all other kinds of injuries. And there's a crowd that's there that's watching and is cheering, and maybe they're placing wagers on it, and it's celebrated, it's put on TV. Right?

And so, you know, you can agree to go into this very dangerous situation. And then, you know, at the end, if you get hurt, you can't really...have any recourse for it because you consented to it.

But in the case of consensual BDSM, we treat that as something that's totally different, where if you consent to an activity that's kinky and you get hurt as a result, that other person can be held criminally liable, even though you consented to that activity or both partners were consenting to it. So, it's just { it’s so interesting when you start talking about these things in the law because a lot of people just aren’t aware of this stuff.

And that's why many kink and BDSM gatherings, they'll have members of law enforcement who are there, who can talk about things like consent and how to prevent situations from arising where there are disputes about consent later on.

So, it's just a really interesting area that I think we need a lot more attention to.

**Lucy Neville:** Absolutely. And I think, obviously, that some of these issues are...also really influenced by...you know, racism, and homophobia, and then classism, and all sorts of other things that exist in society.

So, another thing I talk about with the students, is we have a quite famous BDSM and the law case in the UK: R versus Brown, it was known as the Spanner Trials. Yeah, (( )) you're nodding, you've heard of it.

This was a group of gay men who were involved in pretty { pretty hard-core BDSM, but nobody complained, none of the men made any complaints! I think some videos were found in an unrelated raid on a Soho sex shop. And the Crown Prosecution Service decided to bring this case, even though none of the men who were on trial complained about what happened to them or had any problem with that happening. And it was clear from the videos that consent was given and actually in a very informed way.

And so, it's interesting to me that the CPS decided to prosecute that, on the one hand, which I think has a lot to do with homophobia and...kind of a general fear of kink. But on the other hand, we've got very recent cases in the UK, which are very obviously straight-up domestic abuse, and then violent beatings, and rape.

When the man involved is like, “oh, it was a sex game gone wrong.”

And juries and judges seem to be swayed by this.

And I'm like { I promise like { well, there was one case where a man had poured bleach onto the face of his long-term romantic partner as part of a long session where he'd beaten her and raped her.

And I was like, “I can promise you, [exasperated laugh] pouring bleach on faces is not a common practice within the wider BDSM community! I'm not saying it never happens, but it is not something I have ever encountered on any kink scene I've ever been present in! [laughing] I don't think this holds up in any way!”

So I think, you know, there was definitely...((I)) feel this sort of response, some judges and juries that it was like, “oh, gay, kinky man, bad, bad, must punish.”

And then it's, “Oh, white heterosexual man. Yeah, maybe the woman wasn't clear, maybe he just made a mistake, maybe it was a sex game gone wrong.”

And it's just mind-blowing to me.

So again, I think the work that you're doing around educating people about that is super important.

**Justin Lehmiller:** Yeah. And, you know, that is such an important point that { and this is part of the concern about saying...consent is a defense in cases of BDSM and kink where injury results, is that some people who are domestic abusers will use...kink and BDSM as a cover for...the abuse that actually transpired.

And so that becomes this other tricky thing in terms of under the law and how do we figure this out and make sure that justice is served. Right?

And so how do you balance these things of, you know, respecting people with kinky, or just very different interests, that you have where everything is consensual versus, you know, preventing people from exploiting loopholes to get away with abuse, which we know...happens all too often in so many areas under the law.

But at any rate, I know we could talk about that at length.

And regarding that one case you mentioned about the British gay men in BDSM, I do have a video about that on the blog. I believe the title of it is something like, “When Consent is Not a Valid Defense,” and it's part of, I believe, a BBC documentary, so for listeners who are curious to hear more of the details of that case, you can go to the blog to check that out.

Now, I'm not a clinical psychologist by training, so I'm not involved in psychological assessments, but those are often part of the cases that I work in. And...I was recently part of a case where I worked in tandem with a clinician who performed the assessment.

And basically, this was a case where a person had some very explicit, very graphic chats about sexual activities that if they did in the real world would be illegal, but they didn't actually commit them in person. However, the police took these chats as a sign of intent, and this person was arrested.

And I see this happen a lot in the cases that I'm involved in. You know, there's no physical crime that took place, but there's this long trail of texts and emails that are taken as a sign of criminal intent.

And so, part of the assessment portion is determining whether someone would actually be likely to follow through with what they said and how much of a risk are they to society.

But determining risk of offending is a pretty complex thing, right?

So, can you talk a little bit about how forensic psychologists determine something like this and...how you decide whether somebody is likely a risk to society in terms of committing sex or other crimes?

**Lucy Neville:** I think it's really { obviously this sort of...when does fantasy spill over into reality, and what is the difference between these two things? ((This is)) something which I feel forensic psychology as a discipline is still really struggling with, and it's something which is still quite contested.

And there's been a number of similar cases in the UK...where...fantasy has been taken as proof that somebody has done something or ((that they’re)) planning on doing something. But I think it's really difficult because obviously I'm sure you're aware, it's probably like a Venn diagram.

Most people who go on to commit violent contact offenses will have fantasized about doing that before they do it, but the vast majority of people who fantasize about that kind of thing, don't do it. [laughs}

So that's where...I think sort of having stepped back a bit from forensic psychology and working within a criminological setting, which is more interested in looking at wider risk factors, which is something you also see in developmental psychology as well and that contributes towards forensic psych, is really helpful...in terms of looking not purely at fantasy and what people might be talking about or saying or writing when they're exploring their fantasies, but also looking at other risk factors which are present in their life in terms of, you know, are they isolated? Do they have other sources of support? Have they { have they committed other sorts of crimes before? You know...what state of mind are they in generally? Are they physically and mentally like feeling good about themselves? So it's sort of looking through all those other risk factors and not looking at any one thing in isolation.

I think that's probably true of everything about forensic psychology is it's really important to look at a constellation of risk factors and protective factors as well, not just focus on any one specific thing because...that's where it becomes so difficult to make any meaningful predictions because yes, humans as a group have four patterns of behavior and you can put us into little typologies and say this kind of person tends to behave this way. But we are also little special snowflakes and fairly idiosyncratic and all have our own ways of going through life.

So I think that's one of the great problems for psychology generally, isn't it? How do you marry these two things up?

How do we look at broad trends in human behavior, but also respect the fact that individual people can act in...very different ways from pretty much everybody else, and do really weird stuff sometimes, and that personalities aren't always consistent.

**Justin Lehmiller:** Yeah, I love everything that you said there. [laughs]

And you know, this is very complex business, and there's a model that I particularly like for understanding sexual offending, developed by Michael Seto, I believe it's called the Motivation-Facilitation Model, and so it looks at this...through a very broad lens.

And so you've got the individual factors, this person's fantasies, their personality traits, but then you also have the situation and environment that they're in, and you know, is substance use and other things like this, present? What is their history of other crimes that they might have committed?

And...so you have to look at all of these things in combination. And also, you know, somebody's age. You know, there's so many factors that could be important in kind of making this determination, so it's definitely not as simple as it seems.

And with regard to that issue of what's the link between fantasy and behavior in sexual offending? Well, if you look at the research, the correlation is pretty modest.

And when you start breaking things down, you know, what you see is that you'll have some people who commit sexual offenses and have never fantasized about it, some people who've had the fantasy but have never engaged in the behavior, some people have both fantasy and behavior, so, you know, it's kind of all over the board in a lot of ways.

**Lucy Neville:** ((When)) I was doing my masters, we had someone from Broadmoor, which is a high security psychiatric hospital in the UK, come in to give a talk about doing sexual offender treatment programs with the offenders in Broadmoor. And he was talking about using penile plasma graphs, I've probably pronounced that wrong, on the offenders while showing them sort of violent pornography and then seeing if they got an erection.

And then if they did, it was like, “well, they're still unsafe.”

At the time, I was like, “this is some clockwork orange level stuff going on here!” [laughs] Like, “whoa!” I was like { I found that really problematic that, just looking at what somebody might find...arousing even without wanting to find that arousing, what their body is responding to, and saying, “well, this shows an intention to actually engage in those behaviors.” It was a real stretch for me.

I was like { this seems like this could be...really harmful in terms of punishing people who actually have no intention of acting on those sorts of desires or fantasies.

And it also felt like weirdly invasive.

On the one hand, I was like, “I know we're talking about a very dangerous population. If you end up in Broadmoor, you've done some pretty bad stuff.” But I was like { but there’s still a part of me, which is like, but people's fantasies are also private!...That's something which is very...central and core to who you are. And that felt...weirdly exposing in a way that just didn't sit right with me, even { even as a young master’s student, many moons ago. [chuckles]

**Justin Lehmiller:** As somebody who studied fantasies pretty extensively, you know, most people have had some type of deviant fantasy before, a behavior that would be illegal if they were to act on it in the real world.

The most common example of this is voyeurism, which is defined...specifically as a non-consensual act, spying on somebody who doesn't know, when they're undressing or having sex. And I find that about two thirds of my participants say they fantasized about it before. Right?

And so, if you just assume that fantasy equals intent, or that somebody is going to commit a sexual crime, well, you're going to have to lock up a huge percentage of the population, right?

So, we can't just look at fantasy and isolation. You have to look at it in combination with all of these other factors.

**Lucy Neville:** Absolutely.

But I guess the flip side of that as well would be the prevalence of so-called rape fantasies in women.

When we look at some of the meta-analyses that have been done, rape fantasies are really common amongst women as a population. But...[laughs] I think it would take a special kind of...misogynist to say this means all these women actually want to be raped!

Because I think when something is existing inside your head, consent again becomes a weird issue, right? Because you are controlling the people that you are thinking of. So, they're kind of consenting to whatever you're having them do in your head because you are the puppet master, and they are your puppets, and they're part of you!

So, I think it becomes really complex when we say everything that people enjoy imagining, they want to happen in real life either { either as the perpetrator or as { as a victim.

**Justin Lehmiller:** Yeah, absolutely.

And don't get me started on a whole discussion of consent and fantasy...[laughs] because there's this whole other world of people...who...argue that if you fantasize about somebody who doesn't consent to be in your fantasies, that, that is the non-consensual thing. And it's like, “I don't know the answer to that question!” So...

**Lucy Neville:** It's quite complicated, yeah!

**Justin Lehmiller:** Yep, I don't purport to know the answer to it!

So, I know we're running short on time here, but I have one more question for you about this topic, which is, what do you think people should know who might be interested in pursuing a career in forensic psychology?

Is there anything that you know now, that you wish you would have known at the start of your career?

**Lucy Neville:** I think a lot of people { a lot of students go into undergraduate level { go into it thinking it's going to be more like forensic science.

So, what I would say to them straight away is if you want to be in CSI, really you should be doing a...forensic science degree, or a chemistry degree, or a biology degree, you shouldn't be doing a forensic psychology degree.

So, I think that's something that's important to make clear in how they'll be working, the things we spoke about at the top of the podcast about what sort of jobs are open to forensic psychologists.

And I think, also, unlike going into forensic science, forensic psychology is necessarily quite political because you are going to be making choices about how you interact with the criminal justice system, and how you position your research, and who you research, and how you research with them, which are quite political.

So,I also find that some students start off being like, “why are we doing all this stuff that's about politics, and why are we doing all this stuff that's about you know { sort of { economics?”

And you're like, well, it's really relevant. You can't work with the criminal justice system or understand the criminal justice system without understanding the people who created it (( )) and whose interests it serves, and how it helps and hinders us.

So, if all you're interested in is a sort of purely scientific, super, you know, objective approach, you should probably be going into the sciences or forensic science.

You shouldn't be going into forensic psychology, which is in many ways a sort of bastard love child of the humanities and the sciences, isn't it? [laughs] Sort of magpies from everywhere!

But I think some of the students think it's going to be much more straightforward and much more procedural than it ends up being, and they find some of the wider sort of social and political context stuff...a bit stressful.

Or, you know, they just want to talk about serial killers 24/7. And they're like, “why do I have to learn statistics?!”

[laughs]

**Justin Lehmiller:** Well, I mean, and that's a whole bigger issue.

People have { just going into psychology in general, is they're like, “wait, I have to understand statistics?”

Yes! You know, if you want to be a good psychologist, you have to be a mathematician.

So, thank you so much for this amazing conversation, Lucy. It was a pleasure to have you here.

Can you please tell my listeners where they can go to learn more about you, and your work, and get a copy of your book, “Girls Who Like Boys Who Like Boys?”

**Lucy Neville:** [laughs] Sure!

I'm on Twitter as blue\_stocking, with an underscore between the “blue” and the “stocking,” and then I work at Leicester University in the UK, so I've got a website. If you type in Lucy Neville, Leicester University, you'll see my page come up.

So, I'm also happy if anybody wants to read any of my ((erotica)), I'm happy to reply to emails and let you know my non-deplume as well! I don't go super public with it, but I don't keep it massively private either!

[laughs]

**Justin Lehmiller:** Well, thank you for your time. And also thank you to my listeners to keep up with new episodes of this podcast!

[jazzy music in background]

Visit my website, sexandpsychologyatsexandpsychology.com, or subscribe on your favorite platform, where I hope you'll take a moment to rate and review the show. You can also follow me on social media for daily sex research updates. I'm on Twitter, Justin Lehmiller, and Instagram at Justin J. Lehmiller. Also, be sure to check out my book, "Tell Me What You Want.”

Thanks again for listening. Until next time!

[jazzy music fades]

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