

Making Sensory Sense of Autism Spectrum and Paraphilias

by Denise C. Kellaheer, D.O.

University of California- Davis, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences,

Assistant Clinical Faculty

Contact: dkellaheer@gmail.com

OCT 2015

ABSTRACT:

Could sensory fascinations and core social skills deficits predispose ASD individuals to the asocial or autoerotic type of paraphilias like fetishism and masochism? Though sensory response abnormalities are now included criterion in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-5th Edition (DSM-5) criteria for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), little is known on how sensory issues impact sexual behavior in this population. Sexual behaviors tend to be sensory-seeking behaviors so preferred interests may reveal sensory strengths or deficits in ASD individuals. Research has not yet answered questions about sensory affinities and sexual behaviors in ASD. However, forensic mental health professionals may be wise to survey sensory motivations when evaluating ASD individuals in the context of sexual misconduct as this may make a difference in risk assessment and in tailoring treatment recommendations.



"My Strange Criminal Addiction" Alex Davis, season 1, episode 2, 12/8/14, Discovery Communications, Inc.

The ASD Collector with odd sensory attractions

B. had been masturbating with soiled baby diapers since age 11. Masturbating with his bare hand felt too coarse and was difficult because of poor dexterity. One day, he grabbed a used diaper from a bathroom trashcan and used it to effectively climax during masturbation. The smell and feel of a used diaper became appealing to him. Though it would often cause him urinary tract infections, he preferred diapers soiled with feces because feces served as a lubricant when masturbating.

Case of the diaper collector

B. is a 22 year old single male with high-functioning ASD who was arrested for repeated trespassing in the parking lot of daycare after hours. He was found collecting used baby diapers from a dumpster. Police found over 100 used diapers in his van. A search warrant revealed images of babies in diapers and of diapered adult males on his computer but no child pornography. He had a past charge of petty theft for stealing baby diapers. He lived with his mother and she believed that the diapers simply represented an ASD collecting behavior. She banned his diaper collection in her home so he kept them in his van.

Published cases²: diagnosed ASD & fetishism or autoerotic masochism behaviors

Object fetish Chesterman & Rutter, 1992	Masturbating while holding clean lingerie and while watching clothes spin in a washing machine
Object fetish Coskun & Muskaddes, 2008	Stimulated by/then gyrating towards or rubbing on persons wearing blue or black pants
Body part fetish Dozier et al, 2011	Stimulated by/then gyrating on floor next to female feet
Body part fetish Early et al, 2012	Constantly focused on adolescent peers' feet and offering to massage them
Object fetish & masochism Hellemans et al, 2007	Masturbating while binding self with belts and had interest in shoes and leather
Masochism Müller, 2011	Strangulation using nylon/barrier tape/plastic bags with assistance of others while masturbating
Object fetish	#1: Masturbating to clothing stolen from attractive persons
Body part fetish Ray et al, 2004	#2: Stimulated by tickling/massaging feet
Object fetish Van Bourgondien et al, 1997	Stimulated from/then masturbating to: black shiny objects, suitcase, books, shoes, shampoo bottles

Summary of relevant research on sensory abnormalities in ASD

Hypersensitivity	Autism traits positively correlated with sensory over-responsivity ³ Over-responsivity correlated with anxiety ⁴ Most correlated with ASD restrictive, repetitive behaviors ⁵
Hyposensitivity	Seen in ASD more than in other DD populations ⁶ Associated with lower language quotient ⁷ ASD less sensitive to thermal stimuli than non-ASD group ⁸
Unusual sensory interests	Associated with severity of core ASD deficits and lower cognitive function ⁵
Sensory processing abnormalities	Higher levels of impairment associated with more restricted, repetitive behaviors of ASD ⁶

A sensory connection: the DSM-5¹

Autism Spectrum Disorder (p.50)	Crit. B.4: "Hyper- or hypo-reactivity to sensory input or unusual interest in sensory aspects of the environment." Ex: "apparent indifference to pain/temperature and excessive smelling or touching of objects"
Fetishistic Disorder (p.700-701)	Crit. A: Sexual arousal from "the use of nonliving objects or a highly specific focus on nongenital body parts" Specifiers: Body part, Nonliving object, Other A "multisensory experience" in which "holding, tasting, rubbing, inserting, and smelling the fetish object while masturbating" is common.
Sexual Masochistic Disorder (p.694)	Crit. A: Sexual arousal from being "beaten, bound" With asphyxiophilia: "sexual arousal related to restriction of breathing"

The ASD individual with Diaper Fetishistic Disorder

Though ultimately it was determined that he represented a low risk of sexual predation, B. had a fetishistic disorder that caused a second interface with the law. He was diverted to mental health court and received specialty treatment for paraphilic behaviors and for adult ASD social deficits.

A list of the literature cited may be found at: <http://www.dcforensicsinc.com/>



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