

Considerations in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Pedophilia

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Introduction

- Feelings of romantic love toward young boys (paidophilein) was once a common but debated practice in Ancient Greece.
- Today, adult-child sexual relationships are viewed under a harsher and critical lens.
- Such relationships are considered to be both a crime (child abuse) and a type of psychopathology (pedophilia).
- Psychologists struggle to find an effective approach to treating pedophilia.
- Shin Takagi promoted the use of child sex dolls as an effective way to prevent pedophiles from acting out their sexual impulses on real children (Morin, 2016). He and several other men with pedophilic urges never acted upon them, stating the dolls help.
- Aside from anecdotal evidence, there has been no empirical research on the effectiveness of these dolls. Before we can begin to research this area, we should first identify the key components of pedophilia.

Goals for Psychologists

1. Find effective treatment to reduce recidivism rates among pedophiles.
2. Research the use of sex dolls as a possible crime prevention measure.
3. Develop a model of pedophilia that includes biological, ethical, social, and legal factors.

Considerations

1. DSM-5 revisions should add pedophilia subtypes: pedophilia (sexual attraction to prepubescent children), hebephilia (sexual attraction to pubescent children), and pedohebephilia (sexual attraction to both) (Blanchard et al., 2008)
2. Psychologists should empirically examine a biopsychosocial model of pedophilia
3. Clear explanations distinguishing pedophilia, hebephilia and pedohebephilia from sexual orientations should be emphasized
4. The presence or absence of sexual attraction is a key component. This differentiation should be the main focus of conceptualizations and treatments.
5. Use of sex dolls as a possible treatment or prevention tool. The differentiation between person versus object based sexual arousal should be established. This fact may be a key component in determining whether dolls could work.
6. Can research using the dolls be both ethical and feasible? What are the social and legal ramifications of the use of sex dolls for treatment?

Relevant Research

- Some may argue that paraphilia is another form of sexual orientation. However, research suggests this is not the case.
- A study by Cantor (2012) used IQ, cognition, physical traits, and neuroanatomy to tease out the differences between sexual orientation and the paraphilic disorders. His results support the separation and the idea that sexual orientation and sexual deviance are neurologically different (Cantor, 2012).
- Research has shown that those who are sexually attracted to children have a high rate of recidivism of sexually based crimes (Stephens, Cantor, Goodwill & Seto, 2017).

