

Romantic and Sexual Relationships with Adult Partners Among Minor-Attracted Persons

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Abstract

Limited research has been conducted on minor-attracted persons' romantic and sexual relationships with adult partners. This study examined reasons for such relationships among 128 self-identified minor-attracted persons. Secondary analyses explored whether age sexual orientation (i.e., degree of attraction to minors and/or adults) can be conceptualized as a continuum. We also explored whether age sexual orientation impacted reasons for engaging in sex with adult partners. The results suggest that age sexual orientation varies widely among minor-attracted persons and can be quantified using a modified Kinsey Scale. Minor-attracted persons endorsed both non-sexual and sexual reasons for engaging adult-partnered relationships. Minor-attracted persons with more exclusive attraction to minors were less likely to engage in sex for pleasure reasons and less likely to engage in romantic relationships due to love towards their adult partner; this contrasted with minor-attracted persons with less exclusive attraction to minors. These findings support the heterogeneity of minor-attracted persons, including differential reasons for engaging in adult-partnered relationships. Professionals should seek to understand the nature of their clients' relationships and age sexual orientation to determine whether such factors are relevant. Professionals can then support clients in their search for meaningful relationships.

Romantic and Sexual Relationships with Adult Partners Among Minor-Attracted Persons

Chronophilias refer to primary sexual attraction to age/maturity categories other than young, sexually mature adults and are increasingly being examined as possible sexual orientations (Seto, 2017). *Minor attraction* is an umbrella term that encompasses all sexual attractions to age categories that are under the age of legal adulthood; this age varies by region. The term minor attraction can include having attraction to infants (i.e., *infantophilia/nepiophilia*), pre-pubescent children (i.e., *pedophilia*), or post-pubescent adolescents (e.g., *hebephilia*). An ongoing debate exists over whether minor attraction is better understood as a sexual orientation or a mental disorder. Specifically, Seto (2012) has suggested that attraction to minors meets the three criteria of a sexual orientation which are age of onset, sexual and romantic behaviours, and stability of orientation over time; these criteria parallel gender sexual orientation.

Existing research has suggested that many minor-attracted persons explicitly label their attraction to minors as a sexual orientation or as part of their overall sexuality (Walker, 2019). Further, minor-attracted persons often indicate that they identify their attractions as such because they cannot be changed and/or are permanent, which also aligns with the sexual orientation criteria outlined by Seto (2012, 2017). Research by Cash (2016) has noted that minor-attracted persons tend to rank their attraction to minors at the top of their hierarchy of sexual orientation identities. Despite most minor-attracted persons expressing such views, it is important to recognize that not all of the participants conceptualized their attractions as a sexual orientation, but rather conceptualized these desires as a mental illness (Walker, 2019).

The Stigmatization of Minor Attraction

Attraction to minors is highly stigmatized and emotionally charged within society (Imhoff, 2015; Jahnke, Imhoff, & Hoyer, 2015). The term *sexual minority* describes gender and sexual orientations that do not align with cultural norms (Cochat Costa Rodrigues, Leite, & Queirós, 2017). Homosexual individuals have historically experienced stigma and discrimination due to their involvement in non-heterosexual romantic relationships. Such experiences have been related to a higher prevalence of mental disorders and internalized homophobia (Meyer, 2003). More recently, intersectional approaches have been used to assess how different minority statuses, including sexuality, interact to result in differing experiences for the individual that frequently include stigmatization (e.g., Everett, Steele, Matthews, & Hughes, 2019).

Minor-attracted persons encounter similar stressors as a result of their attraction to minors (Freimond, 2009). However, unlike minor-attracted persons, people with other stigmatized sexual orientations can choose to legally³ engage in their desired romantic and sexual relationships, even when their sexual orientations are highly stigmatized. For example, homosexual individuals can have such relationships, despite societal judgement, by attracting others with the same sexual orientation. As minor attraction can be considered a sexual orientation based on the previously mentioned criteria, and as minor attraction is an atypical sexual preference, we argue that minor-attracted persons similarly fall into the category of a sexual minority. Nevertheless, it should be recognized that this comparison is imperfect as minor-attracted persons cannot legally engage in romantic or sexual relationships with their desired partners (i.e., minors).

³ Referring to primarily North American legal systems.

Mixed-Orientation and Relationship Engagement

Given that minor-attracted persons cannot engage in a legal relationship with a minor, it is expected that many may turn to adult-partnered relationships for companionship, among other reasons. Previous literature has suggested that minor-attracted persons experience heightened levels of distress and loneliness upon realizing that they may never experience a satisfying romantic relationship with a partner they are attracted to due to legal constraints (Cash, 2016). An extension of this is the recognition that they will never receive, or give, physical love. These concerns likely impact minor-attracted persons' decisions to engage in romantic and sexual relationships with adult partners, even though these partners may not be congruent with their preferred age sexual orientation. We do not know if minor-attracted persons are fulfilled by such relationships; nor do we know if they are able to self-express and fully engage within such relationships.

The term *mixed-orientation relationship* has been used to describe a relationship in which one partner identifies as homosexual or bisexual and the other partner identifies as heterosexual (Adler & Ben-Ari, 2018). The term "mixed" refers to the incongruency that exists between the partners' sexual orientations. Existing research on mixed-orientation relationships has found that individuals often choose to engage in these relationships for non-sexual reasons. Higgins' (2006) review of literature on mixed-orientation relationships indicated that the most common reasons for these relationships were social expectations, desires to fit in, wanting children, and overcoming their homosexual desires. Research investigating gay men within heterosexual relationships found that gay men engaged in these relationships to avoid acknowledging their homosexual identity (Ross, 1978), as a conscious flight from homosexuality (Kissil & Itzhaky, 2015; Ross, 1978, 1979), to have children and a family (Higgins, 2002; Ross, 1978, 1979), to

fulfill community expectation (Kissil & Itzhaky, 2015), and to escape loneliness (Ross, 1978, 1979). Like mixed-orientation relationships, some minor-attracted persons can have partners who are not necessarily congruent with their attractions. Although individuals may experience high levels of sexual and/or romantic attraction to adults, some minor-attracted persons do not. Therefore, minor-attracted persons' reasons for engaging in relationships with adult partners may parallel many of the reasons gay men and lesbian women chose to engage mixed-orientation relationships.

Research examining why individuals engage in sex has been primarily conducted using cisgender, heterosexual samples (e.g., Meston, Hamilton, & Harte, 2009) with a few studies conducted on samples of sexual minority women (Ronson, Milhausen, & Wood, 2012; Wood, Milhausen, & Jeffrey, 2014). Heterosexual men and women typically reported pleasure, feeling desired, attraction, and expressing love to their partner as the most frequent reasons for engaging in sex (Meston & Buss, 2007). Similarly, regardless of sexual orientation, research has found that the most frequent reasons given for engaging in sex among sexual minority women were pleasure, physical desirability, commitment, and love (Wood et al., 2014). Together these findings suggest that these populations engage in sex for both sexual and non-sexual reasons.

In contrast, a study examining the use of bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, and sadism/masochism (BDSM) among asexual individuals and their romantic partners suggested that asexual individuals participated in BDSM activities primarily to produce sexual arousal for their partners (Jolene Sloan, 2015). These individuals reported that engaging in these sexual activities results in intimacy and non-sexual benefits with their partner, therefore making it a worthwhile activity. Consequently, gaining intimacy and other non-sexual benefits appears to be a primary reason that asexual individuals engage in sexual activity with their partners.

Minor-attracted persons' reasons for engaging in romantic or sexual relationships with adult partners may parallel the reasoning provided by mixed-orientation partners. However, minor-attracted persons' reasoning may also parallel asexual individuals, as these individuals acknowledged engaging in sexual activities that are incongruent with their sexual orientation in order to connect with their partners. Unfortunately, most of the existing literature on this population is based on individuals who are exclusive in their attractions (e.g., asexual individuals who identify as not sexually attracted to any partner). In contrast, minor-attracted persons have reported experiencing varying levels of exclusivity in their attraction to adult partners (Cash, 2016). Therefore, further research is needed to determine whether the motivation for adult-partnered relationships among minor-attracted persons matches the mixed-orientation or the asexual population.

The Kinsey Scale (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948) was created to measure gender sexual orientation along on a continuum. With this scale, Kinsey argued that gender sexual orientation should be conceptualized on a continuum rather than the binary of homosexuality and heterosexuality (Kunzel, 2008). Previous research on minor attraction suggests that most minor-attracted persons experience a degree of attraction to both minors and adults, with only a minority of these individuals identifying as exclusively attracted to minors (Cash, 2016). However, existing research on this issue is primarily qualitative (e.g., Freimond, 2009; Houtepen, Sijtsma, & Bogaerts, 2016). As a result, age sexual orientation has not been quantified. Consequently, it has not been determined whether age sexual orientation exists on a continuum like the Kinsey Scale (Kinsey et al., 1948). Further, how age sexual orientation affects the reasons minor-attracted persons choose to engage in romantic and sexual relationships with adult partners remains unexplored.

Study Objectives

Although research has examined the reasons for engaging in romantic and sexual relationships for some sexual orientations, no studies have yet to examine the reasons minor-attracted persons have for such relationships. The present study sought to address this gap through a quantitative examination of the reasons identified by minor-attracted persons for engaging in romantic and sexual relationships with adult partners. Furthermore, we explored whether minor attraction is quantifiable on a continuum like the Kinsey Scale (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948). We also examined whether the reasons minor-attracted persons choose to engage in romantic and sexual relationships with adult partners varied by age sexual orientation.

Based on the mixed-orientation relationship literature (e.g., Higgins 2002, 2006; Ross, 1978, 1979), it was expected that minor-attracted persons similarly engage in romantic relationships with adult partners for primarily non-sexual reasons due to sexual orientation incongruencies. As existing research has suggested that the age sexual orientation of minor-attracted persons varies (Cash, 2016). This exploratory examination of reasons for engagement and age sexual orientation was expected to show that the more exclusively attracted to minors the individual is, the more likely they would identify non-sexual reasons for engaging in adult-partnered relationships.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 149 self-identified minor-attracted participants (116 men, 19 women, 14 gender diverse). Participants were recruited from two online support forums for minor-attracted persons: B4U-ACT (<http://www.b4uact.org>) and Virtuous Pedophiles (<https://www.virped.org>). All participants were 18 years of age or older, fluent in English, and

were currently in, had been in, and/or desired to be in a romantic relationship with an adult romantic partner.

Procedure

The study was advertised on the two support forums for minor attraction. The advertisement included a brief description of the study, eligibility requirements, and the link to the questionnaire. The participants were informed that the study would take approximately 30 min to complete. Individuals interested in participating in the study were required to review the online consent form, which outlined their right to choose to participate and informed them that their responses were anonymous. Once participants consented, they then completed a demographic questionnaire, the YSEX?-SF, and the Reasons for Romantic Relationships survey. The order of presentation was randomized for the second and third measure. Upon completion of the study, participants were presented with a debriefing form that described the purpose of the study, provided the researchers' contact information, and outlined resources for minor-attracted persons if they were distressed by participating in the research.

Materials

Demographic Information

Participants provided basic demographic information including their age, sex, gender, race, gender sexual orientation, and current relationship status. Participants were also asked whether they identified as minor-attracted and whether they had ever desired or experienced a romantic relationship with an adult partner to determine their eligibility for the study. Information on participants' previous and current involvement with adult partners was also collected.

Reasons for Sex

The Why Humans Have Sex Short Form (YSEX?-SF) is a 28-item scale designed to measure reasons for engaging in sex (Meston, Kilimnik, Freihart, & Buss, 2019). The YSEX?-SF is derived from the original Why Humans Have Sex (YSEX?, Meston & Buss, 2007) survey and has been used in several studies. The survey is comprised of 14 factors: pleasure, love and commitment, physical desirability, experience seeking, practical, self-esteem boost, stress reduction, duty and pressure, expression, mate guarding, reproduction, social status, resource, and revenge. Each item is rated from 1 (*none of my sexual experiences*) to 5 (*all of my sexual experiences*) based on the frequency participants report engaging in sex for each of the given reasons. If a participant has not had sex with a partner in the past, they are instructed to report the likelihood that they would engage in sex for each of the given reasons. The scale was modified for the present study; statements and response options were made to explicitly refer to sexual experiences with adult partners. No definition of sex was provided to allow participants to self-define sex. The YSEX?-SF has demonstrated acceptable internal reliability, $\alpha = 0.42$ to 0.93 , for each of the factors. In addition, 12 of the 14 factors have been found to have excellent cross-form validity (Meston et al., 2019).

Reasons for Romantic Relationship

Reasons for engaging in romantic relationships were assessed using a modified version of a 7-item scale created by Edser and Shea (2002). This scale was created to measure reasons for romantic relationships among bisexual men in heterosexual marriages. For the present study, the wording of Edser and Shea's (2002) scale was modified to apply to adult romantic relationships among minor-attracted persons rather than bisexual men's marriages. Additional items were included from the possible reasons suggested by Ross (1978, 1979) to enhance the breadth of the

measure. Explicit instructions were added to inform participants that they should indicate the likelihood that they would engage in a romantic relationship for each of the reasons if they had not previously engaged in a romantic relationship with an adult partner. These additional items resulted in a 14-item questionnaire. To improve the clarity of the response options, the response scale was also modified from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*much*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Kinsey Scale

The Kinsey Scale (Kinsey et al., 1948) was designed to assess an individual's gender sexual orientation from 0 (*exclusively heterosexual*) to 6 (*exclusively homosexual*). In the present study, the Kinsey Scale was modified to measure age sexual orientation of the participants' degree of attraction to minors compared to adults. The wording of the Kinsey Scale response options was changed to 0 (*exclusively attracted to adult*) to 7 (*exclusively attracted to minors*) to measure age sexual orientation rather than gender sexual orientation.

Results

Participant Characteristics

Participants' age ranged from 18 to 70 years ($M = 32.67$, $SD = 13.04$). The sample had some diversity, but most of the participants identified as Caucasian ($n = 122$, 69.3%). The remainder of the participants identified as "Hispanic or Latino" ($n = 14$, 8.0%), "African-American or Black" ($n = 5$, 2.8%), "Other" ($n = 5$, 2.8%), "Asian" ($n = 2$, 1.1%), or "Aboriginal or Indigenous" ($n = 1$; 0.6%). Most participants indicated that they desired a romantic relationship with an adult partner ($n = 127$, 72.2%) and 120 participants had previously been in, or were currently in, a romantic relationship with an adult partner (68.2%). The mean number of reported romantic relationships with adult partners was 3 ($SD = 3.02$). Half the participants'

current relationship status was “single” ($n = 74$, 50.0%) or “in a long-term, committed relationship” ($n = 41$, 27.7%). The remainder of the participants identified as “married or common law” ($n = 23$, 15.5%) or “divorced or separated” ($n = 10$, 6.8%).

Quantifying Age Sexual Orientation

Age sexual orientation varied across the modified Kinsey Scale. The largest proportion of participants used “predominantly attracted to minors, but more than incidentally attracted to adults” ($n = 46$, 30.9%) or “predominantly attracted to minors, only incidentally attracted to adults” ($n = 43$, 28.9%) to describe their age sexual orientation. Only a few participants defined their age sexual orientation as “predominantly attracted to adults, but only incidentally attracted to minors” ($n = 5$, 3.4%); 16 participants identified as “predominantly attracted to adults, but more than incidentally attracted to minors” (10.7%). The remaining participants described their age sexual orientation as “exclusively attracted to minors” ($n = 16$, 10.7%) or “equally attracted to minors and adults” ($n = 23$, 15.4%). No participant identified their age sexual orientation as “exclusively attracted to adults” or “no socio-sexual contacts or reactions.” Had participants selected either of these options, their data would have been excluded from analyses, as their responses do not fit the eligibility criteria.

For the purposes of quantitative analyses, three groups of age sexual orientation were created. The groups separated participants based on their responses to the modified Kinsey Scale. These groups were created as the original Kinsey Scale response options were unequally endorsed, which resulted in small cell sizes for analysis. Grouped results also allowed for more of ease interpretation of the results. Individuals who selected either “exclusively attracted to minors” or “predominantly attracted to minors, only incidentally attracted to adults” to describe their age sexual orientation were labelled as the *high minor attraction* group ($n = 59$, 39.6%).

Participants who identified their age sexual orientation as “predominantly attracted to minors, but more than incidentally attracted to adults” became the *moderate minor attraction* group ($n = 46, 30.9\%$). Lastly, individuals who described their age sexual orientation as “equally attracted to minors and adults,” “predominantly attracted to adults, but more than incidentally attracted to minors,” or “predominantly attracted to adults, but only incidentally attracted to minors” were labeled as the *equivalent* (minimal or equivalent minor attraction) group ($n = 44, 29.5\%$).

A series of one-way analyses of variances (ANOVA) was used to analyze the impact of age sexual orientation. The p values were calculated using bootstrap ($n = 1000$) for multiple comparisons. Gabriel’s test was used for post-hoc analyses, as the group sizes differed in the present analyses; this statistic has been deemed more powerful and resilient to unequal sample sizes (Field, 2009). Mean differences were calculated using bootstrap ($n = 1000$) for multiple comparisons.

Reasons for Having Sex with Adult Romantic Partners

To determine the most endorsed reasons minor-attracted persons engage in sex with adult romantic partners, the mean score of each YSEX?-SF factor was calculated (Meston et al., 2019) and rank-ordered (refer to Table 1). Overall, the five most endorsed YSEX?-SF factors by minor-attracted persons were pleasure, love and commitment, physical desirability, experience seeking, and practicality.

The Impact of Age Sexual Orientation on Reasons for Having Sex

Group means for all YSEX-SF factors are provided in Table 2. Results were significant with regards to age orientation and pleasure, with a medium effect size, $F(2, 121) = 10.71, p < .001, r = .34$. Analysis of the mean differences indicated that both the equivalent group ($M = 1.85, p < .001$) and the moderate minor attraction group ($M = 1.76, p < .001$) endorsed the

pleasure factor to a significantly higher degree than the high minor attraction group. However, no significant differences were found between the equivalent group and moderate minor attraction group ($MA = 0.08, p = 1.00$). Results were also significant with regards to age orientation and physical desirability, with a small effect size, $F(2, 122) = 3.83, p = .02, r = .23$. The equivalent group endorsed the physical desirability factor to a significantly higher degree than the high minor attraction group ($MA = 1.43, p = .03$). However, no significant differences were found between the moderate minor attraction group and high minor attracted group ($MA = 1.14, p = .10$), or moderate minor attraction and equivalent or equivalent minor attracted groups ($MA = -0.28, p = .94$). The ANOVA examining age orientation and practicality was significant, with a small effect size, $F(2, 123) = 3.30, p = .04, r = .22$. Despite the significant omnibus test statistic, no significant differences were found during post-hoc analyses.

When examining stress reduction with regards to age orientation, results were significant with a small effect size, $F(2, 123) = 3.67, p = .010, r = .24$. Analysis of mean differences indicated that the equivalent group ($MA = 1.09, p = .049$) endorsed the stress reduction factor to a significantly higher degree than the high minor attraction group. However, no significant differences were found between the moderate minor attraction group and high minor attracted group ($MA = 0.80, p = .20$), or moderate minor attraction and equivalent groups ($MA = -0.28, p = .34$). Results were also significant with regards to age orientation and duty and pressure, with a small effect size, $F(2, 119) = 4.91, p = .004, r = .25$. The high minor attraction group endorsed the duty and pressure factor to a significantly higher degree than the moderate minor attraction group ($MA = 1.12, p = .03$) or equivalent minor attraction group ($MA = 1.24, p = .02$). However, no significant differences were found between the moderate minor attraction group and equivalent minor attraction group ($MA = -0.12, p = .99$). The ANOVA examining age orientation

and social status was significant, with a small effect size, $F(2, 120) = 3.89, p = .036, r = .17$. The high minor attraction group endorsed the social status factor to a significantly higher degree than the moderate minor attraction group ($MA = 1.04, p = .02$). However, no significant differences were found between the equivalent group and the high minor attracted group ($MA = 0.70, p = .20$), or with the moderate minor attraction group ($MA = -0.33, p = .78$).

Non-significant relationships were found for love and commitment, experience seeking, self-esteem boost, expression, mate guarding, reproduction, resource, and revenge when examining for age sexual orientation differences.

Reasons for Romantic Relationships with Adult Partners

To examine the reasons minor-attracted persons engaged in romantic relationships with adult partners, the mean score of each item in the Reasons for Romantic Relationships Questionnaire was calculated and ranked (see Table 3). The top five most endorsed items were to gain companionship, love towards romantic partner, to escape loneliness, to engage in sexual activities, and it seemed natural. Participants also could provide text responses for romantic relationship reasons. Their answers included themes such as their partner physically resembled a child or could act like a child, boredom, a desire to legally experience love and sex, to prove to themselves that they could maintain an adult relationship, to help manage fantasies or feelings towards children.

The Impact of Age Sexual Orientation on Reasons for Having Romantic Relationships

As noted, participants were grouped into the three age sexual orientation groups: high minor attraction, moderate minor attraction, and equivalent. Group differences were then analyzed using a series of one-way ANOVAs on the endorsed reasons. Group means for all reasons are provided in Table 4. Results were significant with regards to age orientation and

showing love towards romantic partner, with a medium effect size, $F(2, 126) = 8.53, p = .002, r = .33$. Analysis of the mean difference indicated that the equivalent minor attraction group endorsed the showing love towards romantic partner to a significantly higher degree than the high minor attraction group ($MA = 0.82, p < .001$) and to a significantly lower degree than the moderate minor attraction group ($MA = -0.63, p = .009$). However, no significant difference was found between the moderate minor attraction group and high minor attraction group ($MA = 0.19, p = .74$). Results were also significant with regards to age orientation and others engaging in romantic relationships, with a moderate effect size, $F(2, 127) = 10.29, p = .001, r = .37$. The high minor attraction group endorsed engaging in romantic relationships to a significantly higher degree than the moderate minor attraction group ($MA = 0.90, p = .007$) and the equivalent group ($MA = 1.29, p = .001$). However, no significant difference was found between the moderate minor attraction group and high minor attracted group ($MA = 0.39, p = .48$). The ANOVA examining age orientation and societal pressure was significant, with a moderate effect size, $F(2, 126) = 10.47, p = .002, r = .34$. Analysis of the mean differences indicated that the high minor attraction group endorsed societal pressure to a significantly higher degree than the moderate minor attraction group ($MA = 1.24, p < .001$) or the equivalent group ($MA = 1.13, p = .001$). However, no significant difference was found between the moderate minor attraction group and equivalent minor attracted group ($MA = 0.11, p = .98$).

The ANOVA examining age orientation and worried about attraction to minors was significant, with a small effect size, $F(2, 127) = 5.87, p < .002, r = .28$. The high minor attraction group endorsed worried about attraction minors to a significantly higher degree than the moderate minor attraction group ($MA = 0.81, p = .032$) or equivalent group ($MA = 1.02, p = .005$). However, no significant differences were found between the moderate minor attraction

and the equivalent minor attracted groups ($M\Delta = -0.21, p = .33$). Results were significant with regards to age orientation and thinking the attraction would go away, with a small effect size, $F(2, 127) = 3.72, p = .016, r = .21$. Despite the significant omnibus test statistic, no significant differences were found during post-hoc analyses. The final significant ANOVA regarded age orientation and pressure from family, $F(2, 126) = 7.03, p = .002, r = .28$. Analysis of the mean differences indicated that the equivalent group endorsed societal pressure to a significantly higher degree than the moderate minor attraction group ($M\Delta = 0.95, p = .005$) or the high minor attraction group ($M\Delta = 0.96, p = .005$). However, no significant difference was found between the moderate minor attraction group and the high minor attracted group ($M\Delta = 0.01, p = 1.00$).

Non-significant relationships were found for gain companionship, escape loneliness, engage in sexual activities, it seemed natural, desire to have someone look after you, because of a reason not specified, and desire for children and a family life when examining for age sexual orientation differences.

Discussion

The existing literature suggests that minor attraction can be conceptualized as a sexual orientation, and this is the theoretical framework we are using in our study. Research examining mixed-orientation relationships has suggested incongruent partners engage in relationships for reasons related to avoiding their identity, companionship, and societal expectations. Asexual individuals instead have been found to engage in the sexual component of relationships specifically to connect with their partner and to allow their partner to attain sexual satisfaction. Like other mixed-orientation relationships, the minor-attracted persons who participated in the present study clearly have partners who are not necessarily congruent with their attractions; nearly 70% of the participants identified having been involved in a relationship with an adult

partner. In the present study, we examined the reasons minor-attracted persons reported for engaging in romantic and sexual relationships with such adult partners, and whether these reasons parallel those reported in the existing literature. Further, we investigated whether age sexual orientation could be measured on a continuum like gender sexual orientation.

Age Sexual Orientation as a Continuum

A modified Kinsey scale (Kinsey et al., 1948), used to reflect age orientation rather than gender orientation, successfully gathered information on the range of minor attraction. These findings suggest variability in age sexual orientation among minor-attracted persons, with individuals experiencing different levels of attraction to minors and adults. Like Cash's (2016) qualitative research in which minor-attracted persons often described experiencing attraction to both minors and adults, our findings indicate that not all minor-attracted persons are exclusively attracted to minors. Thus, our findings suggest that like gender sexual orientation, age sexual orientation is not a binary concept, but rather exists on a continuum (Kunzel, 2008).

Endorsed Reasons for Engaging in Sex with Adult Romantic Partners

Minor-attracted persons endorsed all of the provided reasons for having sex to varying degrees. The existing literature on the reasons that heterosexual individuals (e.g., Meston & Buss 2007, 2009) and lesbian, bisexual, queer, and questioning women (e.g., Wood et. al., 2014) engage in sex are consistent with the reasons minor-attracted persons collectively endorsed engaging in sex with adult partners. Specifically, the existing literature has suggested that pleasure, physical desirability, and love and commitment are the most highly endorsed reasons for sex in heterosexual undergraduate students, heterosexual individuals with various ages, and sexual minority women (Meston & Buss 2007, 2009; Wood et al., 2014). Hence, these populations engage in sex both for sexual and non-sexual reasons that are consistent with the

reasons endorsed by minor-attracted persons. In contrast to the literature exploring relationships among asexual individuals, minor-attracted persons reported engaging in sex for pleasure reasons including because “it felt good” or they were “horny.” Conversely, the existing literature on asexual individuals suggests that they engage in sex to produce sexual arousal for their partners. One explanation for these disparate findings may be that the minor-attracted persons in our sample experience varied with respect to age sexual orientations. As some of these individuals are sexually attracted to adults, they may have sexual reasons for engaging in sex unlike the asexual population. Moreover, these findings represent the sample without accounting for variations in age sexual orientations.

Endorsed Reasons for Romantic Relationships with Adult Partners

The analyses both supported, and contradicted, the expected results. Consistent with the existing literature on mixed-orientation relationships (e.g., Ross, 1978, 1979), the most frequently endorsed reasons for romantic relationships with adult partners included several non-sexual reasons. The most endorsed reasons for engaging in romantic relationships among minor-attracted persons were “to gain companionship,” “love towards a romantic partner,” and “to escape loneliness.” Such reasons are similar to those provided by other mixed-orientation relationships (Edser & Shea, 2002). These findings suggest that minor-attracted persons engage in romantic relationships for non-sexual reasons related to gaining social contact and interaction. However, in contrast to past research on mixed-orientation relationships (e.g., Higgins, 2006), minor-attracted persons did not highly endorse “societal pressure” or “desire for children and family life” as reasons for engaging in romantic relationships. Rather, they were more likely to endorse “it seemed natural” as a reason for their romantic relationships. One potential explanation may be that minor-attracted persons are concerned about experiencing attraction to

their own children or being accused of such attractions. It is also possible that although minor-attracted persons experience societal stigma due to their attraction to minors (Freimond, 2009), they may not feel pressure to engage in romantic relationships with adult partners. It is also possible that such romantic relationships are not used to manage or dissipate societal disapproval of their attraction to minors which typically hide; this can be explored more directly in future research.

Contrary to our expectations and the existing literature on mixed-orientation relationships (e.g., Higgins, 2002; Kissil & Itzhaky, 2015), minor-attracted persons endorsed engaging in sexual activities as the fourth most frequent reason for being in romantic relationships with adult partners. These findings suggest that, unlike bisexual and homosexual individuals in mixed-orientation relationships, many minor-attracted persons chose to engage in these relationships for both non-sexual and sexual reasons. Accordingly, minor-attracted persons' romantic relationships with adult partners appear to have a sexual function – at least for some minor-attracted persons. Participants were asked to provide further reasons for romantic relationships that may be specific to minor-attracted persons. Some minor-attracted persons expressed engaging in romantic relationships to help manage their fantasies and feelings towards minors. Therefore, such individuals may also be looking for legal ways to express, control, or manage their attraction towards minors in much the same way that gay men did before homosexual acts were legalized.

Differences in Reasons by Age Sexual Orientation

The reasons for engaging in adult-partnered relationships among minor-attracted persons were further examined to determine the impact of age sexual orientation. Individuals with less exclusive minor attraction endorsed having sex for pleasure purposes or physical desirability

with adult romantic partners at a higher rate than individuals with more exclusive minor attraction. This suggests that the more exclusive minor attraction is for an individual, the less likely they are to engage in sex with an adult partner for pleasure purposes; this is not unexpected given the lack of sexual attraction. Interestingly, individuals with more exclusive minor attraction also reported engaging in sex with adult partners due to worry about their minor attraction. However, those with less exclusive minor attraction reported engaging in such relationships more often due to pressure from family. As such individuals can experience attraction to adults, they may feel better able to achieve family-oriented goals than those who experience more exclusive minor attraction.

Regarding romantic relationships, those with less exclusive minor attraction endorsed showing love to their partner at a higher rate than individuals with the most exclusive minor attraction. However, those with more exclusive minor attraction endorsed engaging in romantic relationships due to others engaging in relationships and societal pressure at a higher rate. As exclusive minor-attracted persons often experience high rates of isolation and stigma, it is not unexpected they internalize what has been outlined as expected of adult relationships. Like sex, individuals with exclusive minor attraction also endorsed engaging in romantic relationships with adult partners due to worry about their minor attraction.

The results indicate that reasons for engaging in romantic relationships among minor-attracted persons parallel different sexual orientation groups based on age sexual orientation. Specifically, those with less exclusive minor attraction parallel the existing literature on heterosexual individuals and sexual minority women. Research has found that reasons such as pleasure and physical desirability are common within these populations (e.g., Meston & Buss, 2007; Wood et al., 2014). A potential explanation for such results is that as minor-attracted

persons with less exclusive minor attraction experience a greater degree of attraction to adult partners, they may be more likely to fall in love with their partners and engage in adult relationships for this reason.

Conversely, the willingness of individuals with exclusive minor attraction to engage in sex with adult partners despite a lack of attraction parallels the literature on asexual individuals, which suggests that individuals engage in sex to produce sexual pleasure for their partners rather than themselves (e.g., Jolene Sloan, 2015). Such acts often serve to increase intimacy with their partner and gives them a sense of satisfaction in the relationship. Wolkomir (2009) suggested this act of negotiation in mixed-orientation relationships can allow for long-term relationships (e.g., asexual non-monogamous marriage) that may not fit the normative profile. Overall, minor-attracted persons' reasons for engaging in romantic relationships appear to parallel the existing literature depending on the exclusivity of their attractions.

Limitations and Future Research

Societal stigmatization of minor attraction can result in minor-attracted persons feeling uncomfortable engaging in research due to concerns about how their experiences will be framed (Imhoff, 2015), which undoubtedly impacted the representativeness of our sample to the population of minor-attracted persons. Participants were recruited from two support forums for minor-attracted persons (B4U-ACT and Virtuous Pedophiles), potentially leading to volunteer bias. A large portion of the minor-attracted persons in our sample identified as Caucasian; therefore, the generalizability of these findings to more racially and/or ethnically diverse populations of minor-attracted persons has not been established. Accessing participants via online forums could have limited the ability of the most marginalized minor-attracted persons to participate given that they are not members of those forums. Moreover, the forums for minor

attraction we used are orientated towards supporting those who refrain from engaging in relationships or sexual activity with minors; therefore, this sample primarily represents minor-attracted persons who have sought peer support to avoid acting on their attractions.

Future research examining minor-attracted persons reasons for engaging in romantic relationships should also consider further modifying the romantic relationship scale used. The questionnaire used was a modified version of the scale developed by Edser and Shea (2002) with additional reasons added from existing the mixed-orientation relationship literature (e.g., Ross, 1978, 1979). Because the scale reflected reasons previously endorsed by individuals in mixed-orientation relationships most of the items focused on non-sexual reasons for romantic relationships. As a result, a bias may exist in this scale as it provides primarily non-sexual reasons for such relationships. Future research should include more sexual reasons for romantic relationships within this scale. Adding these additional reasons will clarify our understanding of whether minor-attracted persons' reasons for romantic relationships with adult partners are primarily non-sexual. The additional reasons minor-attracted persons textually provided should also be added to this questionnaire to make it more applicable to minor attracted persons. Furthermore, the modified Kinsey Scale used to measure age sexual orientation may prove useful for future research. The results suggest that age sexual orientation can be quantified on a scale similar to the gender orientation Kinsey Scale (Kinsey et al., 1948).

The reasons minor-attracted persons engage in sexual relationships with adult partners appears to vary by age sexual orientation. Specifically, the reasoning of minor-attracted persons with more exclusive minor attraction parallels the existing research on asexual individuals (e.g., Jolene Sloan, 2015); whereas, the reasoning given by minor-attracted persons with less exclusive minor attraction are consistent with the heterosexual and homosexual literature (e.g., Meston et

al., 2009; Ronson et al., 2012). Differences exist within minor-attracted persons with respect to reasons for engaging in sexual relationships with adult partners based partly on their exclusivity with respect to minor attraction. Future research needs to consider such heterogeneity when examining minor-attracted persons and their lived experiences.

Conclusion

Until recently, minor-attracted persons have remained an understudied population and as a result, limited research exists on their lived experiences, including their romantic and sexual relationships. The current study aimed to fill this gap by examining minor-attracted persons' romantic relationships with adult romantic partners. Additionally, we explored minor-attracted persons' age sexual orientation and the potential effect of this on their adult romantic relationships. The findings indicate that the existing literature on heterosexual and homosexual individuals is congruent with minor-attracted persons' engagement in sex with romantic partners for sexual and non-sexual reasons. Participants also endorsed non-sexual and sexual reasons for romantic relationships with adult partners. Such findings can assist clinicians and researchers working with minor-attracted persons.

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Table 1

Ranked YSEX?-SF Factors by Age Sexual Orientation ANOVA Test Statistics

YSEX?-SF Factor	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Pleasure	7.54 (2.03)	(2, 123)	10.71	< .001	.34
Love and Commitment	7.26 (2.31)	(2, 122)	2.40	.17	.13
Physical Desirability	6.39 (2.46)	(2, 122)	3.83	.019	.23
Experience Seeking	6.25 (2.36)	(2, 123)	1.02	.15	.13
Practical	5.08 (2.03)	(2, 123)	3.30	.01	.22
Self-Esteem Boost	4.79 (2.35)	(2, 121)	0.34	.69	.04
Stress Reduction	4.66 (2.02)	(2, 123)	3.67	.010	.24
Duty and Pressure	3.88 (2.02)	(2, 119)	4.91	.004	.25
Expression	3.81 (1.72)	(2, 123)	0.50	.35	.09
Mate Guarding	3.43 (1.93)	(2, 121)	2.72	.10	.15
Reproduction	3.19 (2.07)	(2, 122)	2.00	.20	.13
Social Status	2.83 (1.76)	(2, 120)	3.86	.036	.17
Resource	2.41 (0.97)	(2, 122)	0.09	.73	.03
Revenge	2.23 (0.67)	(2, 120)	1.80	.83	.02

Note. p-values were calculated using bootstrapped values ($n = 1000$).

Table 2

Mean and Standard Deviations for YSEX-SF Factors by Age Sexual Orientation Group

Reason	Age Sexual Orientation Group		
	High minor attraction (<i>n</i> = 59)	Moderate minor attraction (<i>n</i> = 46)	Minimal or equivalent minor attraction (<i>n</i> = 44)
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Pleasure	6.14 (2.17)	8.00 (1.52)	8.11 (2.01)
Love and Commitment	6.34 (2.57)	7.63 (1.78)	7.36 (2.54)
Physical Disability	5.60 (2.59)	6.70 (2.17)	6.92 (2.42)
Experience Seeking	5.57 (2.17)	6.15 (2.29)	6.53 (2.56)
Practical	4.49 (1.98)	5.10 (1.86)	5.47 (2.18)
Self-Esteem Boost	4.94 (2.42)	4.45 (2.16)	4.89 (2.46)
Stress Reduction	3.91 (1.76)	4.45 (1.88)	5.25 (2.09)
Duty and Pressure	4.71 (2.74)	3.53 (1.50)	3.44 (1.48)
Expression	3.40 (1.59)	3.80 (1.62)	3.97 (1.90)
Mate Guarding	3.89 (2.36)	3.10 (1.48)	3.19 (1.79)
Reproduction	3.60 (2.48)	2.80 (1.57)	2.97 (1.87)

Social Status	3.20 (2.41)	2.38 (1.00)	2.75 (1.27)
Resource	2.17 (0.51)	2.40 (1.01)	2.39 (0.84)
Revenge	2.14 (0.60)	2.08 (0.35)	5.25 (2.09)

Note. Mean scores for each reason are based on a 1-5 scale, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement for engagement in a romantic relationship.

Table 3

Ranked Romantic Reasons by Age Sexual Orientation ANOVA Test Statistics

Item	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Gain companionship	4.31 (1.02)	(2, 126)	1.09	.51	.06
Love towards a romantic partner	4.25 (1.00)	(2, 126)	8.53	.002	.33
Escape loneliness	4.06 (1.09)	(2, 127)	1.13	.24	.10
Engage in sexual activities	3.68 (1.38)	(2, 126)	1.28	.28	.01
It seemed natural	3.52 (1.30)	(2, 127)	2.08	.05	.17
Desire to have someone look after you	3.22 (1.30)	(2, 126)	0.96	.31	.09
Because of a reason not specified	3.22 (1.37)	(2, 40)	1.92	.10	.25
Desire for children and a family life	3.06 (1.57)	(2, 126)	0.93	.39	.07
Everyone else was engaging in romantic relationships	2.89 (1.45)	(2, 127)	10.29	.001	.37
Societal pressure	2.68 (1.51)	(2, 126)	10.47	.002	.34
Worried about feelings of attraction to minors	2.63 (1.53)	(2, 127)	5.87	.002	.28
Thought attraction to minors would go away	2.52 (1.52)	(2, 127)	3.72	.016	.21
Advice from someone	2.11 (1.43)	(2, 126)	0.97	.20	.12
Pressure from family	2.07 (1.32)	(2, 126)	7.03	.002	.28

Note. p-values were calculated using bootstrapped values ($n = 1000$).

Table 4

Mean and Standard Deviations for Ranked Romantic Reasons by Age Sexual Orientation Group

Reason	Age Sexual Orientation Group		
	High minor attraction (<i>n</i> = 59)	Moderate minor attraction (<i>n</i> = 46)	Minimal or equivalent minor attraction (<i>n</i> = 44)
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Gain companionship	4.40 (0.83)	4.07 (1.27)	4.50 (1.17)
Love towards a romantic partner	4.20 (0.77)	3.86 (1.10)	4.50 (1.17)
Escape loneliness	4.13 (0.92)	3.93 (1.21)	4.00 (1.28)
Engage in sexual activities	3.67 (1.18)	3.57 (1.22)	3.83 (1.27)
It seemed natural	3.22 (1.25)	3.64 (1.36)	3.75 (1.28)
Desire to have someone look after you	3.07 (1.33)	3.14 (1.35)	3.00 (1.48)
Because of a reason not specified	3.47 (1.30)	3.50 (1.40)	2.58 (1.31)
Desire for children and a family life	3.29 (1.50)	2.83 (1.59)	3.03 (1.61)
Everyone else was engaging in romantic relationships	3.59 (1.28)	2.69 (1.39)	2.30 (1.42)

Societal pressure	3.60 (1.35)	2.57 (1.55)	2.08 (1.51)
Worried about feelings of attraction to minors	3.22 (1.62)	2.40 (1.42)	2.20 (1.34)
Thought attraction to minors would go away	3.00 (1.64)	2.29 (1.44)	2.23 (1.37)
Advice from someone	2.53 (1.41)	2.14 (1.35)	2.25 (1.71)
Pressure from family	2.93 (1.58)	2.00 (1.57)	2.50 (1.62)

Note. Mean scores for each reason are based on a 1-5 scale, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement for engagement in a romantic relationship.