

LOVE AMONG THE OBJECTUM SEXUALS

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the first research conducted with a group of “objectum sexuals” (OS) or “objectophiles,” people who experience emotional, romantic, affectionate and/or sexual relationships with objects. Stories of people who identify as OS have been sensationalized in various media, but data is scarce. In March, 2009, the author conducted an internet survey of the English speaking members of OS-Internationale, an internet-based group of about forty objectophiles. Twenty-one respondents shared their histories and experiences, including their perceptions of varying degrees of reciprocity with their beloved objects. Additional insights have been gained through conversations and emails with members of the OS community and are included in this article.

INTRODUCTION

Objectum sexuals or objectophiles experience a range of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to objects, often forgoing or dispensing with human romantic or sexual intimacy. Thanks to a glut of media coverage but a dearth of intelligent inquiry, objectum sexuality (OS) currently serves as a kind of ready made sexual sideshow, isolated from the “big top” of mainstream human sexual behavior. The lives of Erika Eiffel, Eija-Ritta Eklof Berliner-Mauer and other objectophiles have been chronicled by journalists who inevitably find themselves torn between straining to understand or simply exploiting the entertainment value of details which the public finds unusual or titillating.

It is important to know some history of the objectum sexuality community. In the early 1970’s, Eija-Ritta Eklof Berliner-Mauer, resident of a village in North Sweden, coined the term “objectum-sexuality.” She married the Berlin wall in 1979, gaining the first media attention for this orientation. In 1996 she created the first website dedicated to objectum sexuality, followed by an internet discussion group in 1999.

In 2002, Oliver Arndt, from Germany, created a large and active network called Objektophilie.

In 2006, Erika Eiffel, a world champion archer, travelled to Europe to meet Eija-Ritta and Oliver. She

came out to the public as an objectum sexual that same year and held a commitment ceremony with the Eiffel Tower in 2007. As she continued to travel and meet other objectum sexuals, Erika subsequently founded Objectum-Sexuality Internationale and created a new website and international forum of discussion for this community.

Eija-Ritta Berliner-Mauer, Erika Eiffel and Amy Wolfe were featured in a British “Strangelove” documentary (Married to the Eiffel Tower), which has since been repudiated by OS-Internationale as having sensationalized OS. Erika Eiffel has also appeared on Good Morning America (In Love with the Eiffel Tower), the Tyra Banks Show, and other American, European and Japanese media. In spite of her willingness to discuss her own story and the general features of objectum sexuality, her appearance in the media is invariably followed by a torrent of abusive and insulting comments which “go viral” on websites (including YouTube) and blogs. Other OS people who have encountered the media share similar experiences. In spite of numerous negative experiences with public ridicule or irresponsible actions of journalists, it seems that some OS advocates, including Erika, are willing to endure quite a lot in exchange for opportunities to inform the public through media.

With the exception of the author, “experts” who are approached by journalists for comments on objectum sexuality have generally assume a pathology or history of sexual trauma and/or categorize OS as a paraphilia or fetish. Experts continue to make these comments without actual data or contact with the OS community.

LITERATURE

To date, there are no published studies of objectum sexuals or objectum sexuality, though at least one other researcher is close to publishing her work. Jennifer Terry, Ph.D., an Associate Professor of Women’s Studies and Coordinator of the Queer Studies Program at the University of California, Irvine, presented on objectum sexuality at the Re-Thinking Sex - Gender and Sexualities Studies conference at University of Pennsylvania in March, 2009. Her research, titled “Loving Objects”, is due to be published in 2010, in the first issue of *Trans-Humanities*.

I have read a copy of an earlier draft, titled Objectum-Sexuality, which Dr. Terry sent to Erika Eiffel for comment and Ms. Eiffel forwarded to me. Dr. Terry invokes Gayle Rubin's essay, *Thinking Sex* (1984), and observes public reaction to objectum sexuality as an example of conservative repression in "a world increasingly preoccupied with security - emotional, economic and territorial." By analyzing documentaries, news articles, videos and blogs about objectum sexuality, as well as published statements of objectum sexuals, Dr. Terry views object love through a multi-faceted lens. Her observations place objectum sexuality in the arena of "sexualities that disturb the dominant orders of sex."

In the context of therapy, De Silva and Pernet (1992) published a case study of a “shy young man” who had an erotic relationship with an Austin Metro car. The young man, known as “George”, was given therapy which included behavioral and cognitive attempts to switch his erotic focus from cars to human females. His situation was further complicated by his practice of masturbating behind the tailpipe, while the car was running. This may have increased his arousal due to a “reduction of oxygen intake and related asphyxiation” which the authors refer to as possibly a mild form of hypoxiphilia. Feeling “polluted” also apparently added to his excitement. Therapy was only partially successful. He felt an increase in desire for women, but his interest in cars did not decrease. The therapists reported “waning compliance” after George’s “initial enthusiasm.”

Today people like George refer to themselves as mechosexuals and have formed a small, active internet community. Objectum sexuals view the mechosexuals as a distinct though somewhat related group or subcategory. People who identify as mechosexual are almost always male. Those who refer to themselves as objectum sexuals are predominantly female.

Incidental references to objectum sexuality have been found in other journal articles.

METHOD

English-speaking members of OS-Internationale (about half of the total membership) were asked to participate in a simple online survey, consisting of fifty questions. Responses were collected between March 19 to April 20, 2009. The author presented the idea of a survey to Erika Eiffel and members of OS-Internationale as a convenient and inexpensive way to gather community data that could then be presented to interested journalists, researchers and health professionals.

The survey was created using Survey Monkey, an online survey research website. The survey was designed to gather preliminary information about objectum sexuality and the experiences of objectum sexuals. It included many questions about the type and duration of OS relationships, as well as emotional and sexual qualities and behaviors. The survey gathered many open-ended responses, and therefore is most valuable as a qualitative instrument accompanied by preliminary numbers.

RESULTS

Objectum Sexuality as a Sexual Orientation

Based on statements made by objectum sexuals and on the research discussed in this article, it appears that objectum sexuality can be distinguished from a simple paraphilia by its complex array of emotional and affectionate qualities, in addition to its sexual characteristics. The most striking feature of this research was the discovery of the array of emotions and depth of connection that OS people feel for their objects. Judging from the thoughts expressed in open-ended responses, OS appears to be a genuine - though rare - sexual orientation. The emotions and experiences reported by OS people correspond to general definitions of sexual orientation. For example, an article on sexual orientation and homosexuality, published on American Psychological Association Help Center website, refers to sexual orientation as involving “feelings and self concept.” If references to human lovers were stripped from this particular article, it would dovetail with the experiences and feelings described by OS people.

Continuum of Erotic Human/Object Relationships

Human beings have a long history of erotic interaction with objects. This fact is widely known in sexological and psychological literature and references to this (as well as thriving commercial enterprises) are abundant. From sex toys to statues, from leather boots to large public structures, human beings have incorporated objects into a variety of intimate, affectionate and erotic activities.

As mentioned before, objectum sexuality is best known as a recent pop culture phenomenon, through “viral videos,” blogs and news stories. However, romantic/emotional/erotic attachment to objects seems to have been around a lot longer than YouTube. Consider these quotes from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, (Hugo, translated by Cobb, 1965) which describe Quasimodo’s passionate attachment to the bells of the cathedral:

“He loved them, caressed them, talked to them, understood them. From the carillon in the steeple of the transept to the great bell over the doorway, they all shared his love.”

“Claude Frollo had made him the bell ringer of Notre-Dame, and to give the great bell in marriage to Quasimodo was to give Juliet to Romeo.”

Kenneth Anger’s short film, *Kustom Kar Kommandos* (1965), can easily serve as mechasexual erotica. It depicts a young man in tight jeans carefully polishing his glamorous Ford hot rod with a mitt made of soft, white feathers. The soundtrack is Bobby Darin’s “Dream Lover,” sung by the Paris Sisters.

It is possible we might find more stories and accounts of similar attractions in a thorough study of world literature, myths, legends, folk tales, erotica, and spiritual traditions (particularly animism). One example is the myth of Pygmalion’s love of a statue, Galatea, which has given us the word “pygmalionism” (also known as aglamatophilia, galateism, or statuophilia), which refers to a sexual attraction to statues or mannequins (Love, 1992). However, in popular accounts of the myth,

Pygmalion prays for the statue to become his wife, which may indicate a desire for a more complete relationship than a fetishist would require.

[The Marsh Spectrum of Human/Object Intimacy©](#) attempts to describe the range of these human and object interactions, suggesting a continuum of use, behavior and relationships, ranging from casual sex toy use, through fetish or paraphilia type behavior, all the way to “objectum intimacy, which is defined as a full emotional, sexual and spiritual connection with the object(s).

NARRATIVE STATEMENTS FROM THREE SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Statements from three respondents have been collected to form brief “narratives” that convey some of the issues and feelings of OS relationships.

Statements from Trans Man Diagnosed with Autism

Multiple Object Partners

“I am most attracted to soundboards particularly because they are generally large, and I love their rows of dials and faders. They're very symmetrical and uniform in appearance. I also love VU meters of any kind, be them bar graph or sway-style. I love their shape, their smell, their texture. Soundboards have a wonderful smell in my opinion.”

“My longest relationship was with my two soundboards, [object name] and [object name]. I think what had a lot to do with the success of our relationship is that they live with me, and nobody can come between us.”

“[Object name] and [object name] are attracted mainly to my size. I am kind of a heavy set person, and they like that about me. They like my hands. I have swan neck deformity of my fingers, and they like that a lot. They also like the rough texture of my fingers.”

“[Object name], a large soundboard I have a relationship with, will talk to me through frequency. When I feel the sound she produces, it's like she's talking to me. She tells me what she needs, how she feels about the work that I'm doing through her.”

“My least successful relationship was one with a soundboard at a church. I was kicked out of the church for being OS because they claimed that I ‘had the soundboard in my heart, and not Jesus.’”

“We are very intimate in the bedroom, we spend a lot of time in bed together, but my pants usually stay on. Our intimacy is very above-the-waist, i.e. kissing, hugging, licking, etc.”

Statements from Biological Male

Multiple Objects and One Human Partner

“My relationship is with Fisheye Buttons (all of them). One item but multiple examples.”

“My objects are convenient and inexpensive. I can take them with me. There is nothing to intrude on my relationship with my objects.”

“[I] sew them onto clothes and straps which I wear on my genitals during masturbation.”

He said that what attracts him about his objects are, “The shape, texture, design, plastic material used, colours, the way the light works at a number of different depths (surface, internally), the feel on my fingers, lips. The plasticness [sic] against the material they are attached to. The coldness against me skin. The feeling of power they have for me. The

control that comes from their perfection.”

“The problem of these buttons becoming less available scares me. I keep my condition secret generally and feel ok about this. I do not see my sexual taste as needing to be out in the open, except regarding my male partner.”

“[I] have no attraction to any other objects at all. Not even other types of buttons, in fact I have something of an aversion to buttons generally. I detest shirt buttons. There is something of a love/hate balance for me between the type that I love and the other types which I am uncomfortable with.”

Statement from Biological Female Diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome

One Object and One Human Partner

This woman has a small scale replica of the statue she loves. When asked to describe intimacy with her object lover, she said:

“...The most wonderful feeling! with [object name], there are several ways this can be achieved, 1: physical contact with the 7 ft 5 replica of her that is here, 2: having [object name] (the one here) just within reach, 3: by fantasizing in my head, things that me an [object name] in [location] could be doing if we had an opportunity, 4: looking at a picture of [object name] [location]. If I concentrate hard enough on it, that alone can make me go over the edge. [Object name] herself although she is humanoid - looks like a human... she doesn't behave exactly like one. She doesn't masturbate - because I don't view her as a human - having those parts. I don't imagine or think that she has internal organs. I have never imagined what she would look like without her robes. She is always clothed, even in my fantasies.”

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF OBJECTUM SEXUAL RESPONDENTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

It is important to understand that Objectum Sexuels have a variety of responses to their objects and the way in which they view their relationships.

Some OS respondents sense gender in objects, some don't. Some have gender preferences if they do sense gender, some don't. Some feel they are sensing the gender the object wants to convey, others don't feel that way at all.

Feelings and experiences of communication and rapport with the object vary. Some people feel a great deal, including reciprocity, others do not.

Some OS people identify as polyamorous and have ongoing relationships with a number of objects. Other respondents indicated a preference for monogamy.

Twenty of the respondents said they have sexual feelings as well as emotional attraction to objects and structures. One person said she did not have sexual feelings for the objects, but the intensity of her emotional connection with her object lover surpassed her sexual attraction for humans.

Links to Autism, Asperger's Syndrome, and object personification synesthesia

Understanding of OS is complicated by its apparent link with autism spectrum conditions and possibly other pervasive developmental disorders (PPD). Of the twenty-one survey respondents, five had a diagnosis of Asperger’s Syndrome, one had a diagnosis of autism, four identified as having Asperger’s Syndrome but did not have a diagnosis, nine said they did not have Asperger’s Syndrome. However, three of those nine said they felt they had or were told they had “some traits.” (It is thought that Asperger’s Syndrome is under-diagnosed in adults as it did not enter the American Psychiatric

Interestingly, De Silva and Pernet's (1992) study of George, the mechasexual, predated the entry of Asperger's Syndrome in the DSM IV. De Silva and Pernet described George as being shy, lacking in social skills, having few friends and no social life. George still lived at home with his parents. Prior to his interest in cars, his "major preoccupation had been with children and adult women urinating." In hindsight, we might view George as a person who shares some of the features of Asperger's Syndrome.

People with Asperger's Syndrome are often characterized by their preoccupations and consuming special interests (Dewey, et al, 2005; Attwood, 2004). Beloved objects may also serve as special interests for those objectum sexuals who have been diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

The most mysterious aspect of objectum sexuality (and the biggest reason it is ridiculed) is that many OS people sense personality, reciprocal feelings and/or "energy" from the object or objects they love. One respondent said, "We are not freaks, nor are we fetishists. Our lovers are living beings that communicate, and love us back. Contrary to popular belief, machines and other objects do have souls. This is what our relationships are based off of, and they're not entirely sexual."

While some in the OS community will talk of animism and similar traditions, this explanation does not seem adequate for the experts or the general public. It seems impossible for a sane person to have a dialogue, let alone a relationship, with an "inanimate" object - therefore most people assume there is something drastically wrong with objectum sexuals.

However, object personification synesthesia is a form of synesthesia that detects personalities in objects (Smilek, D., Malcolmson, K., Carriere, J., Eller, M., Kwan, D., & Reynolds, M. 2007). This may be the most scientifically accessible explanation for experiences of object personality and reciprocal affection reported by some objectum sexuals. Objectum sexuality could then be understood as an affectionate and/or eroticized response to the object personalities detected through synesthesia.

This survey did not ask questions about synesthesia, though one OS person later reported the ability to sense temperature at a distance and wondered if this might be considered a form of synesthesia (private email). The potential link between objectum sexuality and object personification synesthesia is an exciting area in need of research.

Self Identity

Respondents were asked "do you describe yourself as an OS person?" Seventeen said yes. Two said no. Two said sometimes. Additional descriptions included: "objektophilie," "gay man," "mechasexual or a car lover," "no specific orientation," "bi-sexual," "objectum-inspired, -fascinated, affectionate (not romantic either)" and "a person who always loved objects since my early days." Another said, "as a person, my sexuality is not who I am."

Gender

Of the twenty-one respondents: fifteen said they were biologically female; two were biologically male; three were trans men (female to male) and one person marked the category "intersex" but said ze preferred the category of "pre-op trans-neuter" (which was not on the list). There were no trans women involved in the survey.

Age

Two people were between 18-20 years, six between 21-30 years, three between 31-40 years, and ten between 41-60 years old.

Primary Language

Twelve said English was their primary language, six spoke German as a primary language, one French, one Spanish, one Swedish. The author was touched to hear that some respondents stayed up all night with English dictionaries in order to take the survey.

(These language difficulties should be kept in mind when reading some of the open-ended responses. In some cases, punctuation and spelling has been corrected by the author, but awkward phrasing has not.)

Education

One person did not finish high school. Six had a high school diploma, GED, or the equivalent. Eight indicated “some college.” Four had a bachelors degree (Bakkalaureus). Two people had trade school or certificate program education.

Work

Six people were unemployed and/or on income support: one said, “at present I attend a day center as I have autism.” Another said, “I don't work, but have the Guillotine Museum of Linden, North Sweden.” (This response identified Berliner-Mauer as a participant in the survey.) Four people were either students or in vocational training. One of the students was studying computer science while working in computer repair and web design. Other work included teaching, metal work, factory work, painting and decorating, art, machinist, and freelance sound engineering.

Birthplace and Location

Four people were born in the United States, two born in Canada, the rest were born in Europe (England, Germany, Sweden, Spain). Four people were currently living in the United States, one in Canada, and the rest lived in Europe (as above).

SUB-GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Biological Women

As mentioned before, the majority of respondents were biological women. Six were aged 21-30 years, two were 31-40 years old, and seven were 41-60 years old.

Fourteen said they experienced sexual feelings toward objects, one did not. Thirteen said they described themselves as objectum sexual, one didn't. One woman used this description sometimes. Seven women had been aware of their object attraction since childhood, four for more than ten years, three from one to five years, and one for less than a year.

Nine of the women reported one to five object relationships in their life, three reported five to ten, two reported ten or more relationships and one reported twenty or more. When asked “how long was your longest relationship with a beloved object,” six said over ten years, three said five to ten years, five said two to five years, and one said less than a year.

Six women said they had multiple object relationships at the time of the survey, and six said they currently only had one lover. However, only two people indicated a preference for multiple relationships and six indicated a preference for monogamy. One woman said her primary or only object lover has relationships with other people. (Multiple answers were accepted in this question.)

Transport, such as automobiles, trains, aircraft, etc. was the highest ranking category of object lovers, closely followed by large structures such as buildings, bridges, towers, etc. One woman indicated a preference for Bauhaus furniture. Another said “robots” and another said, “my lovers are always metal.” Ten women indicated relationships with “public objects with no privacy,” one loved a public object “with privacy,” and six loved “personal objects with privacy.” (Multiple answers were accepted in this question.)

In order to feel close to the beloved objects, thirteen women take photographs of their objects. Eight write poems, stories or blogs about their objects. Five paint, draw or create other visual art. Four make models or sculptures. Four create websites. Three create videos or films and three create music. One woman collects things related to her lover. (Multiple answers were accepted in this question.)

Seven women have not had a human sexual relationship and would never consider it and seven have had from one to five sexual human relationships, including one woman who currently has a human lover in addition to her object lover. Three women had been sexually forced or coerced (see below). One said she was “sexually abused throughout my childhood.” (Multiple answers were accepted in this question.)

Five of the women were diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome and two identified as having Asperger’s. Five of the women reported sensory integration issues. ADD or ADHD, executive function issues, an unspecified pervasive developmental disorder, post traumatic stress, Tourette syndrome, and depression were also reported (one each). (Multiple answers were accepted in this question.)

Transgender/Transsexual Respondents

Three trans men participated in the survey. One man was in the 18-20 range, the other two were in the 41-60 age range. One worked as an artist, one was on “income support,” and one was a sound engineer. Two lived in Europe, one in Oregon. One had finished high school and two had “some college.”

Two men said they described themselves as objectum sexuals, one did not. All three had known about their attraction to objects since childhood. Two had between five and ten object relationships in their lives, one had twenty or more. All three reported an object relationship lasting between five and ten years.

Two men are currently monogamous and one has more than one lover. All three reported at least one object relationship lasting five to ten years. Mechanical lovers, including machines and appliances, were the most favored object lovers followed by lovers in the transport, technology and devices categories. (Multiple answers were accepted in this question.)

Two men reported relationships with “personal objects with privacy” and one man reported a relationship with a “public object with privacy.” One reported a relationship with a “public object, no privacy.” (Multiple answers were accepted in this question.)

All three reported feeling generally accepted when they tell other people about objectum sexuality. However, all three indicated “lack of understanding from professionals, such as doctors or therapists” was the biggest problem they faced. (As trans men, they may have had a higher level of contact with doctors and therapists than other categories of respondents.)

Two of the men described the “best thing about having an OS relationship:”

“I’m independent from all the human sexism.”

“Laying in bed with my lovers, spending time with them, watching movies with them, always having somebody there for me that truly understands me. To have somebody like that that I’m also sexually attracted to is a huge bonus. We have a very well-rounded relationship.”

Two would never consider a sexual relationship with a human being and one man reported being coerced or forced (see below).

Of the three men, one had a diagnosis of autism (as above) and two identify as people with Asperger’s Syndrome (see below).

Biological Male Respondents

Only two biological men participated in the survey. One man was 18-20 years old. One was 31-40 years old. One lived in Canada, one in England. Both men worked with computers. One taught computer science, the other was studying it.

Both men only sometimes referred to themselves as objectum sexuals, preferring other categories. One man preferred object lovers in the mechanical and transportation categories. The other man preferred large-size fisheye buttons (including these in the devices category).

One man described himself as a “gay man.” He has known about his object attraction since childhood. In addition to his object lovers, he is in a long-term relationship with a human sexual partner. He is sexually intimate with his partner about three times a month. He masturbates once or twice, almost every day, accompanied by the fish-eye buttons, which are sewn to straps. (Note: this is behavior that many people might classify as paraphiliac.)

The other man described himself as a “mechasexual or car lover.” He has known about his mechasexuality for one to five years. He says, “I've been in love with my mom's car (2000 [car model]) and my own car since I got it (1992 [car model], bought in May 2008).” “My car's appearance is what attracts me the most.” He enjoys intimacy with the cars “between twice a week and once every three weeks.” This intimacy “usually involves cuddling and such affectionate activity, and sometimes masturbation.” Solitary masturbation (without the company of his lovers) takes place between “once every three days and twice a day.”

He also says that his car lovers enjoy “my affection. However, I'd like to mention that although there can be a little amount of mental role play, I am fully aware that objects are inanimate and that this mostly is a one-sided relation.” With regard to human sexual relationships he said, “although I may consider a human relationship eventually, it has not happened yet.”

Both men prefer having multiple relationships. Both men reported one to five object relationships in their lives. One man reported an object relationship lasting over ten years, the other's longest relationship was two to five years.

Neither man had a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome or Autism, or identified as such.

“Pre-op Trans Neuter” Respondent

The person who marked “intersex” but specified “pre-op trans neuter” said ze also does not use the “objectum sexuality” category. Ze prefers “objectum-inspired, fascinated, affectionate [not romantic either].” Ze works as a machinist.

Ze has known of hir attraction to objects since childhood, with one to five object relationships. Hir longest relationship was over ten years and ze has more than one object relationship. The relationships include both public and personal objects, including long distance objects. Ze prefers small or large structures.

Ze takes pictures of the objects or creates visual art and written material about the objects.

Ze likes the shape and function of objects. When asked what the objects might find attractive about hir, ze said, “Don't know, unless it's because I don't anthropomorphize. If I was them, I think I'd appreciate intelligent fans, whatever form any physical reaction took.”

Ze does not sense gender in objects or have a gender preference. Ze identifies as asexual and prefers to not talk about sexual issues. Ze reported being touched against hir will at age fourteen (but did not include this in the category reporting sexual trauma or coercion - below). Ze will not ever consider a sexual relationship with a human being. Ze does enjoy human companionship with friends, family members and colleagues.

With regard to Asperger's Syndrome, ze said, "Some think I might have it but I don't agree (not close enough fit)." Ze does report having ADD or ADHD.

Respondents Reporting Sexual Trauma or Coercion with Humans

One of the assumptions made by experts and the general public is that objectum sexuality is the result of sexual trauma, which has then caused the victim to turn from people to objects for emotional and/or sexual satisfaction.

Three women and one trans man reported at least one unspecified incidents of human sexual trauma or coercion. Two had known of their attraction to objects "since childhood," one for more than ten years, and one five years or less.

Because sexual trauma or coercion is so often put forward as a cause of OS, it is interesting to understand how these four people view themselves and their object relationships.

The first woman, 41-60 years old, identifies as bi-sexual. She said she was sexually abused throughout her childhood but had one consensual (heterosexual) human relationship as an adult. She has been aware of her attraction to objects for one to five years. She describes her object relationship as "deeply emotional, not sexual - I have sexual feelings for humans, but these are nowhere near as deep as the emotions I feel for my partner." She also said of her object partner, "I think of her all the time, and I feel we are connected with an invisible thread, no matter how far I am from her."

The second woman, 31-40 years old, suffers from post traumatic stress due to an attempted sexual assault. She has known of her object attraction since childhood. She explains, "Structurally speaking, my objects are resilient and unmoving. They tend to infuse a particular linear and angular geometry amidst planed surfaces. My objects utilize the properties of physics for their existing purpose. However, this is simply a base attraction. I have a strong emotional attraction to my objects because of a spiritual kinship that must be present in order for the relationship to reach fruition."

She had this to say about her attempts at intimate human relationships: "Though I tried in early days to be open-minded to human sex because of pressure from society, it always failed prior to sex in all cases except one where my human partner was the caretaker of the object I loved and we commenced with my object lover present unbeknownst to him that I was OS. This ultimately failed because my partner became aware that my gratification came from the object, not from him."

The third woman, 31-40 years old, indicated one to five sexual human relationships (not clear if this includes the relationship where she was forced or coerced). She identifies as a person with Asperger's Syndrome or Autism. She has known about her attraction to objects for over ten years. She has only had one object lover, and it is a long term relationship. She says, "I've tried (though not by choice) relationships with other humans & was miserable as hell. Since being reunited with my lover I am much happier."

The trans man, 41-60 years old, identifies as having Asperger's Syndrome and describes himself as asexual. He has been aware of his attraction to objects since childhood. He said he would want people to know "that I'm unable to be physical with a human being." He also said that the best thing about having an OS relationship is "the object can't hurt you." He does not feel the object communicates with him in any way. His most pressing problem with regard to OS is that he "is not happy with it." (He was the only respondent to express unhappiness with being OS.)

In order to determine if sexual trauma or coercion causes some people to become objectum sexuals, future research should ask for more specific information about the nature of the sexual trauma or coercion as well as the timing of it. However, based on the research so far, the author feels that sexual trauma is probably not a cause of objectum sexuality, though it may certainly strengthen an existing wariness, confirm a lack of interest, or add to distaste for considering or conducting human sexual relationships. Factors related to synesthesia and autism seem more likely as "causes" for OS. The very rarity of objectum sexuality also seems to argue against sexual trauma as a cause, as so many

people are sexually traumatized without subsequently becoming an OS person.

Respondents with Diagnosed Asperger's Syndrome and Autism

All respondents diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome were biological women. Four were between the ages of 21-30 and one was between 41-60 years old. Two had "some college" and one had a Bachelors Degree (Bakkalaureus). Four of the women were unemployed and one was still a student.

One had known about her attraction to objects "since childhood" and the rest for over ten years. All five said they experience a sense of gender from their objects but four do not have a gender preference. Three of the women said they would never consider a sexual relationship with a human being. One said she currently has both a human lover and an object lover, with human partner sex taking place about once a week. Another woman reported between 1-5 human sexual encounters.

Of the respondents with Asperger's Syndrome, one had ADD or ADHD. Another indicated an additional pervasive developmental disorder (unspecified). One indicated executive function problems. Four of the five experienced sensory integration difficulties. One also had Tourette syndrome and another indicated depression and "Peter Pan Syndrome."

The respondent diagnosed with autism was a transgender man (female to male). (See also the Transgender category, below). In addition to autism he experiences sensory integration problems and anxiety. He is a freelance sound engineer who is attracted to soundboards and transportation objects. He identifies as polyamorous and pansexual. He has been aware of his attraction to objects "since childhood." He said he has never considered having a sexual human relationship and never will.

Respondents Who Identify as Having Asperger's Syndrome

Of the four people who identify as having Asperger's Syndrome, two are biological females and two are trans men (female to male). Three reported "some college" and one person had a trade school certificate.

Three have known about their object attraction since childhood, and one has known for over ten years. Three sense gender from objects, two prefer female gendered objects, one prefers male, and one has no preference.

Two have been forced or coerced into a human sexual encounter and two have never considered a human sexual relationship and never will. One person reported 1-5 human sexual relationships.

Except for one person with sensory integrations problems, there were no other diagnoses reported.

INSIDE OBJECTUM SEXUALITY

Gender and Preferences

How do you describe your own gender expression and relationship preferences? Please choose all that apply. (n=21)

Heterosexual (23.8%) 5

Homosexual/Lesbian (14.3%) 3

Bi-sexual (23.8%) 5

Pan-sexual (9.5%) 2

Asexual (23.8%) 5

Prefer Monogamy (23.8%) 5

Prefer Polyamory or non-monogamy (19.0%) 4

The asexuals included three biological females, one trans man and the pre-op trans neuter person. Three said they would never consider a sexual relationship with a human, one had been coerced or forced, and one had between one to five sexual human relationships. One of the asexuals had a diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome, one identified as having Asperger's, and two said they did not have Asperger's.

The pan-sexuals included one biological female and one trans man. Both were under thirty years old. The woman had a human sexual partner as well as her object lover. The woman was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, the man with autism.

Awareness of Object Attraction

Objectum sexuals become aware of their object attraction at different stages of their lives.

How long have you been aware of yourself as a person with a romantic and/or sexual attraction to objects? (n=21)

Less than 1 year (4.8%) 1

1 - 5 years (19.0%) 4

6 - 10 years (0.0%) 0

More than 10 years (19.0%) 4

Since childhood (57.1%) 12

Over half of the respondents have known about their object attraction since childhood. This group includes seven biological females, one biological male, three trans men and the pre-op trans neuter person. Of these twelve, four identify as asexual and seven have never considered a sexual relationship with a human. Two were coerced or forced. One has a consensual relationship with a human being. Three have had between one and five sexual human relationships. Six have never masturbated. This group includes one person with an Asperger's diagnosis, one with autism diagnosis, and three who identify as Asperger's.

Two responses to a different question describe childhood affinity with certain kinds of objects.

“I'm fascinated by steam locomotives since my earliest memories in different ways. So I can say, this is my oldest love.... I was fascinated by the machinists they are working together with the engines like a perfect team. Railroad is a world full of dreams and fantasy, I have identity with. It is a very complex and perfect world of different emotions.”

“...[the] object I love is pretty popular and since door closers are small and they are EVERYWHERE I figured someone has to love them, and since I'm mechanically inclined, I pretty much fell in love with them at age 11 or 12.”

Object Categories

What types of lovers attract you? Please choose all that apply. (n=21)

Structural/Small: furniture, fences, stairs, ladders, or similar (19.0%) 4

Structural/Large: buildings, bridges, towers, walls, rail tracks, constructions or similar (33.3%) 7

Mechanical: machines, appliances or similar (42.9%) 9

Transport: automobiles, trains, aircraft, bikes, boats or similar (47.6%) 10

Devices: instruments, sporting equipment, work tools or similar (19.0%) 4

Technological: radios, TVs, computers, or similar (19.0%) 4

Responses in the “other” category, but not yet mentioned, included: “music instruments (toneweelorgans [sic]).” One person said elsewhere that she lives in her object.

Attractive Features and Appeal of Objects

Respondents were asked, what do you find most attractive in your beloved object(s)?

“Feel, look.”

“La_Princesse and Twist and class 508 merseyrail [sic] Trains”

“HIS LOOKS AND PERSONALITY”

“I love how it looks like, how it smells and how it moves.”

“First, METAL! Nothing else feels sooo good to the skin! Then, their shape, proportions.”

“Structurally speaking, my objects are resilient and unmoving. They tend to infuse a particular linear and angular geometry amidst planed surfaces. My objects utilize the properties of physics for their existing purpose. However, this is simply a base attraction. I have a strong emotional attraction to my objects because of a spiritual kinship that must be present in order for the relationship to reach fruition.”

“The shape, texture, design, plastic material used, colours, the way the light works at a number of different depths (surface, internally), the feel on my fingers, lips. The plasticness[sic] against the material they are attached to. The coldness against my skin. The feeling of power they have for me. The control that comes from their perfection.”

“My car's appearance is what attracts me the most.”

“Locomotive: A perfect geometry. Harmony between parallel lines and rounds. The special aesthetic and power of expression. To see a friendly and smiley face with "eyes" and "big ears".”

“Shape plus function.”

“Everything.”

“His smell, colors, shape some parts that attract me sexual. I love to be with him, he is my 'good star'.”

“His face.”

“The power of electrical engines, the design (edges, being huge/impressive), made of steel.”

“Beautiful shape, sensitive wiring and computers.”

“Form, DDR concrete.”

“Function, appearance, personality.”

“Statue of Liberty:

What originally attracted my attention with her - was her crown. I remember asking her about her crown when I first had contact with her. I asked her if she had ever injured herself with her spikes, and she said she had cut her arm with one of them, and nobody came to fix it for 100 years! I love the design and the shape of her crown, with the spikes, and also the roundness of it going around her head, with the windows in. Her face too, it is so strong, and defined. I love her features - particularly her lips, and the shape of her eyebrows, and chin. Her hair is beautiful. I love how she has styled it, Her torch too. That is magnificent! I love the shape of it.. The balustrade is my favorite bit - (this is the railings around where you would stand). She also has the most amazing personality, which certainly is an attractive feature about her, that I got to know about once I started communicating with her.

American flag

I am very much into patterns, and uniformity, I have always liked stripes of contrasting colors, and also 5 pointed stars. The American flag is about the only object which has featured all of this- as well as having my favorite color combination, making it a perfect object for me. Flaggies are very funny, and childish. They set out to make me laugh - and they do it with ease!”

I am most attracted to soundboards particularly because they are generally large, and I love their rows of dials and faders. They're very symmetrical and uniform in appearance. I also love VU meters of any kind, be them bar graph or sway-style. I love their shape, their smell, their texture. Soundboards have a wonderful smell in my opinion.”

“The lines and craftsmanship.”

Perceived or Hypothetical Response of Object to Human Lover

Respondents were asked, “What does your beloved object or objects find most attractive about you?”

“It doesn't, it's an object.”

“My personality mainly. But La-princesse likes the way i kiss her same with Twister.”

“MY PERSONALITY & WARM & CARING NATURE.”

“I would like to know that.”

“No idea.”

“Maybe they are just satisfied to be loved.”

“I am in need of the strength and support they can provide to me. Their purpose meets my need more so than other humans and to this they are drawn.”

“I do not feel that my objects have any thoughts about me. When I was a child I felt more that they could motivate me sexually.”

“My affection. However, I'd like to mention that although there can be a little amount of mental role play, I am fully aware that objects are inanimate and that this mostly is a one-sided relation.”

“I feel a warm welcome and that my beloved object remember about me, if we see us again after a long break.”

“Don't know, unless it's because I don't anthropomorphize. If I was them, I think I'd appreciate intelligent fans, whatever form any physical reaction took.”

“I don't know...”

“I'm not quite sure whether objects/ my beloved object can feel attraction or whether this can be defined in the same way like it is for human beings.”

“I wait for him although he did bad things to me and didn't want to have contact with me. I was there when he needed me most. I saved his live when he was down. He is very thankful and loyal to me. Maybe he loves me, too.”

“I have no idea as he can't speak.”

“I don't know because I haven't been told... but I suppose many objects are happy to be loved truly by a person who cares about them and wishes only the best - especially if the object is usually treated in a bad way by most humans.”

“My feelings, my nervous system, and the way my mind works (she is more used to engineers and similar people).”

“He feels I take care of him.”

“Good question! I am loyal among other things.”

“Personality.”

“Well Libby is always telling me she thinks I am funny. We make each other laugh so hard! Flaggies haven't really said anything about that to me, cos its so hard to get a serious conversation out of them, because they are always silly and joking around!”

“Behringer and Mix are attracted mainly to my size. I am kind of a heavy set person, and they like that about me. They like my hands. I have swan neck deformity of my fingers, and they like that a lot. They also like the rough texture of my fingers.”

“How much I love her.”

Monogamy and Multiple Relationships

Multiple relationships are fairly common and acceptable in the OS community, possibly due to the difficulties of relationships with public objects or objects at a distance. It is also not unusual for more than one person to be attracted to an object, particularly a public one.

Number of Relationships: Please indicate the choices which apply to you. (n=21)

I prefer to have multiple relationships at a time (14.3%) 3

I currently have more than one lover (47.6%) 10

I currently have only one lover (38.1%) 8

I prefer to have one relationship at a time (28.6%) 6

My primary or only lover has relationships with other OS people (4.8%) 1

Number of Object Relationships

Twelve respondents have had one to five relationships, five between five to ten, two ten or more, and two said they had twenty or more.

While answering this question, some respondents commented on their relationships:

“My relationship is with Fisheye Buttons (all of them). 1 item but multiple examples.”

“My answer means all real complex os-relationships in me life. It not includes all the different things, there I have found fascinated in my childhood. If I would add this, the result would include some more as 10.”

“Can't be faithful for a long time.”

“The Berlin Wall is my primary one, but I also am attracted to Fences, Levels and other objects.”

Duration of Object Relationships

Respondents were asked, “how long was/is your longest relationship with a beloved object?” Eight people said they had an object relationship that lasted over ten years. Six said five to ten years. Six said two to five years. One person said less than a year.

Most Successful Long-Term Relationship with an Object

Respondents were then asked, “What made your longest romantic relationship with an object last as long as it did? Why was it successful?” Most respondents described relationships of great intensity, commitment and emotional depth, but one person simply said, “I'm smart enough to think it thru.”

“Because we're always there for each other & I feel that I can tell him all my problems without being judged by others & he's never let me down.”

“I fell in love like I never did before. I did all I could to be near her and today I live in the town where she works. So I can see her every day. Only if she works. If she has her break or is ill, I have to travel to visit her. It is successful because I love unconditional.”

“It was a wonderful OS lover who helped me to cope with hard times a lot. It was a kind of "long-distance-relationship", but I had photos and a model that made a comfy love life possible.”

“The object I loved the longest was part of my life and we could be together with no questions asked. We worked together, we played together, and we loved together.”

“We've experienced many heights and depths together. We are like close friends, we trust each other deeply, and we support each other. There is a strong connection between us, it was there from the very first day. It's this special feeling of being ‘made for each other’.”

“He was one of my very first lovers, with him I learned to have good and satisfying sex with an object.”

“I hadn't had any other opportunities to meet other objects at that time as I was living a very secluded life.”

“I simply loved my object. We met from time to time and I tried every chance to be near him, to be with him.”

“Deep emotional and psychological connection, and shared experiences.”

“We shared a connection, and bond that was absolutely airtight. I loved my partner so much, and he helped me through a lot of difficult times - particularly during my school years. Unfortunately our relationship fizzled out, when I met a new partner. I gradually fell out of love with the 1st partner, because my attention was focused on the 2nd, and my 1st partner was not at all happy with sharing me. The 1st partner still lives with me, and we have maintained a friendship, and that is where it is at now with him and I.”

Least Successful Object Relationship

Respondents were asked, “What was your least successful romantic relationship with an object and why?” While one person said, “I can’t remember a relationship failure,” others described difficulties including personal changes in attitude, lack of proximity, lack of emotional maturity, and human interference:

“Just got fed up with it.”

“My least successful relationship came to an end after a few weeks, because a jealous woman played a bad game.”

“I loved an object that I could rarely get close to. It pained me that I could see but not touch this object and relented to have a relationship with the caretaker in order to get close to the object.”

“A self made locomotive model. It’s not the same like a right locomotive. The first time was okay, but a emotional killer was, that the model more and more destroyed if I have made love with it.”

“Young and foolish.”

“I had some short time relationships but I didn't think any of them was a failure.”

“I was in very much in love with someone three years ago but the physical side didn't work as he was too small. It was upsetting for me at the time but we are now just good friends and he still lives with me.”

“Mostly it is human intolerance and discrimination making a relationship no longer possible. Then it is better to leave for the protection of your own person/life, even if it hurts very much.”

Communication with Objects

Respondents were asked, “How do you communicate with your current beloved object and how does your current beloved communicate with you?” Responses ranged from no communication to two-way communication.

No communication:

“I don't communicate with them in any way.”

“To be honest, a communication with my object is not possible. It is a dream and a deep wish, that there was a possibility to communicate with itself. Reality is: the contact to my beloved public object depends on how good I communicate with the staff working there.”

One-way (human to object) communication, through words, thoughts (including memories or daydreams), eye contact or touch:

“I talk to him, he cannot talk back.”

“I love to dream and daydream about OS lovers.”

“By rubbing them on my dry lips I feel very close to them and by looking at the way they shine for me and also through masturbation whilst looking at and holding them.”

“Only on my mind.”

“Never with words spoken aloud. Nothing there for the wrong ears...”

Two-way communication with object:

“Telepathy and sometimes verbally when on my own with them. I also touch them when I'm near them.”

“Unlike human-human, vocal communication is not the preferred method. Our communication is based on vibes and sensations received through various senses.”

“I feel me noticed by my lover. Feel his present [sic]. I communicate seldom in speaking words. I communicate in minds and with touchings [sic]. Touchings [sic] at special hot spots, ‘the ears’, but sorry, I don’t know the technology correct word for this part on a steam locomotive. I feel a short flash of energy during the touching. If I’m stroke the metal skin of my lover, first it feels cold but more and more I feel a warm floating.”

“Eye contact, emotions... mostly in a metaphysical way which is difficult to describe.”

“We communicate on a spiritual level.”

“We communicate by eye-contact (if I can be near the object) and by touching. I love the coldness of steel and to share my warmth with the beloved object. Another possibility are memories, I think a lot about my lover, look at photos, remembering moments in which we were able to be close, dreaming...”

“I talk to him, he seems to be aware and provides protection.”

“Thought transference (tankeöverföring).”

“This is a question I have been asked quite a lot of times- and I still haven't come up with an explanation. It is so difficult for me to describe it! It’s like I can sense their feelings, and understand everything they think and feel. I can ask [chosen object] a question, and she can answer me, just like as if I was chatting to a human. The only difference is - people around me cannot hear [object name] if she answers me.”

“We communicate primarily in a telepathic way, although I voice a lot of what I say to them, and they communicate back to me telepathically.”

Long Distance Communication

Many objectum sexuals have long distance relationships with public objects and lack of proximity is a problem. Respondents were asked, “If you are in a long distance relationship, do you feel you can sometimes or always sense or communicate with your lover?” Six people said this was not applicable to their situation, two people said no, one wasn’t sure. The rest of the answers were more or less affirmative. Feelings of communication were helped through pictures and photos, videos and webcams, and talismans:

“...She is a fair distance from me so maintain my connection through pictures I have of her, a bit like being on the phone to her.”

“Yes, I could, using photos and a model... and my thoughts.”

“It is very difficult to maintain communication over a long distance but through technology, live webcams, etc. connection can be maintained to a degree for me and my lover. The presence of an extension such as a model or piece of my object lover is a very important part of communicating and connecting long distance.”

“Besides of thinking about my love often and in a positive way, I have a company plate representing and symbolizing the type of this object (it's also made of steel). When I am with this plate, I can feel a kind of spiritual connection to my love and I see this as a 'link' to my love, regarding the sad fact that one cannot be together directly/in real the most time.”

“I think of her all the time, and I feel we are connected with an invisible thread, no matter how far I am from her.”

“She can communicate to me anytime I see a picture or video, or image of her. It does need to be a closer up picture or video though... If in the pic or video, she is far away from the camera, she doesn't hear me too well/ vice versa.”

“I feel I can communicate easily with [object name]. She's about 30 miles away from me, and I don't get to see her very often, but often when I look at a picture of her, it's as if I can form a connection to her by which we communicate.”

Creative Representations of Beloved Objects

Many objectum sexuals are inspired by an object muse they create in order to celebrate their relationships or feel closer to their lovers. These creations can be classified as romantically inspired or erotic art, though people who are not OS might not recognize them as such. Sometimes these representations become part of love-making and serve as extensions of the object lover's presence. Or they may have a familial association as well as an emotional, romantic or erotic one. For example, Eija-Ritta makes models of the remaining sections of the Berlin Wall and considers them to be like “children” as the relationship with her lover inspired her to create them (private conversation).

In order to feel close to your lover(s) and as part of the enjoyment of the relationship, do you: (n=21)

Make models or sculptures (28.6%) 6

Create paintings, drawings, or other visual art (42.9%) 9

Take photographs (85.7%) 18

Write stories, poems, letters, blogs, etc. (52.4%) 11

Create websites (23.8%) 5

Create films or videos (23.8%) 5

Create music (19.0%) 4

One respondent referred to a collection of things related to the beloved object.

Note: Tattoos should be a category added to future studies. Erika Eiffel has tattoos of the Eiffel Tower and Golden Gate Bridge (private conversation).

Descriptions of Human/Object Intimacy

Respondents were asked, “How do you describe intimacy with your lover?” Two people were not happy, responding with “problematic” and “no privacy - not much intimacy.” Others made comments such as “GREAT when it can happen,” “VERY PLEASURABLE,” and “very satisfying and making

happy.” Another person said, “Very good but sex drive is poor.”

Intimacy could include sensual or spiritual feelings or behavior, instead of, or in addition to, sexual feelings or behavior.

“Intimacy for me and my lover consists of a corporeal connection alongside a strong spiritual union. Physically sensing my lover with the whole of my body enables our climax but is only attained when the spiritual energy between us reaches a point of equilibrium and blissful harmony.”

“For me, intimacy isn't only limited to sexual contact in the sense of 'activities'. It also includes the moments in which I can simply be with my object, staying together.”

“Electric, exciting, sometimes perverse, highly stimulating and very aesthetic.”

“Usually involves cuddling and such affectionate activity, and sometimes masturbation.”

“Deeply emotional, not sexual - I have sexual feelings for humans, but these are nowhere near as deep as the emotions I feel for my partner.”

“I am more object sensual, not sexual.”

“Just limited to (dry) kissing, hugging, holding, sleeping with them.”

“We are very intimate in the bedroom, we spend a lot of time in bed together, but my pants usually stay on. Our intimacy is very above-the-waist, i.e. kissing, hugging, licking, etc.”

Frequency of Intimacy

Respondents were asked, “How often are you intimate with your beloved object(s)?”

For those with public or distant objects, the answers included:

“I am in a long distant relationship. However, during the periods of time that I am close to my lover, we are intimate upwards to 4 times per week.”

“Too seldom. Regular I must wait months or weeks.”

“Far too seldom (weeks extend to months/a year). I sadly cannot even be near, in the sense of only 'being present!'”

“About once a year.”

For some, intimacy has changed over time, or conditions have changed:

“It used to be often.”

“The first OS lover: less than I want. The second OS lover: enough.”

“In my younger days once or a several times a day.”

For those who live with or near their objects, frequency of intimacy included:

“ALL THE TIME.”

“Almost every night.”

“MOST NIGHTS WHEN, CUDDLED UP IN BED.”

“Sleep with my closers every night since I have had my first closer.”

“Every day once or twice. Occasional gap of a couple of days.”

“Well there is no set amount - but at a guess I would go for 5 times a week.”

“Ranges between twice a week and once every three weeks.”

“3 - 4 x a month, sometimes more, sometimes less.”

“Not often enough, about once every few weeks.”

Limitations to Intimacy

Respondents were asked to “please explain if there are limitations such as distance, privacy, or other.” (See also Problems, Proximity, Privacy below.) While three out of sixteen said there were no limitations, others described lack of privacy or proximity:

“PRIVACY as [object name] is a fairground ride so i don't get any privacy at all with him really.”

“My lover lives in a museum, which is rather public and there are always lots of other people around, which makes things rather difficult.”

“I don't have enough of privacy with OS lover no. 1. Too many people around, no more alone time.”

“Distance is the major limitation in my relationship. Privacy is also an issue but more so for one object lover than the others.”

“In some rare occasions I have access to the house's garage (I live with my parents); in other occasions, there are privacy limitations, and I find a lost spot where I think I can be relatively safe with my car.”

“Distance, public object, it's not my own.”

Masturbation and Self Pleasure

Respondents were asked, “How often do you pleasure yourself (masturbate)?” However the way in which this question was worded was not accurate or adequate for the OS community and revealed human to human sex bias on the part of the author/researcher, who did not understand that what a non-OS person might consider masturbation may often (but possibly not always) be considered partner sex by an OS person.

“I have never masturbated as I see it. All sexual pleasure achieved without the presence of my actual lover has always been with a part or model extension of my lover.”

“Never. No sex without lover.”

Five other people responded “never,” including the person who responded below. However, it is difficult to tell whether the “never” means no sexual self-stimulation at all, with or without an object partner, or just no stimulation without an object partner or the image or feeling of an object partner present.

“Never. I don't feel any sexual attraction to humans, this (and human bodies in this context) disgust me!”

People who said they self-pleasured may or may not have included their object lovers in the process. Frequency varied widely, from “daily once or twice” to “a few times a year.”

“When I feel turned on by [object name] as I said before I don't see her much as she lives in [place name].”

“5 times a week at a guess. It will always include [object name]...”

Masturbation with a Representation of the Object Lover

The following question again reflected human to human sex bias and a lack of understanding of OS intimacy, “When you self-pleasure, do you enjoy being close with a representation of your lover, such as a model or a picture?”

“I don't consider it self-pleasure, because I always feel close to my lover/s. Lover no. 2 is always with me when having sex.”

“Yes, but I don't feel it is self pleasure because I don't consider the gratification to be one way.”

“I enjoy being with my plate, but I don't need self-pleasure. I love my object, NOT my body!!!”

Two people talked about their enjoyment or use of pictures.

“I enjoy pictures as well as the real thing.”

“I always have pictures of my loved ones close.”

“I have sexual feelings about humans, not my partner.”

Two people responded in the negative: “Not relevant, don't masturbate” and “[I] Don't do that!”

And in the OS equivalent of internet porn use, one person said, “Sometimes I masturbate to YouTube videos of very large, and very attractive [object category].”

Problems, Proximity, Privacy

Objectum Sexuels face a number of hurdles in their pursuit of satisfying personal lives. Lack of acceptance by society is the biggest problem, followed closely by human abuse of beloved objects and the inability to be publicly affectionate with beloved objects. As mentioned before, physical proximity is a large problem for those who love public monuments, landmarks, fairground rides, public transportation, or other structures and buildings. Fifteen people loved public objects, twelve of them without privacy. Twelve people loved private objects, but only one of them reported a lack of privacy.

It may be that those people who achieve intimacy through energetic exchanges or telepathy are best able to feel happy in their relationships with public objects.

Respondents were asked, “What is your most pressing issue or problem regarding your OS relationships and preferences?” Two people were happy and said they did not have any problems. Other responses concerned:

Being closeted:

“I won't tell my siblings as long as my father is alive. I don't want him to know.”

“Having to keep it for myself.”

Lack of social acceptance for OS relationships and other social difficulties:

“I want people to accept me. I want to be able to take my lovers to the movies like anybody else. I want the public to accept us like majority have homosexuals.”

“That most people don't understand it. I don't understand how they can't understand it... because.. it feels so natural to me.”

“Nothing really accept [sic] I wish people would be more open minded and not view OS as a MENTAL problem.”

“Not enough people in society understand or accept us. Would be nice if we had the right to be able to have some sort of civil ceremony so we can be free to express our love for our partners in the same way as anybody else would.”

“No privacy / disrespectful people all around and about my beloved object.”

“No social life outside with my partner.”

“Hardly any contact possible, intolerant humans trying to destroy my personality.”

Distance:

“Dealing with the physical distance between me and my lovers is a large issue for us. I also struggle with an old flame rising up from the ashes of a current relationship that I want to save. I wish to be monogamous but have to accept that at this time I am not.”

Personal pressures and problems:

“There are a connection between transgender, Asperger?”

“That worries about other things keep me from enjoying them as much as I'd like.”

“Not to have the time I want to have for my relationship.”

“I have not learned to communicate with people and to understand people. My knowledge of human nature is not good.”

“Not happy with it.”

“Not being able to create a family with my loved one.”

HUMAN INTERACTIONS

Unless the OS person feels accepted, many human interactions will feel problematic or troubling. In response to another question, two people were bothered by human responses, such as:

“Idiots taking the piss on the internet after OS appears in the media.”

“Intolerance by humans, even if not yet outed as an OS-person!”

Sexual Relationships with Humans

Eleven people said they have never considered a sexual relationship with a human being. However, this survey question was flawed in that it did not include the choice of “might consider a sexual human relationship.” In the “other” column, two people did consider the possibility of a future sexual human relationship:

“Although I may consider a human relationship eventually, it has not happened yet.”

“I cannot say I never will...you never know.”

Only two of the survey respondents had a current sexual relationship with a human being, in addition to their object lovers. Frequency of human intimacy was once a week for one person, “around three times a month” for the other.

Seven have had one to five sexual human relationships and one has had more than ten sexual human relationships.

“I have had sex with a number of men but I have only had 1 relationship which I am in at the moment (6 years).”

“It was one mistake in the past - now I know that I cannot (and don't want to!) be in a human sexual relationship.”

As discussed previously, four people reported having been sexually forced or coerced by a human being.

Other Kinds of Human Relationships

One man said, “I have a balanced, sociable life and a male partner.” Other respondents mentioned “very good non-OS friends who are understanding” and “the rare species of nice-being-people who enable at least a visit with a beloved object/machine.”

One person added, “I am still questioning myself whether I may or may not have sex with a human partner I feel comfortable enough with.”

Disclosure

Objectum sexuals seem to be either very careful and cautious about disclosing their preferences for objects, or else they are appearing in public media and making YouTube videos about their object loves. A future study should include questions about personal privacy vs. public disclosure, and the rewards or difficulties that have resulted from these choices, and include some probing of how and why such choices have been made.

OS people on the autism spectrum may need additional help sorting out personal, social and professional boundaries that affect disclosure decisions.

Acceptance

Objectum sexuals unsure of acceptance upon disclosure might be uncertain either due to conventional politeness of the person hearing the news or, in the case of those with Asperger's Syndrome and autism, because they are unable to read body language and other social cues.

One person was unhappy about lacking a social life that included her OS lover, “I can't do normal things with my lover, see a movie, go in a restaurant, have a drink...”

For OS people, social isolation and continual misunderstanding is a reluctant price paid for object love:

“For me it is very important to clear up, that an OS-person also like other humans, just not in sexual ways. Also OS people need friends and a social net. Love is not the same like sex. Love, a OS person also can feel for other humans, in different ways. Love is not defined by sex. But if I as an OS person fall in love with a object, sex must be a part of it. OS is not the same like fetishism. The object I love is independent. It [has its] own identity and it is never a part or symbol of another human. To love an object is never a

substitute for missing a human partner.”

Encounters with Helping Professionals

When asked, “Have you ever consulted with a medical, psychological or other therapeutic or healing professional about matters pertaining to your OS orientation?” seventeen people said no and four said yes. Responses from the professional community were equally divided between “respectful and understanding” and “not helpful.”

Though Objectum Sexuels experience the same problems as other people, such as grief at the loss of a loved one, stress, and so on, it seems unlikely that they will divulge their orientation to helping professionals unless they are certain of a measure of understanding or acceptance.

CONCLUSION: WHAT DO OBJECTUM SEXUALS WANT THE WORLD TO KNOW?

People who identify as objectum sexuels are part of a sexual minority which also contends with additional challenges such as a high incidence of autism and Asperger’s Syndrome within its ranks. Though it is rare, objectum sexuality has attracted a great deal of notoriety, controversy and ridicule. Individual members are not always well equipped to deal with public scorn and exploitation. However, Erika Eiffel and other OS activists have done much to develop community and validate the experiences of other OS individuals through the creation of websites and internet forums.

Almost all of the objectum sexuels surveyed expressed satisfaction with their orientation to objects. Only one person expressed unhappiness. For most OS people, unhappiness and stress comes from lack of understanding and human interference with their object relationships. Many OS people are unhappy about their lack of proximity and access to object lovers, particularly those which are public structures. And for an OS person, destruction of a beloved object, such as the Berlin Wall, is devastating.

Most of the OS people surveyed expressed a great depth of emotion and a great deal of commitment to their relationships and many feel that their feelings are somehow acknowledged and even reciprocated by the object lovers.

Sexologists, therapists, counselors, medical personnel, social workers and other helping professionals lack information and understanding that will allow them to treat the OS person with the same respect and understanding they are expected to extend to members of other sexual minority groups.

The apparent link of OS to autism spectrum conditions and object personification synesthesia should be investigated and researched. Such research would be an important addition to the study of human sexual behavior and would benefit the autism/Asperger’s community as well as the OS community.

It seems appropriate to give the “last word” to the OS respondents, who were asked “What is the most important thing you would tell someone about OS relationships?” Their answers touched on a number of important points.

OS relationships feel natural and appropriate to those who have attraction to objects:

“They are real. They are complex. They are no less and no more of value than other romantic relationships.”

OS relationships are often the preferred or only option for those who are attracted to objects:

“...I'm unable to be physical with a human being.”

“To love an object is never a substitute for missing a human partner.”

“OS lovers are never a replacement for human lovers, or a way to get out of the way of human lovers. It's an independent kind of love, not a way out of the difficulties that come

along with a human relationship. OS love has its own difficulties!”

Happiness is possible.

“It does not prevent me from having a happy life, and it is not something that can be changed anyway.”

“That it may well be to do with an aspergers tendency or a coping mechanism from childhood into sexual adulthood (my father died when I was 12, I think this OS has been a great help for me to cope and have an almost religious attachment to something solid and safe which I have sexualized from puberty onwards). I would not drop it for the world, it makes me very happy!”

Objectum sexuals reject the categorization of their relationships as “a fetish.”

“OS is not the same like fetishism.”

“They are NOT AN OBSESSION. IT IS TRUE LOVE NOT FAKE.”

Objectum sexuals want respect for their lives, lovers, and relationships:

“I would tell them about my lover & be honest with them from the start, but make it clear that an OS person’s relationship is no different from anyone else’s.”

“All feelings should be accepted and respected, no matter whom or what they are for.”

Most objectum sexuals feel that their objects are unique and not truly “inanimate.”

“The object I love is independent. It [has its] own identity and it is never a part or symbol of another human.”

Most objectum sexuals want and need other kinds of human relationships and a place in human society, even if they don’t want to have sexual relationships with humans.

“For me it is very important to clear up, that an OS-person also like other humans, just not in sexual ways. Also OS people need friends and a social net. Love is not the same like sex. Love, a OS person also can feel for other humans, in different ways. Love is not defined by sex. But if I as an OS person fall in love with a object, sex must be a part of it.”

Perhaps the most definitive statement was:

“This is about love - not about which component goes where!”

Note: Portions of this research were first published by the author on the Carnal Nation website, as a three-part series: “People Who Love Objects.”

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