

Ageplay

Life



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Gentry, Kristin Jennifer Cherry English 101. 04 Spring 2012 Ageplay: Emotionally Gratifying, Socially Taboo! Ageplay, or the often sexually- taboo act of role playing, where one consenting adult personifies a minor child, while the other serves as a caretaker for the “ minor child”, is a highly common phenomenon that shocks and perplexes many, but serves as profound emotional fulfillment for those who participate in the lifestyle. Throughout the following pages it is my intent to explore the many facets of age play and especially dissect, with integrity, the “ why” behind this unique subject matter.

Overwhelmed with a wealth of information, I have broken down the subtopics, for convenience and ease in reading. I have incorporated a variety of research sources varying from books written by esteemed sexologists to personal interviews from age players right here in the community. To protect their identity some have chosen to anonymously contribute to the paper while others have allowed me to use an alias. What is this age play thing all about? Ageplay is a type of role playing mostly practiced amongst the kink community.

In some cases, ageplayers will limit “ sceneing” or “ play” to the “ vanilla” world, sexless, or seemingly bland, 9-5, mundane life, but, it is far less frequent than the sexually- driven alternative. There are three common age ranges that are explored in this kink. The first is Adolescentism, where a relationship is formed around a person who identifies as a young adult or high school aged person. Often, a “ naughty school girl” fantasy falls into this category.

Authors Gloria and William Brame and Jon Jacobs, educated Sexologists and experts in the BDSM arena, wrote about this in the candid, wildly-popular book: *Different Loving: The World of Sexual Domination and Submission*. On page 129 it reads “[in this type of ageplay] the fantasy is likely of only temporary duration. ” Paul Rulof, a lifestyle educator and conference presenter raises a good, supportive point in his writings that suggests why this might be true. On page 52 of his first book, he sheds a new perspective about this particular age range of role play.

He notes the following: “ The teenage years are often ones of exploration of the self-identity, interactions with others, and many different experiences. Many firsts often happen during this time: first kiss, first date and first romantic partner. ” The attraction of new and exciting events is most likely short-lived once those first experiences have occurred. When prompted during an interview, “ Draven”, a Bloomington-Normal based Daddy had to say this about the appeal of this age range. The naive instincts of a pre-teen appeal to the hero complex that most men possess. We like to be needed and especially when we can offer our insight about sexual discovery. I personally enjoy watching my baby girl grow emotionally and become a sweet young lady as a result of my influence. ” The next age group fetish mentioned in the trio-penned “ *Different Loving*” was the Juvenilism range. This includes littles who personify, or emotionally connect with 6-12 years of age.

Punishment is a cornerstone of functionality in this age range. Littles who identify as a juvenile are typically more sensitive and require great emotional care. Most littles who have a bratty, or disobedient streak, fall into

this group, thus the frequency in punishment for these preteen boys and girls. Brame, Brame and Jacobs had this to say about unique, therapeutic punishment tactics for littles in this age range, " The parent figure may ask embarrassing questions about the submissive's personal or sexual habits.

By stripping away the submissive's privacy, the dominant exposes not only the submissive's body but also her inner nakedness and vulnerability. In some juvenilist scenarios the dominant role plays as the erotic guide. " Surprisingly, despite the small amount of littles who fall into the pre-teen category, the Juvenilism age range is not the most popular. The last age fetish, Infantilism, or " ABDL" s (Adult Baby/Diaper Lovers), is the most commonly known age play fetish (Different Loving, p 137).

This class of ageplayers is, by far, the most controversial and is what has been most depicted in the media, in documentaries, and even on reality shows since the 1980's when a Phil Donahue episode practically turned daytime television viewers inside out with discomfort. The episode featured an adult baby, his Mommy and clips of footage showing his daily routines as an ABDL. Visions of an adult willingly soiling himself or fully relying on another adult to feed him, when he was physically capable to feed himself, shocked the studio audience, and home viewers, alike.

Very young myself at the time, less than 9 years old, I had so many questions and the images burned into my memory, mostly from fascination and wonder. I was so very confused and yet, so afraid to ask my very judgmental and cynical grandmother why everyone was yelling at this big baby and his Mommy. I filed the images away into the back of my mind and,

on occasion, when I hear stories of bigotry and discriminations surrounding ageplayers, that particular story comes flooding back to me.

The controversy behind age play absolutely stuck me for over two decades. During my research for this paper I was surprised to find that two of the interviewees, a couple, not involved in the lifestyle in any way, for the Brames' and Jacobs' book referenced the same Donahue show in their testimonial: " We saw a [Phil] Donahue [show] about infantilism and were amazed at the outrage that some people felt about infantilists, who are engaged in something completely innocent.

They enjoy being in baby clothes and get a certain amount of satisfaction from recreating their early childhood. Statistically, nobody knows whether it's normal or not. The psychiatrist on the show was very clear on the fact that these people were doing nothing wrong. " (p137) The experts who scripted " Different Loving" had this to say about this controversial group of littles: " Many D&Sers (BDSM participants) express discomfort with infantilism, as well, perhaps because it is difficult to understand why someone would wish to be as helpless as and infant. (p137) History has taught us that anger and fear are products of ignorance. I believe that this is a solid explanation for the public's response to ABDLs in the media. The intolerance is most likely fueled, further, by the notion that most adult babies are typically of male gender, which contradicts, completely, the general standard of patriarchy in our society. Unfortunately, with minimal awareness and exposure I do not see a wave of acceptance and empathy any time soon from the greater population.

Despite the negative talk about adult babies, and/or their caretakers, and the lifestyles that they lead, of the three categories, Infantilism offers one unique aspect that neither of the other two can offer. The ABDL model is the perfect erotic outlet for those that are afflicted with disabilities that affect fine and gross motor skills and mobility, as well as neurological conditions that may affect the ability to control bodily functions.

In all age ranges the caretaker will make decisions and approach their relationship with their little as they would a person who is biologically the age that their little feels. This includes physical and emotional care. In my observation of a social setting, where several couples were gathered for a kinky birthday party for a local Daddy, I saw first-hand how this plays out between a top (the roleplayer of authority) and the bottom (the role player with the least amount of obvious power), or in this case, a Daddy and his daughter.

During the birthday party the little was feeling feisty and apparently a little bratty. Much like an over-stimulated, attention-seeking, sugary-cake-filled six year old would, the little aimed to be the center of attention and repeatedly was speaking over her Daddy and interrupting him as he attempted to make announcements about the food to his party guests. Excited, the little would bounce up and down in front of him in attempt to get him to listen to her not-at-all-related-to-birthday-cake story.

Despite the Daddy's firm verbal prompts to calm down and fully fueled by an adoring on-looker crowd, the little continued to be a nuisance. Finally, the Daddy grabbed the little by the arm, guided her to a nearby chair, firmly guided her bottom into the seat, bent over to her eye level and sternly

ordered to her sit down, stop talking and to make no attempt to get up without his permission. It looked like a scene I have seen a million times myself as a parent and former preschool classroom assistant.

The little was petite in stature and sported short, pink hair in a pixie styled haircut and natural looking make-up. It was certainly believable to the party attendees and understandably so. The little was acting like a typical child the age the same age of her inner little would act and her Daddy was acting like any loving parent would. For Bigs and littles, this relationship is not a scripted, " fairytale-esque" , theatrical experience. The bond between the pair and their interactions are easily solidified by a fascinating concept called " headspace".

Once a scene begins between a caretaker and a little, the reality and natural roles melt away and, almost like a person with multiple personalities, the emotions, thoughts, habits, preferences, and behaviors of the innerpersonality surfaces and the person that they function as during their vanilla life dissipates, even if for a little while. It is very much trance-like in some cases, and almost always, in sexual scenes. In order to best understand what age play is all about there are terms that one should become familiar with.

These terms are pivotal to communicating with those who identify as minors or caretakers. The lifestyle breeds a whole new language of its own and knowing the lingo fosters a relatable nature when building trust amongst the kink community members. You will note new definitions and terms you have most likely not been introduced to prior to the reading of this paper. For

example, the most common term is “ a/the little”, referring to the person who identifies as the minor.

The term “ Big” is intentionally capitalized, and can refer to the little when they are functioning as their genuine, or “ real life” age; it can also be used as a term to describe the caretaker, or counterpart to the little. Another popular word often heard in conversations about age play is “ inner little”. This refers to the distinct feeling of being “ small”, or younger, than one’s true age, a separate entity, if you will, from who they are forced to be every day in their “ adult life”. There have been great debates when it comes to phrasing the description of littles and their personal connection with their inner little.

I recently surveyed a group of littles, in a discussion forum, online (that shall not be named for the protection of the contributors), as to how they speak of their inner little. The great phrasing debate is typically split between themselves as “ having a little” or “ being a little”, while on a rare occasion, some will say that they “ are little”. This particular description is the least common as very few people desire, or are able, to live the lifestyle 24/7. When I posed the question: “ How do you refer to your relationship with your little? in a discussion forum, open only to littles, I was bombarded with an avalanche of responses. After filtering through and reading the ample list of opinions over 50% of the littles speak of ownership of their little, as if their body hosts a shell for their little to live and safely surface when the need strikes. Slightly over 25% of the all-female responders would represent their little by saying “ I am a little “, while the rest commented that they do not

ever leave the feeling of being little therefore it is senseless to refer to it at all.

Littles have preferences, much different than their Big (in this case I am referencing the vanilla person who “ hosts” the inner little), in everything from hobbies, to fashion, to sleep habits, to comfort rituals, to sexual fantasies, to even how they talk, behave and relate to those around them. In most things ageplay when a debate arises, there is no consensus, as the ageplay community is still evolving. It is adaptable, based on personal preference and relationship history, to whatever extent the partners are comfortable with, in any facet that they so choose.

There are no societal expectations with ageplay, as there are with traditional parent/child roles. There are no social norms to adhere to within the community. The world of ageplay is very pliable and the appeal is very transparent once you begin to take a close look at the logistics of ageplay. Who age plays? As someone who is rarely surprised by taboo or kinky concepts and ideas, I am generally taken back by the diversity of those involved in the ageplay community. No one is excluded from having unique sexual preferences and, certainly, no one is ever exempt from personal hurt and “ baggage”.

In ageplay, the egalitarian roles serve as unconventional, therapeutic tool for people from all walks of life. In my personal interviews and connections that were made with the local ageplayers I have met everyone from the college-educated, pre-med student all the way the blue collar, entry-level, fast foodworker. Like profession oreducationlevel, other demographics do not limit who participates in such a lifestyle. I have met participants as young as

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18 years old and as old as 72. Sexual kinks and taboos are not dictated by demographics and age play is no exception.

Why age play? The beauty in this way of life is that it is customizable to individual needs. As an aspiring sex therapist I find immeasurable worth in personalizing what works for healing old hurts and sorting through hang ups with the tools you have before you. If someone is to grow from their pain and rise above it the method has to be something they believe in and trust will work. With ageplay, both partners steer the ship, so to speak, and the whole intent is to do so with their partner's well-being in mind.

The caretaker, also referred to as the " top", " master", " Daddy", " Mommy", or " Big", depending on those involved and to what extent they interact, parents the little with loving guidance and reassurance while the little fills a need to almost " ego stroke" their Big and construct a confidence and self-esteem boost within them. There is a mutual understanding, and a simultaneous bond between the two, that buffs out the unfulfilled emotional needs of each other and brings great joy and liberation from those wounds. During an e-mail conversation with " Mr.

Beck", a local Daddy and leader in the BDSM social scene here in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois , that I have had the fortune of befriending, I discovered that the " why" is a sensitive topic that some choose not explore for themselves. In response to a question asking if he thought there was a direct link between trauma and eroticism (a personal attempt to deconstruct Sexologist Gloria Brame's theory on the matter, stating that there is no direct link (Different Loving, p127) he responded as follows: " I believe that every form of sexual expression exists on a spectrum.

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Some people are gay with only one person. Some people are into the "lifestyle" only with younger people. So on and so on. There isn't a one size fits all with any form of sexual expression. There are littles working out issues, of course. I have been with a little who had been groped by her father but wanted to call me "Daddy" during sex. When I asked she was clear that her biological father and the "Daddy" figure of her fantasies were completely different people. I think that age play is, at the heart of it, about finding a role that makes sense and embracing it.

There are "kittens" and experts are not rushing out to find out what role the family cat played in their upbringing. Those who are attempting to push age play out into the realms of the broken homes and disquieted minds are, in my opinion, wanting to push uncomfortable questions, about their own sexual landscape, out at arm's length. " This particular Daddy is what is called a "24/7 Daddy", or a Daddy who lives the lifestyle around the clock, at every opportunity. There aren't many spaces where he would edit his words or interactions with his little. When questioned about his version of the " why ageplay? He seemed to be passive aggressive in his response, and evasive to a complete, personal answer. I would say that he was defensive in his wording and not at all comfortable in examining his personal motivation for entering a relationship of the age play nature. For some members of the kink community doing self-reflective exercises unveils some scary and uncomfortable truths that are too intense in nature to comprehend and deal with. This is a common issue when looking at most taboo practices. Many age players share in Mr. Beck's mentality mentioned in his interview.

The idea behind trying to understand the origin for the kink is usually “ just go with it and embrace it...it is what it is. ” For those like myself and Paul Rulof, Chicago- based age play educator and Daddy, we believe that there is a certain, natural connection, through ageplay, to “ righting the wrongs” of the past that children have no control over. Rulof speaks to this theory in his book: “ Ageplay: From Diapers to Diplomas “ when he wrote: “ For many, ageplay is an opportunity to connect with an aspect of themselves that they have forgotten or set aside...some people like to explore alternate models of who they could have been with ageplay. p. 65) As a researcher of this social phenomenon I am on the fence about making a claim that 100% of ageplayers are motivated by deep, unmet, emotional need. I would still say that the majority of ageplayers are gaining a sense of control over an area in their life that they felt they lost early on, but I don't ever care to categorize any group of people, in its entirety, and attach it to one label or judgment, no matter how concrete the evidence is proving that the label is justified.

Rulof listed some of his thoughts on the reasons why people partake of this lifestyle, some sexually motivated, some not. His reasons were listed, as follows, on pages 19-34, the biggest chapter in the book: The participants get to: * Relive their childhood - “... a great number of people have experienced childhoods that they look back upon as desirable or ideal times”. Paul goes on to write that adult life can be viewed as boring and mundane, whereas childhood is generally the complete opposite. Mr.

Rulof paints this point as an obvious motivator for ageplaying. (p19) * Rewriting their childhood - “ For littles, rewriting or re-envisioning their childhood is one reason that ageplay might be appealing. However, ageplay

is not simply a reaction to one's own childhood events. Some ageplayer's own personal childhood or possible negative events may not influence their play much at all...Everyone has something in their childhood that they would like to change: disappointments, lacks, incompleteness and missed opportunities. (p19) I felt that the author seems to have wavered in his stance on this particular justification, however, at a closer look, and full reading of his book, his claim strongly supports that point I mentioned earlier about how subjective this lifestyle truly is. Sure! Some people do use the little part of themselves to mend the past through conscious actions as an adult while others may focus more on specific hurtful events and relationships. The third option is that ageplay benefits them in some way not at all linked to negative childhood experiences.

This group of participants, I gather, based on my interviews, are the ones that are working to address something they would improve about themselves in their current phase of life, be it confidence, the ability to connect with others, building trust in intimate relationships, mastering discipline and will power issues, or just filling a need to be needed...which brings me to Paul's next theory for reasoning. * Practicing Caregiving - "When caregivers play, they are able to explore the naturally ingrained caregiving traits that they have. (p23) I view this as playing "grown up house", or maturing the favored childhood role play game to better hone in on nurturing skills in a less threatening way than what usually occurs in vanilla relationships. * Exploring Gendered Childhoods - "Especially for transgendered individuals, ageplay provides opportunities to explore childhood experiences as the gender they feel more closely associated with

and different than their biological sex. ” (p23) During my research I found a podcast whose subject matter is solely based on ageplay.

One of the hosts, a lively and entertaining male, “ scenes”, or role plays, as a female baby. Spacey, the host is one of three regular hosts of the show. He recently helped produce an episode of the podcast that completely focused on “ sissies”, or male adults who roleplay as young, adolescent or baby girls. The guests on the show were two “ sissies”, one of which who exercises his civil rights, even in instances of airport pat downs, to live his sissy life around the clock.

The gentleman went by the name “ Sissy Stephanie” and he spoke about some of the challenges he encounters living the lifestyle but felt that the emotional payoff is worth the attacks. The second guest, “ Bunny”, talked about his transgendered ageplay and how his youthful, female persona serves as a mechanism to relate to others through a sweet and vulnerable personality, as his vanilla, male self struggles with connection, relatability and trust, typically. Taking Different Options - Much like rewriting your childhood, this theory talks supports the idea that there are particular details in the ageplayer’s childhood that they would like to “ re-do”. Paul writes, on page 24: “ For example, ‘ good girls’ can be tease, tramps, or hang out with the “ wrong type of guys”. He went on to offer that some littles appreciate the chance to earn praise for poor or disappointing choices from their past, or even a shot at living on the wild side and pushing boundaries that were obviously unsafe to do as children, such as actually going with the creepy neighbor who offers little kids candy. Shrinking Childhoods - This point was very interesting me, as I had never heard of such an idea about role playing

as a minor, but Mr. Rulof wrote about how one might be dissatisfied with their timing of hitting developmental, social or emotional milestones in their childhood and ageplay offers them the a shot at restoring their self-image and confidence in their abilities. * Innocence - "...the loss of a childlike innocence and becoming jaded with the world seems to be a reoccurring theme with some ageplayers.

The realization that there are not magical places, fanciful creatures, and happy endings is difficult for some to accept. The desire to regain innocence and escape adult responsibilities could factor in to a desire for ageplay. " (p25) * Relaxing and Enjoyable - Page 26 of Paul Rulof's book highlights how ageplay encompasses the simplicity and carefree nature of childhood and how the escape from everyday adulthood is sometimes just enough reason, alone, to partake in a non-sexual form of age play. A combination of Popular Fetishes - Paul, not only an author and educator, is a creator of CAPcon, Central Illinois' premiere ageplay convention. He has a wealth of knowledge on the subject matter and did fervent research, himself, while penning his book and the statistics he uncovered proved to be helpful in supporting this point. Page 27, in Ageplay, describes how this form of role playing is ranked 51st, out of the 100 top favored fetishes. Three of the main components that make for good role play are fetishes in themselves and were also ranked on the top 100 list.

Upon reaching out to Mr. Rulof, I discovered that his statistics came from a kinkysocial networkingsite, much like Facebook; it is a hub, the high ground, for those in the kink community at large. The site listed role-play itself as the 23rd most popular fetish, followed by cuddling in 81st place and costumes

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barely squeezing in under the 100 mark as the 92nd most practiced kink. These items were ranked in order based upon serving as the number one kink choice for the site members. For example, Mrs.

Smith may like to be pked during intercourse but being bitten is her favorite fetish so biting would have been her vote. This supports how well age play involves three majorly ranked fetishes, out of thousands, literally, and wraps them up into one kinky, therapeutic ball of goodness. * Enhancing Roles - " Ageplay presents a different mental framework through which you can view your partners or others. " Paul wrote for three pages examples that show how a dominant personality or a submissive personality can flourish in this type of role play.

People who may not typically be drawn to this type of play just may participate because of the ability to fine-tune egalitarian roles in this medium. * Filling Psychological Needs - I am a huge fan of how the author referenced " Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs" to prove, what I personally see as the greatest motivator for role playing as a Big or little. There are essential human physical and emotional needs that human's require fulfillment of to develop in a healthy and productive fashion. Much like ageplay, there is a parallel between the progression of human development from birth to adulthood and beyond.

Many ageplayers will identify with multiple ages and, depending on their mood, require different things from their caregiver. Often, littles will not " morph", for a lack of a better term, into a different age until they feel satisfied with their needs being met at their current age. In Maslow's model, humans cannot progress or develop in the natural way without having their

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basic needs met at their current stage in life. * Playing with the Taboo - This idea hones in the basic human calling to be rebellious, or go against the grain, if you will.

There is something engrained in us, as a society formed from hunters and gatherers ages ago, that tugs at our moral compass and prods us to be daring and bold and to break the mold of what is socially acceptable. Men especially are often deduced to a walking set of procreating DNA who lack in the ability to make ethically-upstanding choices without challenge. This set up allows all role players to abandon what is socially acceptable and what is defined as “ normal” and escape to a place where it is ok to break the rules and enjoy it. Fetishes -Different from the supporting point earlier that highlighted similarly ranked fetishes, this last reason speaks to the flexibility for exploration into other, new kinks, that ageplay allows. Because of the disciplinary aspects of ageplay there are countless punishment-based fetishes that could be brought into a scene, as well breast-feeding, diapering, play date, schoolgirl, dollification, and many, many other adjacent fetishes for those who wish to dabble in new sexual discovery.

Ageplay is often a starting point for kinksters who wish to slowly introduce themselves to harsher, less - nurturing-based fetishes. Though the BDSM pioneer took a seminal approach in analyzing the logic and motivation behind “ sceneing” with ageplay principles, is all truly speculation and the reasoning varies for each individual. In addition to varied gains between top and bottom roles, personal needs manifest from each role player, independently, and there rarely a clear understanding of why this is such a comforting, natural expression for anyone.

The reasons for entering this lifestyle can be many and completely askew, much like rewards. The Power Exchange Book series, written by Dr. Bob Rubel, includes a book about ageplay. The Doctor shared first-hand accounts and experiences from fellow ageplayers that he interviewed during his research for the literature. The most profound and beautifully moving words were from a woman who goes by " Bethie Hope O. ". On page 70, the next to last page of the book, these words were composed what following her heart and investing in her Daddy has added to her life: I remember the first few times I visited my Daddy, looking at him or being around him, or even just talking to him on the phone felt like someone was shining a light into the world that was not there before. It was like the world was covered in clouds all the time and when he was around the clouds parted and the sun came out and shone down on everything and I felt warm. I remember the days before my Daddy like a kind of dream, and really, that is how I lived, like I was sleepwalking. I got by, but I did not thrive. Now I feel like I truly live, like the sun is shining on me all of the time.

Part of the reason for that is because I've learned so much about myself and I've found the freedom to just be me, and to do what makes me happy. Part of the reason is my Daddy and how he is with me and how he makes me feel. Part of it is how I love him and how loving someone so much makes me feel. People seem to think that it's an unhealthy thing to have such strong attachments to just one person and maybe it is but my Daddy is my everything. He is my Daddy, my Master, My partner, my best friend, my confidant, my lover...I love him as if I were bore from his own body! "