

Emerging Research on Unique Fetish Interests and Communities

By: Sam Hughes



About Me

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Current Dissertation Project:
Analyzing 83 In-depth
Qualitative Interviews with
Erotic Hypnosis Fetishists

Spotlighting Six Kink and Fetish Interests

Pup Play

Furries

ABDL/Ageplay

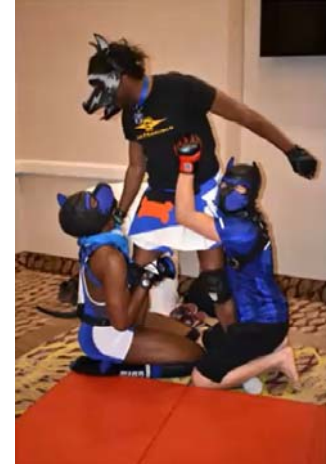
Cuckolding

Erotic
Hypnosis

Haircut
Fetishism

Pup Play

Definition: Sexual and/or intimate play in which one or more individuals takes on the social role of a canine, such as being trained or treated like a dog, wearing fetish gear to have a canine appearance, playing with dog toys, eating meals out of a dog bowl, and/or entering into a psychological headspace that resembles that of a puppy.



Sexual for Some, Decidedly Not for Others

“With me pupping, yes, I’m very sexual and if I’m not at an event, and if I’m being a pup with [partner’s name], then yes, it will almost definitely involve fisting and/or fucking, him fucking me, or even me fucking him as a pup. I’ve done that before. He wanted to get fucked by a pup, so I had my muzzle on and I fucked him. So, yeah, but it’s definitely a sexual thing for me when I’m being a pup.” (Lawson & Langdrige, 2020).

“To me, pup play is innocent. It’s just being a pup.” (Lawson & Langdrige, 2020).

“It’s just like some people are into that, that’s fine, but for me I don’t think you should be because for all intents and purposes while we’re doing this we believe we are a dog. But I don’t want to have sex with a dog.” (Lawson & Langdrige, 2020).

An Explosion in Popularity

“It was really rare up until about four years ago, I suppose. I mean, it’s meteoric since then, you know, that pups have been coming out of the woodwork from nowhere. Then all the big fetish shops started selling pup gear, of course, you know, jumping on the bandwagon, so that’s helped it expand. I think social networking probably made it take off because before Twitter and things like it, there was no way of really communicating to people about pup play, but now you can find out about it everywhere.” (Lawson & Langdridge, 2020)

Pup-Space, Pup-Mode, Pup Headspace

“It’s about the time perspective I found. I was playing with pups over the weekend and that lasted quite a few hours, but it didn’t feel like that at all. You don’t realize it and you have fallen into the headspace.” (Wignall & McCormack, 2017)

“[A] basic mindset where you forget or ignore the human thinking part of the brain and go more instinctual.” Wignall & McCormack, 2017)



Furries/Furry Fetishism/Furry Fandom

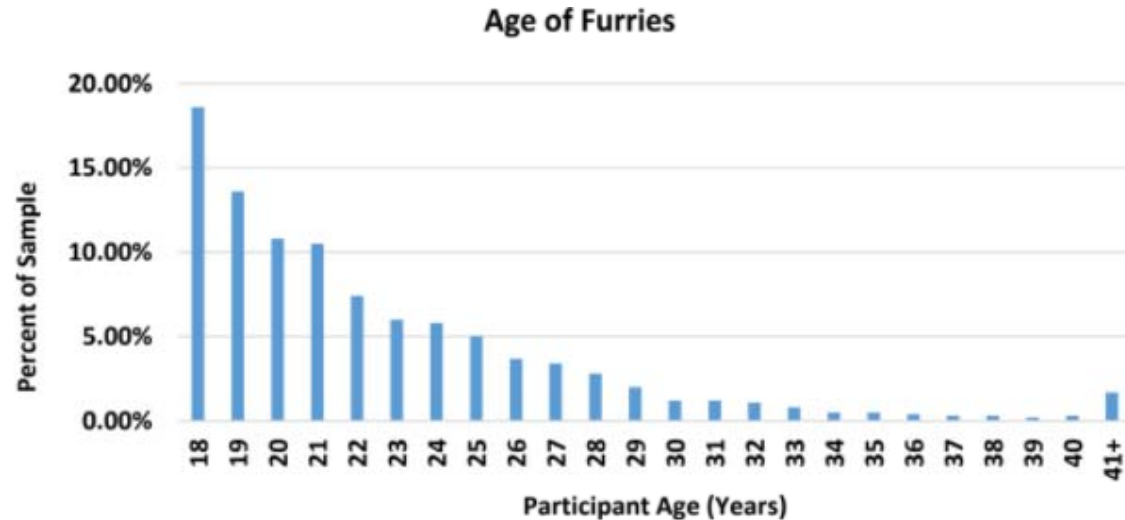
Definition: A pattern of interest in anthropomorphic animals, and/or in wearing or seeing others wear anthropomorphic animal mascot costumes

Research on Furry Communities

The most well-researched of the fetish interests we will talk about in this workshop, with dozens in peer-reviewed journals.

The furry fandom itself also generates in-house research, mostly via quantitative surveys at furry conventions.

Summary of Dozens of Surveys Online and at Furry Conventions (Plante et al., 2016)



Community is mostly of young people, and Con Participants are a few years older
Overwhelmingly White (83.2%)

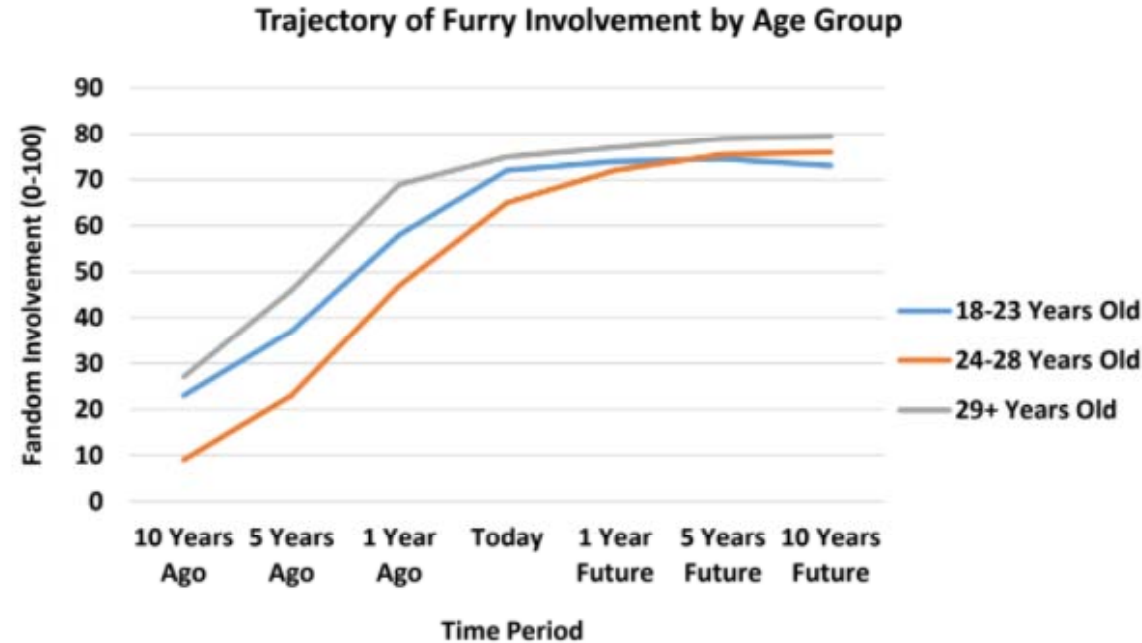
Mostly AMAB (72.4%)

Overrepresentation of transgender folks: 2%
Transbinary, 10% Nonbinary

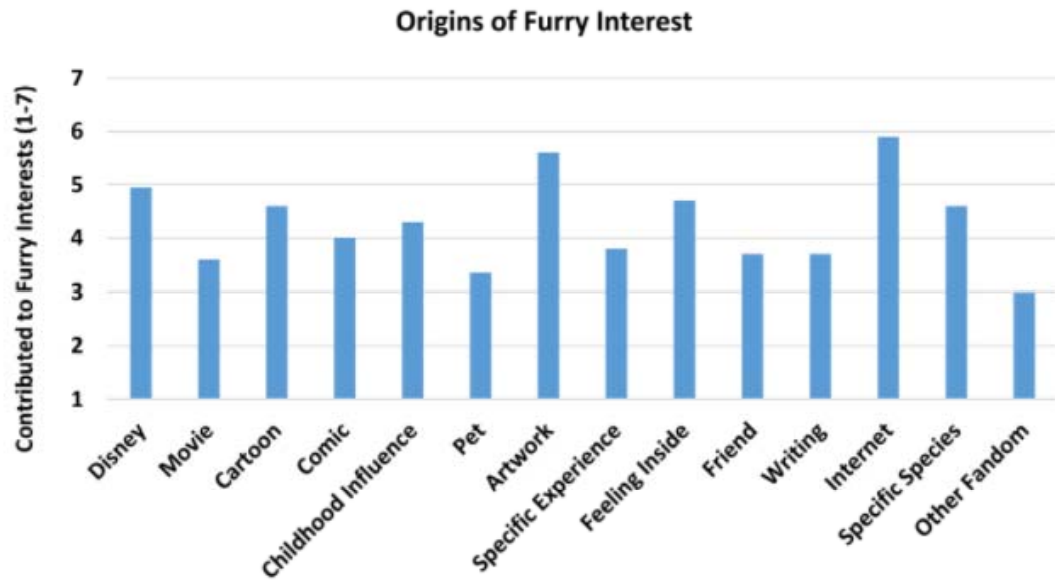
Mostly Non-religious (33.6%)

Overrepresentation of pagan/wiccan traditions (11%)

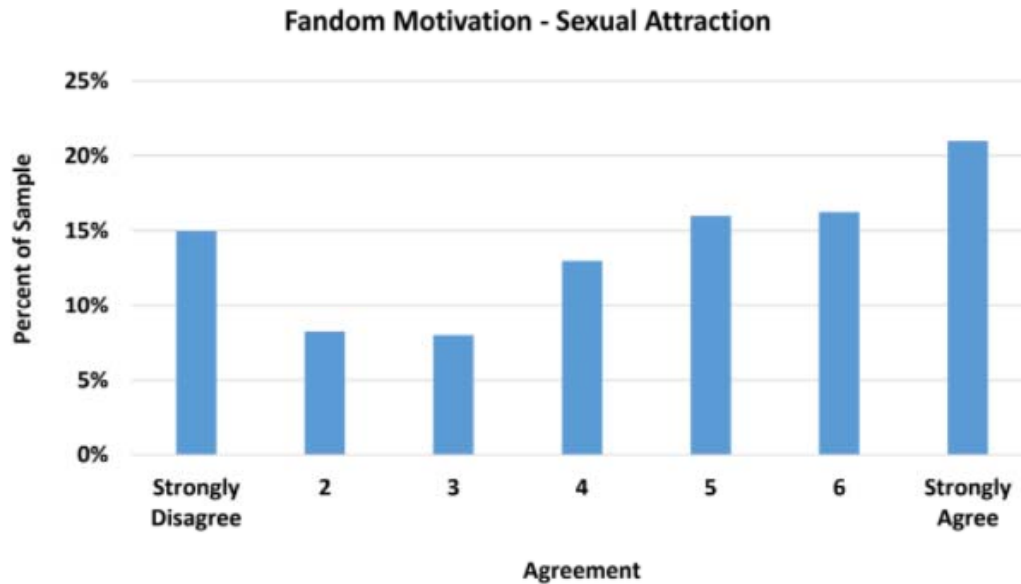
Summary of Dozens of Surveys Online and at Furry Conventions (Plante et al., 2016)



Fairly high rates of
involvement before age 18



Furries Self-Report A
wide Variety
of Interest
Origins
(Plante et al.,
2016)



There's a minority of the community for which their interest in furry fandom isn't sexual at all. (Plante et al., 2016)

Furry Fandom and Mental Health (Simpson, 2018)

High rates of victimization and discrimination

50.4% physically bullied, 16.5% physically bullied a great deal. 37.9% reported harassment or being made to feel shame over being a furry, with some qualitatively reporting being told to kill themselves.

Very high rates of mental health challenges

Study of more than 1000 furries found that 38.4% had attempted suicide at least once in their lifetime, and 31.3% had suicidal ideation in the last year
41.3% in clinical range for depression (18.4% severe)
46.7% in clinical range for anxiety (27.5% severe)



Social Anxiety

"Being a furry let's me express myself more and get rid of my social anxiety. I do not have an urge to commit suicide whatsoever and am generally happy with how I am for right now" (Simpson, 2018)



ABDL/Ageplay

Ageplay: Interest in playing the role of, or explicit identification with, an age that is different than a person's chronological age

ABDL: Adult Baby, Diaper Lover: Interest in specifically roleplaying or identifying as an infant, often with a co-occurring interest in wearing diapers.

Research literature on ABDL

There's some, but It's overly reliant on a single large study of Italian ABDL participants.

Common Motivations for ABDL and Ageplay

Sensory aspects of diapers

Age regression or age play

Emotional or physical well-being

Do not have to worry about bodily functions

Taboo of wearing diapers in public

Dislike of BDSM

Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Ageplay experiences

“FTM interview partners mostly had explicitly feminist backgrounds and did not want to reproduce sexist behaviours when expressing their gender. Identifying with the ‘not-quite-yet-hegemonic’ masculinity of the boy served to distance themselves from the association with the hegemonic masculinity of the grown-up white, heterosexual man”(Bauer, 2018)

Coping with
Medical
Incontinence
is part of
the interest
for some
(about 2%)

“I am profoundly urinary incontinent. I use AB play to cope....”(Female, age 46)

“Wear diapers pretty much 24/7. I have Hinman’s syndrome. I suck my thumb with my blanket.” (Male, age 33)(Zamboni, et al., 2019)



Cuckolding

Definition: Sexual arousal or intimate pleasure at the thought or experience of another person having sex with one's romantic and/or sexual partner.

Academic Research on Cuckolding

Only two studies centrally focused on cuckolding:

A series of interviews with mostly heterosexual cuckolding fetishists

A large-n study of gay men's cuckolding fantasies



Many cuckolds have healthy securely attached relationships (Ley, 2012)

This was contrary to Ley's original hypotheses going into his interview project with cuckolding fetishists, as he had predicted many insecurely attached, unhealthy relationships.

Cuckolding may, in many ways, may simply be another variation on polyamory, with a very high degree of compersion (The feeling of happiness over the happiness and satisfaction of a relationship partner)



Race and Cuckolding

Heterosexual Cuckolding fantasies often revolve around the specific racial identity of the “bull” as often being black. (Ley, 2012)

Related to long-held cultural anxieties over black masculinity and the need to “protect white womanhood”

Cuckolding fantasies among gay men are much less likely to be racially-oriented. (Lehmiller et al., 2018)

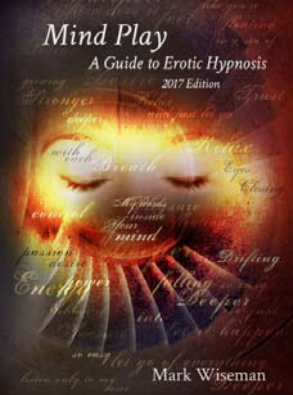
Possible Motivations

Relief at not having to “sexually perform” for partner

Humiliation

Emasculation

Pride at having a partner who is desired by others

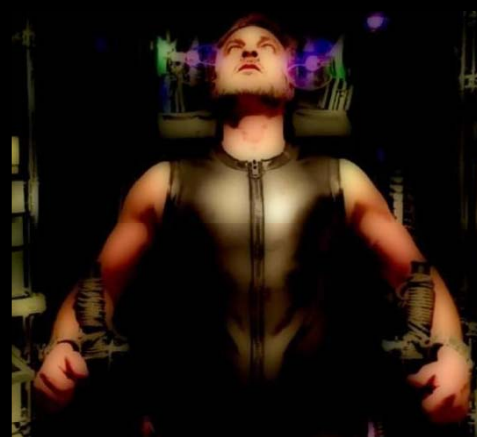


WHAT IS EROTIC HYPNOSIS FETISHISM?

Slave Hypnosis



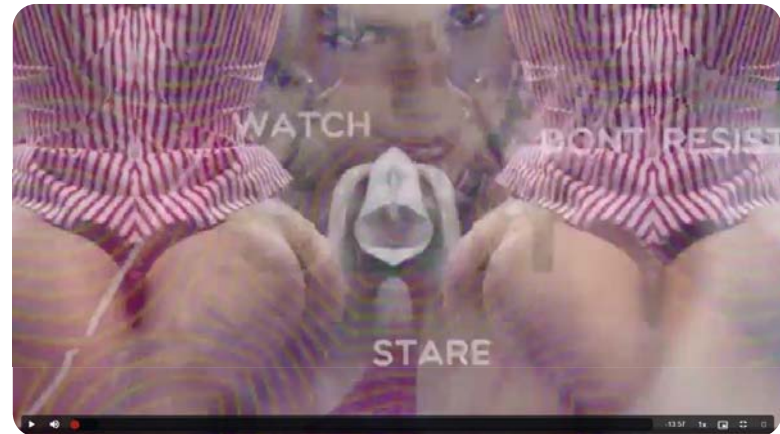
Commanded by Master



- Incorporation of hypnosis for intimate or sexual play.
 - Both actual hypnosis and roleplay hypnosis
 - In-person and online
- Surprisingly widespread
 - Ranked 117th on Fetlife out of nearly 140,000 groups (2019)

WHAT DO ACADEMICS KNOW ABOUT EROTIC HYPNOSIS?

- Very little
 - Hypnosis is mostly studied clinically (e.g., Flammer & Bongartz, 2003).
- Three Exceptions:
 - Analysis of language use on a male erotic hypnosis “dumb jockification” message board (Chambers, 2020).
 - Gender and masculine performance
 - An analysis of first-person video collage pornography utilizing hypnotic imagery and sound, text overlaid (Mackay & Mackay, 2021)
 - Gender and race as key topics
 - Discussion of sissification hypnosis in relationship to transgender identity (Gilbert, 2020)



MOTIVATIONS AND ORIGINS FOR EROTIC HYPNOSIS INTERESTS: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

Power, control, and
trust

Altered States of
consciousness

Introduced by
another person

Media exposure

Experiencing
physically
impossible kink
interests

Experiencing
ethically impossible
kink interests

Spice for enhancing
other kink interests

The stresses of
being smart

Coping with
physical health
challenges

Coping with mental
health challenges

EXPERIENCING PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE KINK INTERESTS

- “So like somebody wants to be abducted by aliens and taken to a spaceship, you can do that with hypnosis. If they wanted an ogre gang bang, you can do that hypnosis you know things that just physically aren’t possible you know for a variety of reasons. You can dig in chain they can be other characters, they can change their body shapes to become animals and other and whatever else, robots, anything else they can be so that's the stuff that I found the most interesting.”

COPING WITH MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

- “I’ve been depressed basically as long as I can remember and it’s been pretty severe. I’m not actively suicidal. I was a lot in my early twenties especially. Experiencing something like ego-death through hypnosis can be [pause] it’s not therapy, but therapeutic. When you’re suicidal, you’re not wanting to die exactly, you’re wanting the pain to stop. Having just a taste of oblivion, that you can come back from afterwards, is so so nice. It’s methadone for suicide, to put it flippantly.”

Haircut Fetishism

Definition: Sexual or intimate interest focused on haircuts, such as giving or receiving haircuts to and from others, cutting one's own hair, choosing haircuts for others or having one's own haircut chosen, or related interests such as the process of dying or shaving hair at a salon or barbershop.



Sometimes Explicitly Sexual, Other times Not

Inside San Francisco's kink-friendly hair salon: 'My clients have called me their hair dominatrix'



Amanda Bartlett, SFGATE

Sep. 29, 2019 | Updated: Sep. 30, 2019 10:31 a.m.



Sometimes Performed as a Kind of Fetish-Oriented Sex Work



Male Pattern Baldness Fetishism

Often as a form of humiliation, possibly connected with anxieties over aging

So what does the Research Say?

There's very little, but a recently published study analyzed data from 271 (mostly male) haircut fetishists identified common themes among people describing their interests in this fetish (Mitchell, 2021)

From Most to Least Frequent (Abbreviated)

Control

Masculinity

Arousal, Sexual or Otherwise

Narrative Culture and Media

Pretending or Hiding Interest

Tactile/Sensory Experiences

Fascination Towards Short Haircuts

Derived from Other Desires

Social Attention

Psychodynamic/Freudian explanations

Early Interest



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Please don't hesitate to reach
out if you have any questions!