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I5 Real Child Voices: The Impact of Age and Gender Congruent Voices on Sexual Arousal to Child Sexual Scenarios

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the nuances that are important to consider in creating assessment stimuli and understanding assessment results.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by shedding new light on how the assessment of sexual offenders works and what the results mean.

Multiple factors have been identified that can contribute to an increased risk of child abuse by adult men.¹ Objective measurement of sexual responsivity to depictions of sexual interactions between adults and children is an important and common component in actuarial risk assessment and in the development of treatment plans for men who have sexually offended against children. Penile Plethysmography (PPG), known as the “gold standard” for objective measurement of sexual arousal in men, consists of presenting a variety of test stimuli to the person being tested.² During PPG, electronic measurements are made of any changes in penile circumference. Increases in penis diameter after/during presentation of a test stimulus reflect the degree of sexual arousal that the stimulus elicits. The audio depictions in both the United States and Canada have historically used monotonous adult male voices to describe a variety of legal and illegal sexual scenarios.

This study compares two independent stimuli sets on a clinical sample of adult males with pedophilia ($n=30$) and a sample of healthy controls from the community ($n=30$). One stimuli set, routinely used at the Sexual Behaviours Clinic (SBC) in Ottawa, Canada, for the past 30 years, uses a monotone male voice describing a variety of sexual scenarios in second-person narrative.³ The comparison set, created at the Sexual Behaviors Evaluation, Research and Treatment Clinic and Laboratory at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, uses voices that are age and sex congruent with the storyline and sound effects consistent with the scenarios. Creation of this set, known as Real Child Voices (RCV), includes audio of adult and child actors reading non-sexual scripts in a sound studio that were later professionally spliced together with sound effects to simulate scenarios depicting adult-child sexual scenarios.³

Preliminary results of this study indicate that the RCV stimuli set does improve differentiation between clinical and healthy participants. This presentation will review the final results of this study. Based on these results, decisions will be made for changes in standard protocols of the PPG stimuli used for clinical assessment and research purposes. These changes are part of a broader initiative working toward multi-site standardization in the assessment of people with problematic sexual interests and behaviors.



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Reference(s):

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 2. Murphy L., Ranger R., Fedoroff J.P., Stewart H., Dwyer G., Burke W. (2015a). Standardization in the use of penile plethysmography testing in assessment of problematic sexual interests. *Journal of Sexual Medicine*. 12(9):1853-61.
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Sex Offender, Assessment, Paraphilia