

B4QR

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*Review of publications from
June to November 2023*

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Preface by Russell Dick, B4U-ACT Chairperson and Co-Founder



Over 20 years ago, as a working clinical social worker, I co-founded B4U-ACT with a man who had served time in prison for having sexual activity with a young teenage boy. We had a simple vision: to identify mental health professionals in Maryland who would provide welcoming, non-stigmatizing mental health services to persons in Maryland with thoughts and feelings of affection and attraction to minors *before* they were convicted of breaking the laws. We soon realized that the mental health providers who might be interested were only wanting to work with them in order to protect minors from them. The mental health providers lacked any concern for the well-being of persons who were attracted to minors. We then refocused our efforts on educating mental health providers in Maryland about the lived experiences of persons attracted to minors

through workshops planned and led by mental health professionals and MAPs. We also developed and began using the phrase “minor-attracted persons” (MAPs).

We never imagined that B4U-ACT and minor-attracted persons would have national and international recognition and participation two decades later. We certainly did not dream that B4U-ACT would produce a quarterly online journal reviewing recent research related to MAPs. We would have been delusional to think such a journal would have a MAP as its editor, MAPs on the review board, and MAPs involved in writing the research reviews. It is truly revolutionary that MAPs now have a voice in the research about them. It is also revolutionary that many researchers are now researching MAPs who have not broken any laws.

It is again, therefore, with personal and organizational pride and enthusiasm that I introduce the beginning of the 4th year of B4U-ACT’s quarterly review journal. I want to thank editor-in-chief Allen Bishop, the other journal editors, Maggie Ingram, Evelyn Thorne, and Richard Karmer, as well as all the critically important research students, academics, and MAPs who volunteered to review the research articles. Without your voluntary commitment to B4QR it wouldn’t exist. I hope that readers of B4QR will tell others about it in order to increase the readership of this unique review journal.

We also have quarterly online research colloquia to discuss the most recent issue of the B4QR journal with researchers, students, and persons who are attracted to minors. The authors of the research articles in the journal are invited to present their research findings and respond to our reviews. Any researcher wanting to join these quarterly meetings should contact the editor-in-chief of the B4QR, Allen Bishop, at: science@b4uact.org.

Russell Dick, MSW
Chairperson and Co-Founder
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Introduction by Allen Bishop, Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to this first issue of the fourth volume of B4QR.

This Winter edition covers six articles on a diversity of topics related to attraction to children. Half of the articles reviewed concern the impact of therapy on minor-attracted people (MAPs). We begin with Jahnke et al. (2023), who explore the topic of secret-keeping in therapy for MAPs in a mixed-methods study. The research team advertised their study on German and English MAP forums and recruited 136 participants with non-court-mandated therapy experience. They asked a variety of questions about the participants' therapeutic experience and the impact of disclosure of their attraction to minors to the therapist. One of the surprising findings from the quantitative analysis is the absence of an observed difference in self-reported client improvement between the participants who had disclosed their attraction and those who hadn't. There was, however, a difference in the perceived "strength of therapeutic alliance", with clients who had disclosed their attraction feeling a greater connection to their therapist.

The other two articles on the theme of therapy focus primarily on the role of therapy in crime prevention. Both studies recruited participants from voluntary treatment programs in Germany for people attracted to children. Franqué et al. (2023) studied 165 individuals before and after they had completed therapy at the Hamburg or Bamberg sites of the *kein Täter werden* ("Don't Become a Perpetrator") mental health network. The team tested the validity of various actuarial tools in predicting the participants who would go on to commit a crime. The results showed a much higher rate of crimes than the researchers had anticipated, which led them to investigate the possible reasons for the lack of predictive capability of the diagnostic tools used in the study. Casademont et al. (2023) present the *Hamburg Youth Prevention Project*, an organization that provides anonymous care to adolescents who are attracted to younger children. The organization tailors its therapeutic interventions based on the determined degree of risk of the patient committing sexual crimes. It also frequently attempts to change the young patients' attractions, an approach that is criticized by the reviewer as potentially harmful and scientifically unfounded.

Our remaining articles illuminate the phenomenon of attraction to children in various ways. Fraser et al. (2023) investigate "emotional congruence with children" (ECWC) in a group of 983 men on community supervision after having committed a sex crime involving a minor. Their analyses support the view that ECWC is not a distinct phenomenon but is "the psychological aspect of attraction to children." The authors also develop a three-class solution showing that ECWC encompasses different types of attachment to children for different types of individuals. Leverett and Tenbergen (2023) offer a literature review on the recent advances in the neuropsychology of people attracted to children. In addition to summarizing key findings, especially concerning executive functioning, the authors raise various methodological flaws that have negatively impacted the field, such as the frequent reliance on forensic samples that do not properly distinguish between individuals who are and aren't primarily attracted to children. Finally, Lehmann et al. (2023) explore the various gender/sex-generic characteristics preferred by MAPs in contrast to teleiophilic individuals. They tested a variety of physical and

psychological sex cues on 589 participants with different age preferences. While the results for the physical cues were mostly as expected, some of the results for the psychological dimension were surprising: characteristics typically associated with children, such as spontaneity and curiosity, were found not to be specifically related to attraction to children.

We conclude this issue of our journal with the Meet the New Generation section. Our honored young scholar is Ellie Woodward, a PhD Candidate in psychology at Nottingham Trent University in England, who works under the supervision of Rebecca Lievesley, Craig Harper, and Daragh McDermott. For her dissertation project, Ellie investigates the conceptualization and achievement of sexual fulfillment of people attracted to children. She joined the B4QR reviewing team in 2023.

I wish to conclude by thanking all of our great volunteers who generously devote their time to this project: my assistant editors, Maggie Ingram, Evelyn Thorne, Russell Dick, and Richard Kramer; our team of over 20 reviewers, who are the heart and soul of this journal; our web designer David Ertz and my journal communication assistant, Rick Byrd. Each of them believes in the importance of a journal about MAPs that focuses on the issues that most directly affect this population, with stigmatization and mental health struggles at the top. This journal wouldn't be possible without them.

Allen Bishop
B4U-ACT Science Director
B4QR Editor-in-Chief

Reviewed Publications

Secret-keeping in therapy by clients who are sexually attracted to children

Jahnke, S., Blagden, N., Mcphail, I. V., and Antfolk, J. (2023)

Psychotherapy Research, 1-16, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10503307.2023.2265047>

Jahnke et al. begin their paper by highlighting the barriers minor-attracted persons (MAPs) face in trusting and being transparent with their therapist, particularly regarding the disclosure of their attractions. The authors present research on therapists' reluctance to offer services to MAPs due to their own lack of guidance and potential biases, which may increase the likelihood of unnecessary breaks in confidentiality. The authors state that clients, MAP or non-MAPs, are more likely to keep secrets from their therapist if (a) the secret is of a sexual nature, (b) they fear or want to avoid negative consequences, or (c) they perceive the secret to not be a priority.

The authors discuss the benefits of disclosure and transparency in a psychotherapeutic context for the client's well-being, the therapeutic alliance, and the outcomes of therapy. However, they note that MAPs may not receive these same benefits from therapeutic disclosure due to the intense stigma against them and the potential consequences of disclosure leading to a report regarding risk. They highlight that the concerns MAPs have about the risk and consequences of disclosure are warranted. While

positive support following disclosure is beneficial, the lack of positive support can be detrimental. The authors present this research with a focus on MAPs' well-being; whether or not MAPs should disclose their attraction to children in therapy is determined by the mental health benefits to the MAP, as opposed to any child sexual abuse prevention implications. This showcases the authors' respect for the wider concerns for which MAPs may seek therapy.

The study uses mixed-methods to investigate the association between disclosure of attraction to minors in therapy and therapeutic outcomes. Quantitative methods were used to examine differences between MAPs who did and did not disclose their attraction to children to their therapist. The authors hypothesized that 1) disclosure in therapy will be associated with a) self-reported client improvement, b) strength of therapeutic alliance and c) the belief that mandatory reporting laws were in place at the time of therapy and 2) for those who have disclosed their attractions, there will be an association between perceived therapist reaction and both client improvement and strength of alliance. Two post-hoc hypotheses were constructed

following data collection: 3) clients who perceived therapists' support post disclosure will report more improvement compared to those who did not disclose, and 4) clients who did not perceive this support will report less improvement than clients who did not disclose their attraction. The authors recognized the novel nature of the research, and considering the potentially reductionist approach of categorizing something as nuanced as disclosing pedohebephilia, they supplemented their quantitative data with qualitative inquiry into the reasons for, and the effects of, disclosure and/or non-disclosure.

The sample consisted of 136 participants, predominantly cisgender men, who were recruited from English and German-based online forums for MAPs. Despite recruiting from German forums, the survey was only available in English, potentially limiting the generalizability of the results to non-English speakers. Participants were included in the study if their sexual attraction to children was equal to, or greater than, their sexual attraction to adults, and they had previous therapy experience that was not court-mandated.

For the quantitative inquiry, the participants were asked to rate their attraction preferences (age and sex of minor), which were then used to compute three attraction variables; pedohebephilic attraction index, male-oriented pedohebephilic attraction and pedophilic versus hebephilic attraction. This allowed for the results to be interpreted in relation to the

spectrum of MAP attractions, and has demonstrated good validity, though no test-retest reliability information is available. Offending history was not measured, which is noteworthy as most studies focusing on MAPs do include offending history, yet doing so may promote the misconception that MAPs are inherently at risk of offending. Participants were asked of their historical and current therapy attendance, whether they had disclosed their attractions, and their understanding of mandatory reporting restrictions in their country of residence/therapy attendance. The perceived therapist's responses to disclosure of attraction to minors were measured using an adapted version of the Perceived Social Support for Minor Attraction Scale, named the Perceived Effects of Disclosure in Therapy Scale (PEDTS). Functioning pre- and post-therapy engagement was measured with the Outcome Rating Scale, and the Session Rating Scale was used to ask about client-therapist alliance. An open-ended question was presented within the scale, for qualitative data collection, asking participants what motivated their decision to disclose/not disclose, and how this impacted their therapy experience.

To enhance the integrity of the results, participants were asked a set of questions to determine whether they answered any items untruthfully or in an unserious manner. Participants who answered "yes" were excluded from the analyses, though there was no other measure of social desirability bias. For the

quantitative analyses on therapy outcomes, the authors divided the results into three groups; *did not disclose, disclosed and felt supported, disclosed and felt unsupported*. Group status was dependent on participants' response to one item on the PEDTS asking how supportive the therapist was in response to disclosing attraction to minors. Participants who responded with a 5 or greater (out of 7) were placed in the *disclosed+supported* cluster, and participants who responded 3 or lower were placed in the *disclosed+unsupported*. Respondents who scored at the midpoint (4) of this scale were not retained for analysis. The open-ended free responses were analyzed using Thematic Analysis. The data were coded independently by one of the authors and an external researcher with qualitative expertise, supplementing the reliability of the interpretation.

The majority of the sample (n = 96) had disclosed their attraction to children in therapy, and those with an exclusive attraction to minors were more likely to disclose. The two main groups (disclosed versus not disclosed) did not differ in respect to client improvement nor beliefs of mandatory reporting requirements, rendering hypotheses 1a and 1c unsupported. Hypothesis 1b was supported, as clients who disclosed reported a stronger perceived therapeutic alliance. Hypothesis 2 was supported, with higher perceived effects of disclosing in therapy (PEDTS) being associated with client improvement and therapeutic alliance. Across the three defined groups of disclosure (*no disclosure, disclosure with*

and without support), there were no differences on pre-therapy functioning measures. Those who disclosed and felt supported did not feel significantly more improved than those who did not disclose (refuting hypothesis 3), though a sensitivity analysis with outliers removed resulted in statistically significant improvements (supporting hypothesis 3). Clients who did not perceive support following disclosure reported less improvement than those who did not disclose at all, supporting hypothesis 4.

The qualitative results highlighted four themes: 1) *disclosure as a process of desperation and emotional turmoil*, 2) *disclosure reluctance – experiential and perceived*, 3) *therapists as MAP aware* and 4) *differential impacts of disclosure*. Theme one described how the suppression of one's attraction to children was impacting their day-to-day functioning, resulting in a state of emotional turmoil and desperation which culminated in disclosing to a therapist. The second theme discussed the hesitance and reluctance participants have towards disclosing their attraction to minors, based on either actual or anticipated therapist's negative reactions (i.e. fear of being reported, being reported to authorities). Some statements exemplifying this theme reflected the 'cost-benefit analysis' of disclosing, and the importance of a safe, trusted therapeutic environment. Importantly, this theme encapsulated the stigmatizing and shaming responses of professionals when a client discloses an attraction to minors; referencing how the professional often

focuses on the risk of child sexual abuse perpetration and ignores the client's needs and presentation when disclosing. Theme three revealed how some participants specifically choose a therapist who is known to MAP organizations and/or who works with "pedohebephilic clients" (p.11); facilitating the disclosure experience. The final theme discussed both the positive (i.e., self-acceptance, reduced feelings of stigma, and enhanced trust in the alliance) and negative (i.e., rupture, sudden therapy termination) impacts of disclosing an attraction to minors, which were dependent on the therapist's positive or negative response to the disclosure; namely increased self-acceptance, reduced feelings of stigma and enhanced trust in the alliance (positive), coupled with some experiencing a 'cold' reaction from therapists and a rupture in the therapeutic relationship.

Combining these results and extant theoretical literature, the authors highlight how the benefits of disclosure are not ubiquitous across all populations, and the present results showcase the importance of the therapist response. The qualitative exploration mirrored extant research on the fears and barriers in place for people considering disclosing sexual attraction to children, and the influence of mandatory reporting on disclosure was discussed (specifically how very few participants had actually been reported by a therapist, but the perception and fear of this happening was a significant barrier to disclosure). The quantitative and qualitative sections

may somewhat contradict each other as no difference was observed between disclosure and non-disclosure groups on mandatory reporting beliefs, but this difference was a significant theme in the qualitative results. However, the authors acknowledge that the quantitative results are impacted by the insufficient sample size. This study reflects one of only two (known/published) articles on disclosure of sexual attraction to children, and the authors discuss the implications in relation to the well-being of the person in the therapeutic alliance, as opposed to focusing solely on the benefits for crime or risk prevention. The authors conclude with a discussion on the importance for therapists, working with all clients, to focus on alliance-building and to monitor the discussion of potentially shameful topics, as well as how information pertaining to informed consent and reporting are communicated. The focus on the psychological aspects of disclosure within this research is positive in light of other authors principally approaching MAP research through a forensic lens. Though at times risk prevention is referred to, the authors make it clear that their aim is to investigate disclosure for the psychological benefits it may offer MAPs. The authors sensitively acknowledge in their discussion that 'secret-keeping' or non-disclosure may still be rational and expected from minor attracted individuals, despite the potential positive outcomes.

**Individuals Under Voluntary Treatment with Sexual Interest in Minors:
What Risk Do They Pose?**

Von Franqué, F., Bergner-Koether, R., Schmidt, S., Pellowski, J. S., Peters, J. H.,
Hajak, G., & Briken, P. (2023)

Frontiers in Psychiatry, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2023.1277225>

This study investigates the rate of sexual contact with minors and use of illegal images of minors, among individuals voluntarily seeking therapy with the German mental health network *kein Täter werden*. *Kein Täter werden* specializes in treatment for minor-attracted people, and advertises itself as helping individuals who are concerned they might engage in unlawful behavior relating to minors, or who have done such things and wish to avoid doing so again.

The rationale of the study is that, while the reported rates of adults having sexual contact with minors and using illegal images of minors have been rising, the actual incidence rates of those occurrences are likely still higher than the reported rates. Thus, they argue, the goal of primary prevention might be better served by attempting to reach individuals who might commit these crimes or have done so but wish to avoid doing so again via voluntary therapy.

However, the authors note that some have challenged this approach, arguing that non-offending and/or undetected populations are likely low risk and that resources would be better spent on “higher risk” populations. The authors argue that this line of

thinking is based on recorded instances; a new approach is needed which considers unrecorded instances for risk assessment.

The authors use four diagnostic tools to measure study variables: STATIC-C, STATIC-99, CPORT, and CASIC. These are elaborated on in some detail, with their predictive validity, the points of each scale, and some slight context provided for each one. STATIC-C is included, despite the admission that current research regarding its predictive validity is poor.

The sample of this study consists of 165 individuals recruited from both the Hamburg and Bamberg *kein Täter werden* sites. This “non-forensic” sample includes those who have “a sexual interest in minors [and] voluntarily seek therapy, might or might not have offended but have not yet been detected or have fulfilled all legal requirements.” The original sample included 1,363 individuals (979 in Hamburg and 384 in Bamberg), but participants were excluded for various reasons, such as not meeting non-forensic criteria.

The study itself consisted of two phases. First, the participants were interviewed and asked to fill out a series of questionnaires to compile their demographic information, ICD-10 diagnoses, criminal records, STATIC-C data, and other personal information. For the eligible (“non-forensic”) participants, the authors collected information such as participants’ history of using illegal images of minors and engaging in sexual contact with minors 14 years old or younger. The authors also assessed participants’ scores for STATIC-99 and CPORT. After the course of the therapy (called the “evaluation phase” or “time at risk phase”), their case files were reviewed again to determine instances of using illegal images of minors or engaging in sexual contact with minors during this time period.

Afterward, the authors used “the exact *Binomial test*” and point-biserial calculation to compare data for recidivism risk during the evaluation phase with data from a German study using a representative sample (Dombert et al., 2016) as well as two studies reporting recidivism rates for forensic individuals (Helmus et al., 2012, Seto et al., 2011). The authors then used a combination of “receiver-operating characteristic curves (ROC)” and “the area under the curve (AUC)” calculations to measure the predictive power of different measuring tools. Self-reported use of illegal images of minors and sexual contact with minors were used as dependent variables. The sample was split into four groups: “No offense,”

“CSAM only,” “CSA only,” and “Mixed (both CSAM and CSA).” Groups were analyzed both on their own, in super-groups (i.e. CSAM only plus Mixed/CSA only plus Mixed), and as a whole sample.

In the raw data for the initial sample, 80% of participants reported using illegal images of minors in their lifetime, and 35% reported ever having engaged in sexual contact with minors, which are both much higher than the rates in the representative German sample used for comparison (2.4% and 1.5% respectively; Dombert et al., 2016). During the clinical phase (~24-28 months), the combined recidivism rate for the “CSA only plus Mixed” super-group was approximately 14%, which is similar to the rates for the forensic group (15%; Helmus et al., 2012), showing no statistical difference. For the CSAM plus Mixed super-group, the combined recidivism rate was approximately 39%, which was significantly higher than the forensic group (3.4%; Seto et al., 2011). Risk assessment for sexual contact with minors showed no statistically significant correlation with any of the measuring tools, while the use of illegal images of minors was only statistically significant with a combined CPORT with CASIC score.

In the discussion section of the article, the authors contemplate the possible reasons for the lack of predictive capability of the diagnostic tools they use in the study, and why only CPORT with CASIC had

statistically significant predictive capability with recidivism in using illegal images of minors. While CASIC was originally developed to detect attraction to children and/or adolescents when a person may be attempting to hide such an attraction, most of the actual questions relate more to potential illegal behaviors than attraction. Thus, the authors recognize one could have such an attraction while not meeting the criteria for CASIC. This, along with the fact that only 45% of the sample meet the cutoff for CASIC while 88% had a clinical diagnosis of “pedophilic disorder,” causes them to speculate that, while attraction to minors might be a potential indicator of recidivism risk, it is not in and of itself a good predictor. They also speculate that CASIC might not actually detect attraction to minors, but rather some “specific subgroup of individuals” who are attracted to minors and might be prone to recidivism.

Based on their findings, the authors argue that resources should be available to non-forensic populations in similar networks to *kein Täter werden* and not only to those deemed “high risk,” because even “individuals with a high-risk profile had a low-risk profile at some point in their life.” They also recommend that, since the recidivism rate for sexual contact with minors was similar to forensic samples, non-forensic individuals should be given similar resources to those who are in the forensic system.

While the study has significant limitations, most of them are discussed in the limitations section: 1) the results are from individuals who turned to *kein Täter werden* specifically; 2) the sample size does not meet the recommendations for stable estimates; 3) the study is based on self-reports; 4) most participants were from two locations; 5) the definition of “CSAM” used only includes photorealistic media and not drawn/animated content (though, of note, drawn/animated content of fictional children is legal in the Federal Republic of Germany); 6) participants might have different concepts of what constitutes “CSAM;” 7) the instruments used only include static risk factors; 8) and the follow-up period was shorter than the studies used for comparison. One limitation that was not addressed by the authors was the comparison of the sample in Dombert et al., 2016, which was a representative sample of almost 9,000 men in Germany, to the current sample of 165, which consisted entirely of people actively seeking treatment for concerns about their sexual behavior. Logically, there would be a significant disparity in self-reported criminal behavior between these two samples. While the authors may have intended to compare a representative sample with a help-seeking sample to highlight the difference, this was not explicitly stated and a potential explanation of the disparity in rates was not provided, despite the authors acknowledging the lack of generalizability of findings from the current sample.

This article addresses an uncomfortable but important question: what is the recidivism risk of sexual crimes for those attracted to minors? Much of the supposed risk is assumed rather than empirically proven, especially for non-forensic samples. Such research can lay the foundation for science-based policy rather than emotional reactions. However, framing people attracted to minors in terms of risk can also be stigmatizing and dehumanizing, reinforcing the impression that people attracted to minors are inherently dangerous and should be viewed as a risk to be managed rather than individuals whose lives have value and whose mental health is important in its own right. This impression can lead to treatments narrowly focused on social control that ignore or even harm MAPs' mental health.

Another issue with the article, which limits its ability to provide a nuanced exploration of the topic, is its lack of operationalization. The article focuses on individuals with a sexual "interest" in minors, but research has shown that not all persons who have an "interest" in illegal images of minors or who engage in sexual activity with minors are preferentially or exclusively attracted to minors. The article does not

make this distinction clear, which may be one reason why CASIC has predictive capability, but not necessarily a large overlap with clinically diagnosed "pedo-hebephilic disorder": the criteria for CASIC largely focus on behaviors associated with illegal behavior, not attraction as such. Further, it was not always clear whether the authors were referring to pedophilic disorder, as defined early in the paper using ICD-10 criteria, or attraction to children and/or adolescents more broadly.

Early in the article, it is taken for granted that "sexual deviance" - an arguably unscientific and stigmatizing term - is a risk factor for sex crimes. However, some recent research argues that this has been assumed rather than empirically proven and provides some evidence that people who have committed sexual crimes tend to have sexually typical tastes and fantasies (Turner-Moore, 2023).

In conclusion, this article explores concepts that have some interesting potential implications and uses. However, while conducting more research on this topic may be useful, future researchers should first reflect on the appropriateness and utility of their framework and measures.

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The Hamburg Youth Prevention Project (HYPP) for adolescents with sexual interest in children

Casademont, F., Märker, V., Bindt, C., & Briken, P. (2023)

International Journal of Impotence Research, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41443-023-00755-9>

This article by Casademont, et al. (2023) was written with two objectives. One was to provide an overview of the current state of research on “child-attracted adolescents” (CAAs), and the second was to introduce the *Hamburg Youth Prevention Project* (HYPP). The HYPP is a German-based mental health organization dedicated to providing anonymous primary care to adolescents who are attracted to younger children. The organization also aims to contribute to the understanding of how attraction to children develops, particularly among youths.

The authors begin by addressing the lacuna in the diagnostic criteria for attraction to children in teenagers. For instance, the DSM-5’s definition of a “pedophilic disorder” requires that the individual be at least 16 years old, and at least five years older than the children they are attracted to. However, as the authors note, many teenagers experience attraction to children, and recognize this attraction as atypical relative to their peers, years before their sixteenth birthday. The authors conclude that, because the discovery of a sexual and/or romantic attraction to children is often accompanied by emotional distress and that CAAs are at risk of engaging in illegal sexual activity involving younger

children, treatment cannot be delayed until these adolescents reach the age of majority.

The authors state that the HYPP is working to compensate for the lack of clinical attention given to CAAs in four ways: (1) providing anonymous and easily accessible primary care to CAAs, (2) reducing the probability of adolescents acting sexually with children, (3) increasing the knowledge of the development of sexual attraction to children, and (4) “providing and improving health care to maintain and stabilize the psychosocial and sexual health of at-risk adolescents.” According to the article, the HYPP “is based on a biopsychosocial understanding of sexuality,” and devised a specialized form of treatment under the guidelines of the World Federation of Societies of Biological Psychiatry, notably instead of the World Association for Sexual Health.

The HYPP follows the “risk-need-responsivity” approach from the field of “sex offender treatment”, which tailors treatment based on the determined degree of risk for engaging in illegal sexual behavior. The HYPP individualized treatment, which takes place in an (anonymous) outpatient setting and typically lasts 1-2 years, consists of a diagnostic

process and weekly counseling/psychotherapy sessions involving sexuality education and predominantly cognitive behavioral therapy techniques with the primary goal of “making sense of the functionality and meaning of the (abusive) sexual attitudes or acts.” Medication is additionally offered as needed (“e.g., SSRIs to control intense, sexual impulses or urges”), and parents/guardians and institutions may also be included.

Between 2018 and 2022, one female and 37 male adolescents participated in the HYPP’s treatment program. The authors state that few of the adolescents have approached the HYPP at their own behest, but rather because a parent or guardian had become aware of their sexual attraction, or of them engaging in sexual activity with younger children or possessing sexual images involving minors. Often the adolescents were motivated to participate in the HYPP due to the negative consequences they would incur if they refused, such as being expelled from school or losing their mobile phones.

This article has a number of strengths that should be mentioned. Firstly, it recognizes the fact that being attracted to children is not the same as behaving illegally with children. It also fills in an important gap in the literature by addressing the fact that (as mentioned above) adolescents often recognize, and feel distressed by, attractions to children long before mental health resources for minor-attracted people become available to them.

However, once the authors begin to more fully explain what exactly the HYPP means by “treatment,” it becomes increasingly evident that the organization is operating on some stigmatizing assumptions about CAAs, and age-based sexual attractions generally. Its failure to consult guidelines of the World Association for Sexual Health and its use of the “risk-need-responsivity” approach from “sex offender treatment” suggests that the authors elevate the goal of controlling potential “sex offenders” above (or to the exclusion of) that of achieving sexual or mental health. In fact, most treatment components come from the “juvenile sex offender management” tradition. For example, specific cognitive behavioral treatment methods described include “reducing cognitive distortions, dealing with atypical sexual arousal, and identifying individual warning signs that potentially lead to (further) offending.” The authors state that the HYPP is “based on the core assumption that in adolescent participants, there is still great flexibility for development, including their sexual interests.”

The authors never explain how exactly the HYPP aims to make use of this “flexibility” (or what makes it distinct from conversion therapy—banned in Germany for minors since 2019), but apparently believe one of the ways it can achieve this is by “...assist[ing] the patient in making sense of the functionality and meaning of the (abusive) sexual attitudes or acts.” Without explaining how a “sexual

attitude” can be “abusive,” the authors then list several functions/meanings that the HYPP theorizes are ascribable to a sexual attraction to younger children amongst adolescents, including “striving for social attention, overcoming power imbalances, deviant sexual interests, seeking attachment and contact, feeling safe, or experimenting with physical arousal.” In most of these potential etiologies proposed above, the attraction to younger children is attributable to some sort of psychosocial deficit that needs to be remedied. The idea that this attraction is a non-pathological, normative variation of human sexual/romantic interest is never considered by the authors. In the two cases where these “functions” and “meanings” do contain a sexual element, the authors characterize them as either “experimental” or simply “deviant.”

The authors write that one of the HYPP’s primary indicators of treatment success is a reduced probability of recidivism. However, the organization recognizes that this definition of success presents a measurement problem when treating teenagers who have never been found guilty of a sex crime. To account for this, the HYPP has expanded its definition of success, writing,

“...we also consider it a success if patients stated that they comprehend possible psychosocial stressors and risk factors, avoid corresponding behaviours, and learn alternative behaviours. Furthermore, we regard it as a success if patients

express an understanding of their sexual fantasies and underlying related factors (e.g., compensating for a power imbalance, experiencing emotional closeness to others).”

Even this broader definition of “success,” however, leaves much room for improvement. For one thing, it requires that patients conceptualize their sexuality as a symptom of some sort of developmental maladjustment, such as “compensating for a power imbalance” (an idea which the authors mention twice, yet never explain). Additionally, it burdens CAAs with the need to be constantly aware of their potential to violate the law, and to be hyper-vigilant of their thoughts and surroundings. Absent in the HYPP’s idea of success is patients developing resiliency or self-worth in the face of prejudice. Nor do they consider it a success if patients find ways to experience their sexualities in law-abiding ways without altering them.

Near the end, under the sections titled “Improving Treatment Offers,” the authors cite some of the perspectives offered by adult MAPs as to what they believe would have benefited their mental health growing up, such as having positive role models, better sexuality education, and improved relationships with parents (Shields et al., 2020). However, the authors do not say whether or not the HYPP is aware of these perspectives, or if so, how they plan on incorporating them into the treatment strategies.

The HYPP attempts to satisfy an important function in providing treatment to CAAs—a highly neglected and vulnerable population. However, based on the authors' portrayal of its philosophy, it appears to primarily view the adolescents in its care as dangers to be neutralized, or problems to be solved, as opposed to people deserving of respect and dignity. The HYPP approach appears to be based not on knowledge from the fields of adolescent

development or human sexuality, but instead on a “sex offender management” perspective, one which could severely harm the youth receiving treatment. The authors conclude by writing, “It is essential to remain attentive to the insights of affected adolescents and incorporate this feedback into empirically-based, effective treatment strategies.” If this advice is followed, hopefully the HYPP can offer CAAs much better.

Emotional Congruence with Children: An Empirical Examination of Different Models in Men with a History of Sexually Offending Against Children

Fraser, J. M., Babchishin, K. M., & Helmus, L. M. (2023)

Sexual Abuse, 2023, Vol. 0(0) 1–26, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/10790632231172160>

This paper examines “Emotional Congruence With Children”¹ (ECWC), a psychologically meaningful construct proposed to be a cause of and predictive of “sexual offending against children” (SOC). The paper summarizes recent work on ECWC, originally defined by Finkelhor as “an exaggerated cognitive and emotional affiliation with childhood and children”².

The authors repeat findings that ECWC predicts both the onset and maintenance of SOC and is “related to risk of sexual recidivism, and may be important in the assessment, management, and treatment of individuals who commit sexual offenses”³. They also note that ECWC remains a poorly understood concept. They summarize a meta-analysis⁴ that lays the groundwork for a more structured model. Based on studies of correctional samples, the meta-analysis presents a complex picture of ECWC as statistically related to various criminal factors (ex: most strongly associated with extrafamilial sex crimes involving male children, predictive of extrafamilial recidivism, etc.)

Although it appears frequently in their paper, at no point do Fraser et al. provide a definition for “pedophilia”. This review replaces that term with the expression “attraction to children”, denoting primarily sexual but also romantic attraction to prepubescent children.

The aim of the paper is to evaluate three proposed models⁵ (hereafter the “McPhail models”) for ECWC: *Blockage*, *Sexual Domain* and *Psychological Immaturity*. The authors also test a fourth model that conceptualizes ECWC as “an indicator of pedophilia”, which they also refer to as “the psychological aspect of attraction to children”⁶.

Using a correctional sample of 983 men on community supervision with a history of SOC, Fraser et al. conducted “Structural Equation Modeling” (SEM) – a statistical technique used to analyze the relationships between observed and latent variables – on each of the proposed models to test the fit of the proposed models in explaining ECWC. They also ran SEMs to examine the

¹ Also “emotional identification with children”.

² Finkelhor, 1984.

³ McPhail et al., 2013

⁴ McPhail et al., 2013

⁵ McPhail et al. 2014

⁶ Brankley et al. 2019

relationship between ECWC and “atypical sexual interests”.⁷

Fraser et al. did not find strong support for the McPhail models in their data. However, they did find support for the hypothesis that ECWC is the “psychological aspect of pedophilic interest, rather than a distinctly unique construct.” They also found a three-class solution (different from the McPhail models) best fitting the data, associated with three distinct subgroups of men from their forensic sample. They named and characterized the three classes as:

Relationship Deficits — “men with a history of SOC with ECWC who lack relationship stability, and were characterized by low sexual and general criminality.”

Immature/Lonely — “men who were young and showed problems with self-regulation and cognitive problem-solving, characterized by low sexual and general criminality.”

High Risk — “men who were also young and showing problems with self-regulation and cognitive problem-solving, but who were characterized by high sexual and general criminality.”

The authors discuss the advantages of their larger sample and its bivalent coding of ECWC over support for the McPhail models. They also suggest that differences between key indicators used in the

two studies may explain the absence of a clear winning model explaining ECWC.

In summary, the study “found the strongest support for ECWC being an indicator of attraction to children rather than a distinct construct.” The authors also observe that only men in the *High Risk* class were characterized by “high levels of atypical sexual interests” and that “ECWC is likely a multifaceted construct, and individuals may exhibit high levels of ECWC for various reasons.”

Fraser et al. provide possible explanations for high ECWC, independent of attraction to children, in the three classes, as follows:

Relationship Deficits: “... may seek out the company of children to fulfill their relationship needs, given that children may be easier targets.”

Immature/Lonely: “... may seek out the company of children as a direct result of their loneliness and immaturity...”

High Risk: “... may be due to the psychological attraction that they feel towards children.”

The authors indicate their findings might be operationalized in treatment for people convicted of SOC. They suggest that future research should “explore whether men with histories of SOC with ECWC respond differently to treatment aimed at reducing ECWC depending on their ECWC subgroup association and the underlying explanation

⁷ The expression “atypical sexual interests” effectively denotes pedophilia.

for their ECWC.” They also recommend having larger samples and incorporating better measurements of both ECWC and attraction to children.

Fraser et al. are to be commended for combining nuanced analysis and methodological rigor (despite obvious sampling limitations to be discussed later). The authors defend a plausible and intuitive explanation of emotional congruence as the psychological aspect of sexual attraction to children. Their proposed model also has the merit of flexibility, with its recognition of three very distinct classes of individuals with ECWC, which suggests that ECWC may not be a unified phenomenon.

However, these merits of the paper are overshadowed by serious limitations. In uncritically accepting Finkelhor’s original definition⁸ of ECWC as an “exaggerated” affiliation with children, the authors miss an opportunity to explore the implied normative limits of this affiliation. Nor do they consider social contexts where ECWC might be more, or less, desirable, or consider the implications of ECWC being characteristic of attraction to children. They don’t ask how an “appropriate” level of ECWC should be determined, other than by a tautological appeal to an actuarial tool (STABLE-2007). Should everybody ideally exhibit the same levels of ECWC? Is indifference preferable

to affiliation? Might “reducing ECWC” be code for conversion therapy?

The human dimension of ECWC can’t be simply abstracted away by quantifying it and making it a factor in an equation. Framing it as a cause of SOC submits it to an implied value judgment that needs to be justified. If ECWC is characteristic of attraction to children, this framing must erode the distinction between SOC and attraction to children and contribute to the stigma and shame already experienced by people who exhibit ECWC and/or attraction to children. For men especially, an admission to *liking kids* can barely be contemplated separately from the pall of suspicion around it. Further spoiling of the social value of ECWC has ethical implications that need to be addressed.

Data referenced by the authors shows that elevated ECWC is common in populations with no history of SOC⁹, that pedohebephilia with ECWC does not significantly predict SOC¹⁰ and that “if anything, [ECWC] appeared protective”¹¹ in some populations. These apparently confounding and potentially protective effects are excluded by the authors’ sample selection (limited to men with a history of SOC) and are neither controlled nor accounted for in their analysis.

⁸ Finkelhor, 1984.

⁹ “Nonoffenders with children (i.e., parents) had higher ECWC than nonoffenders without children” McPhail et al. 2013

¹⁰ “[R]esults indicated comparable scores on ECWC for pedophiles and hebephiles who never acted upon their fantasies and [offenders].” Konrad et al. 2018

¹¹ Hanson et al. 2007

In their Structural Equation Modeling, the omission of potential contributing factors invites spurious causal links and compromises the unity of scale¹². Further to that, sampling constraints ensure that subsequent objective testing of inferred hypotheses will not be sensitive to these incoherencies. Potential positive effects of ECWC are literally beyond the scope of the analysis, like looking for lost car keys under a streetlamp because the light's better there.

Further consequences emerge when missing empirical signals are combined with the ideological priors¹³ inevitable in a forensic framing¹⁴:

“The limitation of this sample is that our exploration is restricted to what is collected by the agency.”

“The educational background of the staff is unknown; [...] there is no interrater reliability data for the assessments.”

The explanations offered for ECWC (*Relationship Deficits, Immature/Lonely* and *High Risk*) might be characterized as failures in adulthood intersecting with “social deviance”. This casts a negative light on an emotional engagement that, in other contexts, such as alloparenting, might be seen as laudable. Referring to children as “easier targets”, in an effort to fulfill relationship needs, precludes the possibility

of appropriate adult/child relationships and suggests that an adult's emotional commitment to a child is necessarily trivial and undemanding. While the forensic data may provide some narrow basis for this negativity, it does not excuse the preclusion of a broader perspective.

The authors' suggestion that future research should use “a larger number of men with a history of SOC” simply recommends compounding the existing sample bias. Also, the suggestion that findings be operationalized in “treatment aimed at reducing ECWC” are premature, given the doubtful construct validity of ECWC. The authors correctly identify a need for measurement that “prioritizes construct validity over predictive ability” but seem disinterested in doing that. Perhaps this reluctance reflects the divided aims of theory and explanation on one hand and actuarial risk assessment on the other.

If ECWC represents the psychological aspect of attraction to children, it may be preferable to strengthen its potentially protective elements, rather than weaken them. There is an acknowledged positive social role for adults who are “crazy about kids”¹⁵ and this should not be denigrated.

In *naming* the latent classes and variables inferred from the biased sample (of people with history of SOC) without reference to a larger population or any

¹² “[E]rrors of omission of important variables (both exogenous and endogenous) have an influence on every parameter of the tested SEM model” Tarka 2017

¹³ Reijman et al. 2014

¹⁴ Fraser et al. 2023

¹⁵ Brendtro 2006

supporting theory or attempt to explain ECWC within this larger context, the authors invite nominal fallacies¹⁶ and risk pejorative labeling¹⁷. The exclusion of the individuals attracted to children who have ECWC, but no history of SOC, undermines a “consistent definition of pedophilia”¹⁸ and focuses suspicion on individuals who may have ECWC, but whose relationships with children may be honorable, ethical and socially productive.

The theories and labels generated by this research have real world impacts on a population already vulnerable to false belief and prejudice, so there are questions around duty of care. This is not to question the integrity or goodwill of the researchers. Rather, the suggestion is to recalibrate the field of inquiry to encompass adult emotional congruence with children as a potentially benign and socially adaptive trait, not just a spurious marker for sexual offending.

¹⁶ Remedios 2018

¹⁷ Willis 2018

¹⁸ Gannon 2021

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Recent Advances in the Neuropsychology of Pedophilia

Leverett, S. D., & Tenbergen, G. (2023)

Sexual Offending: Theory, Research, and Prevention, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5964/sotrap.10515>

This article provides a much-needed summary on the relationship between pedophilia, neuropsychology (specifically executive functioning), and sex crimes involving prepubescent children. It also covers many methodological flaws that have negatively impacted the field and provides appropriate direction and implications for better research in the future.¹⁹

According to the authors, early studies, such as one by Flor-Henry (1987), pooled together individuals with various criminal histories (child sex offenses, adult offenses, violent offenses) and compared them to healthy controls. This approach obscures in-group differences and makes results only interpretable in the broader context of general criminal behavior and incarceration.

Subsequent research by Joyal et al. (2007) investigated the neuropsychological function of people who committed sex crimes involving children, people who committed sex crimes

involving adults, and a demographically matched control group. Both offense groups compared similarly to the controls except for verbal fluency and verbal learning. The group with child sexual offenses also displayed weakened response inhibition, though this was not found among the group with adult sexual offenses.

While Joyal et al. (2007) was an improvement on previous studies, the authors recognize that the methodologies used still did not account for many key differences. One concern that the authors raised was the use of behavior to determine if a person is sexually attracted to children. However, recent research has reliably observed that many individuals who commit sexual offenses involving children do not have a predominant sexual attraction to children, but may violate the law for other reasons, such as using a child as a surrogate sexual partner in lieu of an ideal sexually mature partner. As such, the authors express the need to distinguish between “pedophilic offenders” and “nonpedophilic offenders” in incarcerated populations.

A study conducted by Cohen et al. (2002) on nonexclusive, heterosexual child-attracted males in incarceration found no significant differences in set-shifting (the ability to shift attention between one

¹⁹ Note on terminology: The authors state that while they recognize the social value of the term “minor-attracted person” (MAP) as less stigmatizing than “pedophile,” they claim that as MAP is neither a scientific nor clinical term, for the sake of clarity they have opted to use the word “pedophilia” to refer to the sexual attraction to prepubescent children. We accept this rationale, though in our review, we will use the term “child-attraction person” (CAP) to refer specifically to people attracted to prepubescent children (as opposed to minors generally) without the stigmatizing connotations of “pedophile/pedophilia.”

task and another), attention, impulsivity, or verbal fluency relative to the control group. Another study by Kruger and Schiffer (2011) of people exclusively attracted to prepubescent children found slight deficits in cognitive flexibility and abstract reasoning, though absolute values were within the normal range.

The authors highlight further research comparing child-attracted and adult-attracted individuals with sexual offenses against children, which found distinct neuropsychological profiles, particularly in executive functioning and processing speeds. Child-attracted individuals with sexual offenses against a child exhibited slower processing speeds and, in some studies, showed better behavioral inhibition and planning abilities than their adult-attracted counterparts, while the adult-attracted group displayed broader executive function impairments. These findings challenge previous assumptions that sexual crimes against children are related to greater impulsivity and instead suggest a more nuanced relationship between sexual orientation, neuropsychological functioning, and law-breaking behavior. The authors emphasize that a control group of child-attracted people with no history of sexual offenses against children would be necessary to disentangle the nuance of whether the findings are related to sexual orientation, committing crimes against children, or any confounding variables of general criminality and incarceration.

Additionally, neuropsychological differences have been observed between people convicted of contact child sexual crimes and people convicted of noncontact child sexual crimes, with the former referring to sexual crimes involving interactions with a child and the latter referring primarily to internet crimes such as the viewing of illegal sexual material depicting children. Several studies have found that people convicted of noncontact crimes were on average younger, more educated, exhibited greater levels of sexual attraction to children, and had fewer traits of antisociality and lower rates of general criminality than people convicted of contact crimes (Babchishin et al., 2011; Babchishin et al., 2018; Blanchard et al., 2007; Neutze et al., 2011; Seto et al., 2006; Seto et al., 2017). The authors note that the rates of transition from noncontact to contact crimes is very low, with estimates ranging between 2 and 12 percent, indicating the presence of inhibitory mechanisms.

Two additional distinct populations of child-attracted people include those who have engaged in sexual activity involving a child and have remained undetected by the authorities, termed “darkfield offenders,” and child-attracted people who have not committed any sexual offenses involving children. The authors emphasize the need to recruit darkfield offenders in the general population to distinguish between the neuropsychological effects of incarceration and general criminality from the effects of a sexual attraction to children. Identifying

these critical subgroup distinctions is vital for accurately understanding the relationships between child-attracted people, sexual offenses involving children, and neuropsychological functioning.

The authors end their review of the literature with a discussion on threats to internal and external validity. One of the challenges to internal validity is the difficulty of accurately measuring sexual attraction. Although self-reports and phallometric assessments are much more accurate than references to behavior or criminal history, their interpretive power is limited. Other concerns about internal validity include definitional and measurement issues in the assessment of executive function, as well as the overreliance on convenience samples with comorbid psychiatric diagnoses and criminal histories which may confound results. External validity threats, meanwhile, include the use of inappropriate or inconsistent control groups which can lead to persistent discrepancies between studies, compounded by the risk of self-selection bias. The authors hope that by recognizing and circumnavigating these limitations, individual neuropsychological markers may be observed in child-attracted people, specifically those relating to offending/nonoffending behavior for more tailored treatment methods.

The authors of this article have done well to avoid stigmatizing language and assumptions about minor-attracted people, focusing solely on the

research methodologies and the ways to improve them. Some terms the authors use, however, though not stigmatizing per se may still be called into question. For example, the authors referred to child-attracted people as having a “sexual preference” for prepubescent children, which may diminish the significance or legitimacy of their sexual orientation. If the authors used the term “preference” to refer to people who are more attracted to prepubescent children than to people in other stages of sexual maturation, then a better term would be an “exclusive” or “predominant” attraction to children. Another concern is that the authors do not address the lack of distinction between sexual and emotional attraction to children in the literature as a major gap that needs to be explored.

Furthermore, in two instances early in this article, the authors refer to pedophilia as a “paraphilia.” While the word paraphilia has always been subject to inconsistent usage and its definition has changed frequently, paraphilias typically refer to the attraction to atypical sexual acts or objects (BDSM, specific body parts, non-human animals, etc.) while chronophilias, or erotic-age orientations, like erotic-gender orientations, are whole-person focused. As such it might be best to avoid the word “paraphilia” in the scientific literature of age-specific sexual attractions.

This article contributes some much-needed definitional work to the research on child-attracted

people, sexual behavior involving children, and their relationship to neuropsychological functioning and criminality. This reflects a growing awareness that the attraction to children (and to minors generally) is multifaceted, and so too are sex-related crimes and

the people who commit them. Future researchers should be sure to keep this article in mind when planning their studies and trying to determine precisely which demographic they hope to investigate.

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Physical and Psychological Child and Adult Sex Cues and Their Association with Sexual Age Preferences

Lehman, R. J. B., Schäfer, T., Fleischhauer, M., Schmidt, A. F., & Amelung, T. (2023)

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The purpose of the current study was to investigate and validate gender/sex-generic characteristics preferred by minor-attracted people (MAPs). The authors begin the introduction by providing a comprehensive overview of sexual orientation, expanding the concept to include age preferences in sexual stimuli using Seto's (2017) chronophilia model based on age and sexual maturity. They describe sexual attraction cues for teleiophilic individuals (i.e., individuals attracted to post-pubescent adults), emphasizing evolutionary theory, linking preferences to reproductive success, and discussing factors such as physical appearance and manifest behavior. The Ideals Standards Model is introduced to explain mate selection criteria, with the model encompassing warmth-trustworthiness, vitality-attractiveness, and status resources (Fletcher & Simpson, 2000; Fletcher et al., 1999).

The exploration of sexual attraction cues specific to MAPs delves into a different explanatory approach, namely, the “malfunctioning of body shape detectors” (Quinsey & Lalumiere, 1995) which attempts to explain attraction to minors via the over-selection of indicators relating to youth. Notably, the authors forgo other (mainly criminogenic) theories on the etiology of attraction

to minors in favor of a sexological approach, successfully maintaining a neutral tone throughout the paper. Furthermore, they highlight the scarcity of research on this topic and present distinctions in preferences between teleiophilic individuals and MAPs, particularly in terms of status resources and emotional congruence with children.

The current study focuses on MAPs and their preferences in both physical and psychological features. The study aims to explore gender/sex-generic characteristics preferred by MAPs and validate such characteristics using external criteria such as age preferences and sexual fantasies. The rationale for only sampling male participants is explained in terms of the lower rates of attraction to minors that are reported among women. Even so, it is unfortunate that an opportunity was missed to address an oft-excluded population.

The authors sought to investigate whether a factorial structure resembling the Ideals Standards Model (Fletcher & Simpson, 2000; Fletcher et al., 1999) would be applicable for cues related to attraction to minors alongside cues related to attraction to adults. The authors anticipated that desirable psychological

characteristics of the object of attraction, such as openness and honesty, would be related to both adult- and minor-attraction, that physical child sexual attraction cues would be more strongly related to minor-attraction than adult-attraction, and that psychological adult sexual attraction cues would be more strongly related to adult-attraction than minor-attraction.

To test their hypotheses, the authors recruited a sample of 589 male participants over the age of 18 ($M = 30.6$, $SD = 16.6$) with various age preferences. The sample was recruited through online platforms, social media, and sites for self-identified pedophilic and hebephilic individuals. Participants were asked to rate the importance of physical and psychological features in their preferred sexual partners. Physical features included aspects such as smooth skin, absence of pubic hair, childlike face, and slim body shape. Psychological features encompassed traits such as cheerfulness, openness, honesty, and curiosity. Participants' sexual fantasies were assessed using the Sexual Fantasy Questionnaire (Gray et al., 2003). Participants were also asked to indicate their preferred age group for "potential sexual partners", (specifically, "What age do you prefer a potential sex partner to be?", p. 10). The phrasing of the question marks a problematic choice of methodology, seeing as it is unlikely that all of their respondents would consider children to be "potential sex partners". The question would have benefitted from more neutral phrasing such as

"which age groups do you find to be sexually attractive?", which does not insinuate the participants' endorsement of child-adult sex.

Using a principal component analysis, the study identified five dimensions of sexual attraction across the entire sample: warmth-trustworthiness, vitality, attraction to neotenous innocence, agency, and attraction to neotenous physical appearance. The distributions of sexual age preferences showed that, overall, young adults were most frequently rated as the most attractive. Preferences for prepubescent and pubescent children increased with the participants' age, while preferences for other age groups aligned with the participants' age. A child-adult difference index was created to quantify the magnitude of the difference between average preferences for children and adults. For 6.3% of participants, the index was positive, indicating a stronger preference for children than for adults.

In the discussion, the authors elaborate that the warmth-trustworthiness dimension aligned with that from previous studies, emphasizing psychological qualities such as friendliness and sincerity. However, this dimension was unrelated to sexual age preferences or fantasies, suggesting its potential relevance to long-term relationship attractiveness rather than immediate sexual attraction.

The vitality dimension included attributes like spontaneity and curiosity, showing a strong

association with sexual attraction in middle-aged adults. Surprisingly, this dimension was unrelated to minor-attraction, challenging the expectation that individuals with such attractions seek the playfulness and joy associated with children.

The attraction to neotenous innocence dimension combined psychological and physical features related to neoteny, indicating a preference for innocence cues. Attraction to neotenous innocence was positively correlated with sexual age preferences below 18 years and negatively correlated with adult-related preferences. The relevance of these cues varied across different age groups and sexual orientations, with a greater emphasis on females.

The agency dimension focused on adult personality characteristics such as success and independence. Agency was negatively related to child-related sexual preferences but positively associated with preferences for young adults. This suggests that mid-life achievements and status are valued by individuals attracted to younger adults but not by those attracted to minors.

The attraction to neotenous physical appearance dimension included physical features associated with neoteny, such as no pubic hair, clear skin, and a petite body shape. Attraction to neotenous physical appearance showed positive correlations with minor-related sexual preferences and fantasies but to

a lesser degree than the attraction to neotenous innocence dimension. Furthermore, attraction to neotenous physical appearance was negatively correlated with adult-related preferences.

The findings of the current study contribute to understanding the complexity of sexual attraction and age preferences. The dimensions provide insights into the multifaceted nature of attractiveness, encompassing both psychological and physical features. Notably, the study highlighted the importance of cues related to neoteny in sexual attraction to children, emphasizing the need for further research to validate these findings and explore their broader implications.

The study acknowledged limitations in the marker system for neoteny, emphasizing the need for a more systematic approach. The authors recommend that future studies incorporate additional physical indicators of sexual maturity to enhance the comprehensiveness of neotenous cues. The study used a mix of psychological, ontogenetic, and physical indicators, potentially limiting comparability with existing models like the Ideal Standards Model (Fletcher & Simpson, 2000; Fletcher et al., 1999). The authors acknowledge that selecting only the factors within the Ideal Standards Model that are theoretically aligned with attraction to minors limits the study's comparability with previous research using this model.

In addition to assessing preferred attributes in a partner, the authors suggest that future studies should include a self-report measure of how well these attributes apply to individuals themselves as this approach could reveal the extent of similarity or dissimilarity between individuals' self-perception and their sexual preferences.

The authors encourage future research to explore additional traits that may support the assumption that MAPs desire dependency in their preferred partners. They suggest traits such as submissiveness, dependence, helplessness, and the seeking of advice could be valuable in understanding the functional relationship and intimacy needs associated with sexual preferences. Additionally, the authors highlight the potential attenuation of reported associations due to the use of globally relevant psychological attributes and posited that incorporating attributes more directly related to the “underlying motivation for minor-attraction” (p. 21), such as dependence and helplessness. The specific phrasing of minor-attraction having a “motivation” is problematic as this phrasing gives the impression that attraction to minors is a voluntary choice, as opposed to an involuntary orientation. It is certainly possible that traits such as dependence and helplessness may be attractive to MAPs; however, the authors intuiting exclusively negative traits as the “underlying motivation for minor-attraction” paints an inherently stigmatizing picture of the target population in the process. This is part of a general

tendency of the paper to present attraction to children as inherently problematic and “abnormal”, an assumption that, for instance, is also revealed in the early discussion of Quinsey & Lalumiere’s speculative explanation of attraction to minors as a “malfunctioning of body shape detectors,” a theory which assumes “normal” categories of sexual attraction rather than a spectrum of sexual attractions.

The authors appropriately address the limitation of recruiting exclusively male participants. Given the large body of research on gender differences in mating strategies, the authors recommend that future research explore the possibility of gender effects in more detail to enhance the generalizability of findings. The authors also recognized the variability in recruiting strategies for teleiophilic vs. minor-attracted individuals and that discussing attractive features in preferred partners between legal online forums and general non-topical sites may have biased the data. It is recommended that future studies aim for a more diverse range of recruitment strategies.

In conclusion, the study presents a much-needed sexological perspective on attraction patterns in MAPs. For the most part, the authors do well in maintaining objectivity towards the target population while addressing a gap in the literature. The novel exploratory nature of the study provides valuable directions for future research to enhance the

understanding of physical and psychological
attraction cues.

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Meet the New Generation

In this section, we present a young scholar from the MAP-research community, typically a PhD student who is on B4U-ACT's email group for researchers. This is a way for B4U-ACT to honor individuals who demonstrate an authentic concern for the respect, dignity, mental health, and well-being of MAPs.

Ellie Woodward, PhD Candidate Nottingham Trent University



Ellie Woodward is a PhD candidate in Forensic Psychology at Nottingham Trent University in the UK, supervised by Dr. Rebecca Lievesley, Dr. Craig Harper and Prof. Daragh McDermott.

Ellie learned about her supervisors' research on minor attraction during her Masters degree at NTU and joined their team as a Research Assistant for projects centered around treatment targets and fantasy sexual material use. During this time, she secured a funded PhD studentship to explore the topic of sexual satisfaction and fulfillment among MAPs. Ellie is currently investigating the conceptualization and achievement of sexual fulfillment, and potential links to other factors such as overall wellbeing and treatment goals. Her research aims to explore these connections and to consider clinicians' perspectives on supporting individuals in achieving sexual fulfillment through a program of mixed-methods research. Now in her second year, Ellie hopes to establish an evidence base for interventions in clinical contexts, to strengthen therapeutic relationships and work effectively with those seeking support.

Alongside this work, Ellie lectures at NTU Psychology, is a Research Associate, and reviews for the B4QR journal. In the future, she hopes to pursue an academic career while maintaining connections to clinical practice.

B4U-ACT Resources

B4U-ACT is a 501(c)3 organization established to publicly promote professional services and resources for self-identified individuals who are sexually attracted to children and desire such assistance, and to educate mental health providers regarding approaches needed in understanding and responding to such individuals.

Our organization assists researchers from around the world, especially PhD students (<https://www.b4uact.org/research/research-collaboration/>). If you would like us to collaborate with you or your team on a project, and if you share our research ethos (<https://www.b4uact.org/about-us/statements-and-policies/research-ethos/>), contact us at science@b4uact.org. You can also email us if you would like to join our researcher email group.

We provide several additional services to support therapists, researchers, students, MAPs, and their family members:

- Workshops for professionals, researchers, and minor-attracted individuals (<https://www.b4uact.org/get-involved/attend-a-workshop/>)
- Advocacy/education (<https://www.b4uact.org/know-the-facts/>)
- Advice for MAPs seeking mental health services, including referral to approved professionals (<https://www.b4uact.org/attracted-to-minors/professional-support/>)
- Guidelines for therapists (<https://www.b4uact.org/psychotherapy-for-the-map/>)
- Online discussion group for professionals, researchers, and minor-attracted individuals (<https://www.b4uact.org/dialog-on-therapy/>)
- Peer support groups for MAPs (<https://www.b4uact.org/attracted-to-minors/peer-support/>) and their families (<https://www.b4uact.org/attracted-to-minors/support-for-family-friends/>)