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B4QR

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



It was a year ago that I, with “pride, honor, and enthusiasm,” introduced the debut issue of B4U-ACT’s Quarterly Research Review. We followed with three more quarterly issues in 2021, each one reviewing scientific research concerning minor-attracted persons (MAPs). Importantly, these reviews looked at the research through a lens that humanized this often stigmatized and misunderstood minority group, focusing on the issues of MAP well-being, self-identity, social support, and sources of fulfillment. I confess that when Allen Bishop, Editor-in-Chief, initially proposed that we publish a quarterly journal of these reviews, I doubted we could maintain sufficient volunteer reviewers

and editors to hit this target. We not only hit it, but with exceptional quality and international scope involving researchers, students, and MAPs.

As we begin year two of B4QR, I cannot help but reflect upon the unfair attacks on Professor Allyn Walker for their work and public statements regarding pedophilia and MAPs. Fortunately, this elicited an outpouring of support from researchers and academics who recognize the need for freedom within academic research, even if the topics and findings are controversial and discomforting. The four B4QR journals of 2021 demonstrate the contributions of researchers to expand our collective knowledge and understanding of persons who feel affection and attraction to minors. Our reviewers’ critical assessments of the research help to highlight some of the shortcomings within the research, as well as potential avenues for additional research. B4U-ACT appreciates the risk-taking researchers exploring ignored aspects of the lived experience of minor-attracted people. We urge our readers to support this research and speak out for academic freedom.

I want to thank Allen Bishop and the other journal editors, as well as all the critically important research students, academics, and MAPs who volunteer to review research articles. I look forward to another year of new research helping to define new paradigms for understanding and responding to MAPs living within our communities.

Russell Dick, MSW
Chairperson and Co-Founder
B4U-ACT, Inc.

Introduction by Allen Bishop, Editor-in-Chief

Welcome to the first issue of the second volume of B4QR. Our previous issue included an extensive review of Allyn Walker's landmark book *A Long Dark Shadow*. As most of our readers know, Professor Walker has since been the object of a cruel and unfair campaign attempting to demonize both their work and their very person. Our research community is united in solidarity with Allyn and in support of academic freedom. These sad events have only strengthened our commitment to promoting research in this field.

Our journal opens with reviews of three recent publications on female MAPs, a topic that has been largely underresearched until now. The three studies varied in their recruitment and data-collection procedures. Stephens and McPhail (2021) used an online survey open to the general MAP population and later analyzed the results from the 20 participants who had identified as females. In contrast, Tozdan et al. (2021) specifically targeted female MAPs in advertising their own surveys, resulting in a larger sample of 52 participants. Finally, Lievesley and Lapworth (2021) opted for a more qualitative approach and conducted individual interviews with six female MAPs, extracting various themes from their interviews.

All three studies investigate the many ways in which female MAPs are both similar to and different from male MAPs. The first two studies are alike in their focus on the general characteristics of this population, with questions concerning the nature, exclusivity, and discovery process of the participants' sexual attraction. The third study offers a more in-depth exploration of the emotional and social reality of female MAPs. It reveals that female MAPs experience a "lonely secret existence" not unlike that of many male MAPs, but they also often feel alienated from the (predominantly male) MAP community itself.

In addition to these three studies on female MAPs, our team also reviews five different publications in this issue. Our next three reviewed publications try to illuminate the nature of minor attraction in different ways. Jahnke et al. (2021) is a two-part study on the neurodevelopmental perturbations supposedly associated with attraction to children, as measured by markers such as height and handedness. The authors cannot find support for this hypothesis in their community sample of MAPs. Martijn et al. (2021) investigates the physical and psychological features that MAPs find attractive in children in a study that includes both a quantitative and a qualitative component. Schmidt and Imhoff (2021) similarly surveyed males on the physical features that they find attractive, but their study was not restricted to individuals attracted to minors. They presented computer-modified images to their heterosexual participants to see how they responded to females that had both youthfulness traits (e.g., large eyes) and maturity traits (e.g., large breasts) enhanced.

The last two publications in this issue compare minor-attracted people with other taboo sexual minorities, but they do so in very different ways. Lehman et al (2021) comprises two studies that look at the

stigmatizing attitudes of the general public towards MAPs compared to other groups. In the first study, MAPs are compared to sexual sadists and people with antisocial tendencies, while in the second study they are compared to necrophiles and zoophiles. In all cases, MAPS are shown to be more stigmatized. Finally, Marečková et al. (2021) compared MAPs to sexual sadists on their desire to interact with sex robots and sex dolls. They found that their Czech MAP participants expressed greater interest in the “sex robot experience” (37.5%) than did sexual sadists (26%) and the control group (18%).

We hope you will find this new issue of B4QR informative and useful. Don't hesitate to contact us if you would like to join our reviewing team, or if you want to propose recent publications for our journal to review: science@b4uact.org.

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

Reviewed Publications

A preliminary examination of sexual interest in children in a non-representative community sample of females

Stephens, S. and McPhail, I. (2021)

Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2021.1928804>

Research on females with a sexual attraction to children is severely limited, especially compared with males. This study offers some much-needed data on this too often ignored MAP demographic. While its procedural constraints are too extensive for any concrete conclusions to be drawn, it does help illuminate some of the particularities of females who are attracted to children in comparison to males and provides us with clear direction for future research.

For this study, a number of people with a self-identified attraction to children were asked to complete an online survey. Participants were recruited from online forums for people who are sexually attracted to children, and other online outlets such as Twitter. All in all, the final sample consisted of 228 people, 20 of whom were biological females (8.8%), and for comparison, 208 (91.2%) people who were biologically male. For a preliminary survey into a largely untrodden field, this study was quite in-depth. In addition to covering the factors highlighted in the diagnostic criteria for Pedophilic Disorder used in DSM-5: “focus of erotic-age interest, exclusivity, and erotic sex

interest,” (p. 2) the authors included other elements associated with people who are attracted to children, such as emotional attraction and social preference.

According to the authors, a previous study on females with an attraction to children (Tozdan et al., 2020) did not include attraction to children in Tanner stage 3 – an oversight that may have impacted its results. To rectify this problem, the authors asked their participants to gauge their attraction to children between the ages of 11 and 14 as well as their attraction to younger children. This choice also allowed them to compare their results with previous findings of significant overlap between pedophilia and hebephilia in males.

Exclusivity was assessed by asking participants to judge their sexual attraction to prepubescent children compared to adults, and again for pubescent children, and to choose one of seven options for each, from having an exclusive attraction to children to having an exclusive attraction to adults. Those who reported an exclusive attraction to adults were excluded from the final analysis, as were those who

were only incidentally attracted to prepubescent and pubescent children. For analysis, the remaining participants were grouped into four categories: Exclusively oriented towards children, predominantly exclusively oriented, somewhat non-exclusively oriented, and non-exclusively oriented. Participants were also asked whether they were attracted to boys, girls, or both.

The study also addressed the non-sexual elements of adults' attraction to children, namely whether their emotional attractions and their social preference were adult-oriented or child-oriented. Finally, the authors asked participants to specify the age at which they first experienced an attraction to another individual, and the age at which they realized they had an attraction to children younger than themselves. The duration of their attraction to younger children was calculated by subtracting this latter age from the participants' current age.

Several findings are of interest. 80% of females in the sample were shown to have pedohebephilia, which was similar to results for males (85.1%). In terms of exclusivity, females reported less of an exclusive attraction to prepubescent children over adults (10.5%) compared to males (19.4%), though they reported an exclusive attraction to pubescent children over adults at a higher rate than males (20% compared to 11.2%). Meanwhile, none of the females reported an equivalent (or non-exclusive) attraction to prepubescent or pubescent children and

adults. On the other hand, 10.2% of males reported a non-exclusive attraction to prepubescent children and adults, and that number increased to 16.8% for pubescent children.

In terms of erotic sex interest, 50% of females reported an attraction to boys, while the remaining half was split between an attraction to girls (25%) and an attraction to both boys and girls (25%). For males, 65.9% of respondents reported an attraction to girls, 24.4% reported an attraction to boys, and 9.8% to both. Regarding emotional attraction, 42.1% of females reported a child-oriented emotional attraction, compared to 59.9% of males. Both females and males were more likely to have a child-oriented emotional attraction as opposed to an adult-oriented emotional attraction. 21.1% of females and 18.8% of males had an emotional attraction to both children and adults.

The results were most similar between males and females in their responses to "age at first attraction" and "age at realization of sexual interest in children." Females and males had their first attraction to another person at an average age of 8.2 and 8.3 respectively, and both females and males came to understand that they had a sexual attraction to children younger than themselves on average at a little over age 18. This indicates that males and females who are attracted to children show a similar pattern in their sexual development and awareness.

The largest discrepancy between male and female participants occurred when asked what their sexual behavior would be in “ideal circumstances.” Male and female participants were each mainly child-oriented in both their sexual attractions and sexual fantasies. Both sexes revealed that their current sexual behavior was generally adult-oriented (although this question received only 97 responses). However, for sexual behavior in “ideal circumstances,” only 26.7% of females reported their sexual behavior would be child-oriented, while 66.7% reported their sexual behavior would be adult-oriented. As for males in “ideal circumstances,” 48.2% reported a desire for child-oriented sexual behavior and 36.9% for adult-oriented sexual behavior.

For both males and females, responses to this question seem at odds with responses regarding sexual attraction and sexual fantasy, though what’s more interesting is that the percentage of females who reported child-oriented sexual behavior in “ideal circumstances” was markedly lower than males’ responses to the same question.

The authors offer two explanations for this disparity. One possibility is that males who are attracted to children may be generally more child-oriented in their desires and would prefer children as sexual partners over adults in ideal circumstances, whereas females are less exclusive and a change in circumstances would not affect their sexual behavior

as much. However, this hypothesis does not seem to match up with the rest of the data in this study, as female participants mostly reported either a predominantly exclusive or somewhat non-exclusive attraction to prepubescent and pubescent children. Furthermore, 75% of females reported that their current sexual attraction was child-oriented, and 72.7% reported that their current sexual fantasies were child-oriented. Another explanation the authors offer is that when it comes to something of such consequence as sexual behavior, even in an anonymous survey females may be more inclined to choose the more socially acceptable answer.

Perhaps more precise data could be acquired by better defining the meaning of “ideal circumstances.” This term is not clarified by the authors, which leaves one wondering if “ideal circumstances” means circumstances wherein there is no risk of detection by the law. Does it imply circumstances wherein laws prohibiting child-adult sexual contact were repealed and/or social disapproval of these acts were absent? How each participant individually interpreted this concept may have influenced their responses. Future studies should clarify the concept or else divide it into two or three components, such as “ideal legal circumstances” and “ideal social circumstances,” and then test for each option.

As the authors note, a sample of 20 females is extremely small, and obviously those who were

willing to complete this survey cannot be assumed to represent females who are attracted to children within the general population. Before any inferences can be drawn regarding the sexological features of females attracted to children, and its comparison to the data on males, more studies will need to be done with much larger samples. Other limitations the authors point out come from the extreme anonymity of the survey which obfuscates psychometric evaluations and also prevents the researchers from questioning the participants further for valuable context to their responses.

The authors suggest that future studies on people who are attracted to children should directly seek out females. Specifically, the authors want researchers to examine “sexological features, personality correlates, the presence of psychological disorders,

and developmental trajectories in females with sexual interest in children.” Until more data is available, the authors ask readers to be wary of generalizing observations of males to females regarding attraction to children.

Despite its drawbacks, this study brings to the fore an important consideration for the field. While “MAP” is used as a generalized term, presumably to encompass both males and females, the majority of what is known about minor attracted persons comes from studies on males and thus limits this generalizability. Yet this is a distinction rarely made within the literature. However, this study effectively brings attention to the situation of female MAPs, who despite being lower in number, likely experience much the same stigma as MAPs who are male.

Women with Sexual Interest in Children – Results from an Online Survey Among a Non-Forensic Female Sample

Tozdan, S., Briken, P. and Schröder, J. (2021)

Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy: <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2021.2005208>

This study by Tozdan et al. surveyed women whose sexual attractions included children (<11 years old) or young adolescents (11-13 years old). The study was comprised of 52 women with an average age of 33.2 years who anonymously self-reported their sexual attraction to children under the age of 14 years. Participants were recruited via an online survey link that was posted to several websites directed toward people with a sexual attraction to children.

In a brief literature review, the authors claim that previous studies with female samples vary significantly in their conclusions and implications. There may be some indication that a focus of attraction to early adolescents is more common than to children under the age of 11—at least in terms of the use of sexual images and sexual fantasies related to that age group. The authors share research showing that 5% of the women with sexual attraction to children and/or adolescents report viewing sexual images of adolescents versus only .8% indicating they view sexual images of children under the age of 11. They also mention partial evidence of a higher degree of homosexuality and bisexuality in female MAPs.

The author's review of non-forensic male studies is

somewhat limited in scope and tends to draw overly strong conclusions about the male MAP population, especially on questions such as the exclusivity of sexual attraction and age of onset. We will return to this point later when discussing the results of the authors' own study. In their review, the authors present data that goes against the growing consensus in the field that sexual attraction to children can be conceptualized as a sexual orientation (e.g., Seto, 2012). For instance, they mention studies that establish a correlation between attraction to children and early sexual experiences such as masturbation and the use of pornography. They also present evidence that men attracted to children have a higher overall level of sexual activity and pervasive sexual thoughts than men who are attracted to adults, and they present statistics that suggest that men attracted to children tend to discover their attraction later than teleiophilic men.

The authors' own study investigated characteristics such as sexual orientation, age of onset, gender preferences, level of education, the existence of relationships, diagnosis of mental disorders, use of adult pornography, and use of sexual images of minors, among other measures. Participants were at least 18 years of age and self-reported a sexual interest in children under the age of 14. Gender

identity was restricted to those identifying with the female gender or another unspecified gender (i.e., “other” in the survey); those identifying exclusively with the male gender were not included.

Participants indicated a bisexual attraction more frequently (67%) than women from the general population (7.2%), a fact that the study’s authors believe may be explained by relative similarities in physical characteristics among children and/or early adolescents of either gender. Like the male studies cited by the authors in their literature review, their female participants indicated higher levels of masturbation and use of pornography—and an earlier age of first sexual experience and exposure to pornography than samples from the general female population. Nearly half of participants said they engaged with sexual images of children and early adolescents. Age of preference among participants was shown to be relatively non-exclusive, with many respondents indicating being attracted to more than one age group. Participants could select multiple age ranges for both genders including 0-4 years, 5-10 years, and/or 11-13 years.

Only 9% of the MAPs in this study mentioned having an exclusive attraction to children. 38% mentioned being mainly attracted to children but also attracted to adults; 23% indicated being equally attracted to adults and children, and 29% indicated being mainly attracted to adults. Noting the similarity of these figures with other studies on male

MAPs cited in their literature review, the authors conclude that “the majority of individuals with a sexual interest in children are also attracted to adults. This implies a great chance for individuals as the focus on adult sexuality may lead to a sufficient degree of sexual satisfaction and therefore may help prevent sexual offenses against children.”

One problem with this conclusion is that no details are given as to the degree or intensity of attraction to adults in the 35% group that is “also attracted to adults.” If this attraction to adults is weak, then the authors’ expressed hope that MAPs can refocus their attraction on adults—which in itself raises ethical questions—will apply to a smaller group of MAPs. This is suggested by Mundy et al. (2021)’s recent findings on a non-forensic sample of 125 male MAPs. Mundy et al. similarly found that 9.1% of their participants were exclusive in their attraction to children, but unlike this present study, Mundy et al. asked participants if they were only “incidentally attracted to adults” or if they were “more than incidentally attracted to adults.” Of their 125 participants, 28.9% said that they were only “incidentally attracted” to adults, while 30.9% said they were “more than incidentally attracted” to adults. That study also found much fewer cases of MAPs equally or primarily attracted to adults.

Regarding the age of onset, the female MAPs in the present study discovered their attraction to children at a mean age of 17.4 years. The authors present this

finding as comparable to other studies and suggest that this shows “that sexual interest in children does not generally occur from entering puberty onward and thus is not comparable to sexual orientation which usually occurs before the onset of puberty.” One should be careful with such comparisons between teleiophilic and pedophilic attractions since children and adolescents who are attracted to peers will not naturally conceptualize this as an attraction “to children.” Given this known fact, and to avoid possible interpretive confusion among study participants, it would have been better to follow other studies in distinguishing between different stages of discovery.

The study also asked participants the degree to which they wanted to change their sexual attraction to children, and the results showed that 23% had a “high” motivation to change, 19% a “moderate” motivation to change, and 58% had a “low” motivation to change. There are inherent problems with the assumption that changes to behavior or thoughts are needed among MAPs; indeed, many individuals live healthy, productive lives without any clinical interventions. Importantly, a relatively low level of interest in changing sexual attractions does not imply a lack of commitment to safety for children or a willingness to stop using illegal sexual images of children.

Another surprising element in this study is the authors’ interpretation of the ICD-11’s criteria for

“pedophilic disorder.” Like the DSM-5, the ICD-11 distinguishes between pedophilic attraction and pedophilic disorder and counts as a necessary criterion for pedophilic disorder either experiencing distress due to the attraction or “having acted” on the attraction. The “having acted” disjunctive branch is standardly interpreted as referring to the individual having engaged in sexual activities with children, but Tozdan et al. use an unusually loose interpretation of the criterion. To determine whether the criterion applied, they asked their participants: “Have you acted in accordance with these thoughts, fantasies, or urgent needs? (For example, did you masturbate to these fantasies?)” Giving solitary masturbation as an example of “having acted” on their attraction is a highly questionable choice by the authors. If merely masturbating counts as “having acted,” then 99.9% of people who meet the first criterion of pedophilic disorder will also meet the second criterion - and so virtually everyone who has a pedophilic attraction will also have a “pedophilic disorder,” rendering the distinction irrelevant. This can only serve to inflate the number of people who will be diagnosed with a disorder.

While the study at hand serves a neglected area of research in attraction to minors, namely, prevalence among women in the general population, it faces some limitations far beyond its small sample size. The authors would be well-served to call attention to prior research, as well as indicators in their own study, that point to similarities in the manifestation

of attraction among minor-attracted persons and those who are attracted to adults. Moreover, the authors convey their point-of-view that minor-attracted individuals need therapy (i.e., the “motivation to change” measure) merely based on the existence of the attraction. While social stigma and internalized shame among some minor-attracted persons—particularly for adolescents who are experiencing these feelings—should be of concern to

all in our society, the suggestion that all MAPs need therapeutic intervention is both false and perpetuates deeply-ingrained societal perceptions regarding this population. The study gleans some useful information in a relatively sparse area of the literature and is therefore worthy of a read—albeit with a critical eye toward the limitations stated above.

“We do exist”: The Experiences of Females Living with a Sexual Interest in Minors

Lievesley, R. and Lapworth, R. (2021)

Archives of Sexual Behavior: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-021-02160-z>

There has been a significant recent growth in the body of literature investigating minor attraction through a non-forensic, non-clinical lens, but this literature largely neglects the experiences of minor-attracted females. Attempting to fill in this gap, Lievesley and Lapworth conducted a qualitative study investigating the experiences of self-identified females in the MAP community.

The authors begin with a quick literature review. As is generally assumed, females have a lower prevalence of attraction to minors compared to males (1-3% versus 4-9%). However, interestingly, a study has shown no statistical differences between men and women's sexual fantasies involving children under 12 (Joyal et al., 2012). In explaining this discrepancy, the authors suggest that it “may reflect differences in the prevalence of sexual attractions to older children or teenagers” (p.4).

The present study features interviews with six adult women on their attraction to minors and how they make sense of them in their daily lives. The interviewees ranged from 18 to 40 years of age and included women who were both exclusively and non-exclusively attracted to prepubescent children. Every woman in the sample reported never having committed any illegal sexual act involving children.

The interviewees asked the women about their attractions, their coping strategies, and their support-seeking and/or disclosure experiences. The transcripts of these conversations were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodology that centers on the participants' sense-making of their own lives. Under IPA methodology, participants are considered experts on their personal narratives and are encouraged to independently interpret their lived experiences. The researchers closely studied these interview transcripts by reading them several times to uncover emergent themes. Upon reading the transcripts, they observed two superordinate themes which were then divided into five subthemes.

The first superordinate theme identified from the data was “a lonely secret existence,” which encompassed three subthemes: (1.1) having to hide a core part of their identity from loved ones in order to maintain their relationships, (1.2) feeling alienated and isolated, and (1.3) feeling deterred from disclosing their sexual attraction. The authors compared the sentiments expressed here with those who identify on the LGBT spectrum, as the MAPs in the study admitted hiding parts of themselves and withdrawing from others, often at the cost of their wellbeing and sanity. Many participants reported

feelings of alienation and isolation from being unable to fully relate to others because of their sexual orientation. Consistent with other studies on male MAPs, the female MAPs in this study struggled with the thought that they would not experience sexual and/or romantic satisfaction in the same way that their adult-attracted peers do, a pain heightened by the feeling of not being able to discuss these struggles openly.

When sharing reasons for not disclosing their sexual attraction, participants reported that the perceived risks were too high. They discussed fear of negative emotional backlash from family and friends due to the common conflation of pedophilia with child sexual abuse. One woman in the sample even discussed the hardship of anonymous, online disclosure in dedicated support groups, though she admitted this was easier than any face-to-face disclosure to her loved ones. Participants were deterred from disclosing to those working in healthcare settings (e.g., therapists) due to a perceived lack of expertise in the field and a fear that their attraction would be reported to the authorities, causing significant ramifications to their lives and security.

Loneliness and the need for secrecy were thus prominent themes within this sample. These were accompanied by feelings of artificiality in relationships and perceptions of living an inauthentic existence. This feigned mode of being had negative

effects on the participants' mental health, with reports of frustration, resentment, emotional distress, and suicidal ideation. For these reasons, the authors reiterated the necessity of modifying and standardizing clinical guidelines for reporting people who disclose an attraction to minors and promoting a more humanizing, less stigmatizing portrayal of MAP sexualities.

The second superordinate theme, "a minority within a minority," detailed the reflections made by the women about their peculiar position in the predominantly male MAP community. Participants reported that there was a lack of awareness of female MAPs, with one woman commenting, "there's a lot of people that say [...] female pedophiles don't exist" (p.17). The authors noted how such statements reflect both social perceptions about sexuality and the limitations of the current body of literature on MAPs. Further excerpts from the interviews reflect how the lack of research and public dialogue on females attracted to children made the participants in the study doubt the reality of what they were experiencing. Some reported internalizing the belief that MAPs are all male, resulting in further self-doubt and confusion when they met other female MAPs. The emergence of online communities where female MAPs connect with one another was a source of comfort for the participants, providing a shared reality and the knowledge that others felt the same way. For one participant, connecting with other female MAPs was

fundamental to viewing herself in a more positive light than she had done before, due to having previously internalized the negative stigma surrounding this attraction.

Although participants mostly reported feeling a higher degree of isolation and exclusion than male MAPs, some talked about the relative benefits of being a female MAP. They claimed that society does not attach as much stigma to female MAPs and partially attributed this to a lack of public awareness of their very existence. One said, “I don’t think there can be a stigma towards something you don’t know exists” (p.22). However, when the public is alerted to the existence of female MAPs, there is a fear that the condemnation will be worse, a fear substantiated by one study which showed respondents recommending more severe punishments for female perpetrators of child sex crimes than for male perpetrators (Harper & Bartels, 2018). The experience of this double-standard is described by one woman as making her feel like a “double freak.”

With still much to be learned about female MAPs, this study produces interesting insights that could be put to use on current and future MAP support forums. While some findings here have been mirrored in studies of male counterparts, the second theme encapsulated the unique issues faced by female MAPs. Importantly, however, the authors

noted that controlling one’s own sexual behavior was not a major concern for participants in this sample. This is an important point to emphasize to challenge the public’s commonly held belief that managing one’s sexual behavior is a key concern for MAPs. The struggles of loneliness, self-concept, and absence of romance were of higher importance to participants. This is a strength of this article compared to much of the literature about MAPs. The authors diverted from a purely forensic perspective in favor of personal, humanizing accounts. Since this study consisted entirely of self-analyses, there may have been the tendency for the participants to emphasize their “desired selves” in the interviews and to occasionally avoid discussing especially difficult topics. The authors offer this as a potential explanation of why participants did not mention difficulties managing sexual behavior.

We cannot avoid mentioning that this study has a very small sample size (only six participants), with no demographic information provided. This hinders the applicability of the data to the wider population of female MAPs. Further research is required to increase understanding of females in the MAP community and to recognize how they may be distinct from males and other genders. Future research would also benefit from identifying whether there are more within-female MAP differences, as this would present a more accurate portrayal of a likely heterogeneous group.

Neurodevelopmental Differences, Pedohebephilia, and Sexual Offending: Findings from Two Online Surveys

Jahnke, S., Schmidt, A. F., Klöckner, A. and Hoyer, J. (2021)

Archives of Sexual Behavior. Pre-print: <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/c9svz>

This paper by Jahnke et al. (2021) is a two-part study on neurodevelopmental perturbations associated with pedohebephilia (i.e., the sexual attraction to children) and sexual offending.

The neurodevelopmental hypothesis of pedo(hebe)philia was initially proposed by Blanchard et al. (2002) to help explain the underlying causes of sexual attraction to children. Briefly, the hypothesis states that sexual attraction to children may be the result of neurodevelopmental perturbations, evidenced by increased non-right-handedness, childhood head injuries resulting in unconsciousness, lower IQ, and reduced height. While previous studies have found evidence in support of this theory (Blanchard et al., 2002; Blanchard et al., 2007; Fazio, 2018) most, if not all have been conducted using forensic samples of those with sexual attraction to children. This means that rather than detecting markers of sexual attraction to children, these studies may instead be detecting markers for the commission of sexual offenses. Researchers have since tried to control for criminality by comparing forensic samples of those with sexual attraction to children with teleiophilic (i.e., the sexual attraction to adults) men who have also committed criminal offenses (Fazio et al.,

2017). However, as Jahnke et al. (2021) state, "... just as increased levels of antisociality among teleiophilic men who have sexually offended would not lead us to support that being antisocial is a characteristic feature of teleiophilia, the problem remains that the detected markers for neurodevelopmental perturbations may be more relevant for pedohebephilic men who sexually offended than for pedohebephilia per say" (pg. 5-6).

Another issue with the previous studies that Jahnke et al. (2021) point out is the absence of specificity of the neurodevelopmental markers associated with sexual attraction to children. For example, non-right-handedness has also been previously associated with non-heterosexuality, alcohol use, depression, and anorexia nervosa (Denny, 2009, 2011; Lalumière et al., 2000; Tenconi et al., 2010.). It is possible then that factors other than sexual attraction may explain these neurodevelopmental markers.

In the present two studies, Jahnke et al. (2021) look at the differences in neurodevelopmental markers between community samples of men sexually attracted to children and to adults. Based on previous studies, they elected to specifically focus on the

following markers: non-right handedness; head injuries resulting in unconsciousness prior to the age of 13; height and previous sexual convictions. Both studies were similar in nature; Study 1 was conducted with German-speaking individuals as a feasibility study for the larger Study 2. With this in mind, the remainder of this review will focus on Study 2.

The total sample size for study 2 was 632; approximately half were recruited from B4U-ACT forums, and half from MTurk. Measures were administered as follows:

Viewing Time Measure of Sexual Interest. Participants viewed a shortened version of the stimulus material from the Not Real People set, including added images of children in early and late adolescence. For each stimulus, participants were prompted to indicate their attraction by endorsing one of the following responses: “Yes, this is a potential sexual partner for me,” or, “No, this is not a potential sexual partner for me.”

Self-reported Sexual Interests. Participants indicated their sexual attraction ratings to pre-pubescent males and females, adolescents in the early stages of puberty, and sexually mature adult men and women. Ratings were on a 10-point Likert scale.

Cognitive Ability. The 16-item International Cognitive Ability Resource Sample Test (ICAR) was

used as a measure of cognitive ability. The ICAR has been established as a reliable and valid measure of cognitive ability and has high convergent validity with the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS.) As the ICAR is self-administered, it has the added benefit of bypassing any clinician-bias an administrator may have toward those with sexual attraction to children.

Handedness. The Adapted Edinburgh Handedness Inventory was used to establish handedness.

Head Injuries. Participants were asked about head injuries they received that led to unconsciousness, both before and after the age of 13.

Sociodemographic Information. Participants self-reported their sex, age, educational achievement, height, and previous sexual convictions (for both contact and non-contact offenses.)

Participants were placed into one of three groups (Pedo-SO [pedohebephilic with no sexual offense convictions]; Pedo+SO [pedohebephilic with sexual offense convictions]; and T-SO [teleiophilic with no sexual offense convictions]) in two different ways: 1) based on their self-reported sexual attraction ratings; 2) based on their Viewing Time scores. There was good classification accuracy between the self-reported and viewing time-inferred sexual interests.

The analyses showed no significant differences in education level attained between T-SO, Pedo-SO, and Pedo+SO. Regarding age, the Pedo+SO group was significantly older than Pedo-SO group.

When considering grouping based on self-reported sexual attraction, there were no differences between the three groups with regard to height, handedness, and head injuries before/after 13. However, Pedo-SO/+SO achieved significantly higher IQ scores than Tel-SO. Further, Pedo-SO scored higher IQ scores and were significantly taller than the Pedo+SO group. When considering grouping based on Viewing Time scores, none of the markers reached statistical significance.

As the Pedo+SO group was significantly older than the Pedo-SO group, the authors conducted further analyses to determine if age was a confounding variable: "...the evidence for age confounds was weak" (pg. 25).

In sum, the authors' results could not find support for the neurodevelopmental perturbation hypothesis in a community sample of men sexually attracted to children; in the same vein, the findings also cannot disprove the hypothesis. Rather, the authors suggest that their results "positively commensurate with the notion that indicators of neurodevelopmental perturbations such as, particularly, height and intelligence are linked to (self-reported) offending

status when pedophilic interest is kept constant in group comparisons" (pg. 26).

One must note the authors' comprehensive description of their methodologies. For both studies, Jahnke et al. give a nearly step-by-step account of all decision-making processes, from their choice in measures, to their data analyses. Their method and data analysis sections are detailed in such a way that it would be possible for another researcher to replicate the study with their own data; this is something which is highly important given the current replication crisis in psychology, but oftentimes overlooked. Any researcher looking to be more transparent with their work should look to Jahnke et al. (2021) as an example.

The authors offer a fresh look at the idea that sexual attraction to children, or pedohebephilia, is associated with neurodevelopmental perturbation markers. While the data are not conclusive, given the results of this study and several studies before it, it seems more likely that these markers are indicative of something other than sexual attraction, such as antisociality. This may encourage researchers to consider or develop other theories of the etiology of sexual attraction to children. For example, there exist many other theories of sexual orientations that focus on evolution, heredity, learned behavior, and environmental exposures (e.g., see Rosario and Scrimshaw, 2014).

Some researchers question the usefulness of studies that focus on the etiology of sexual attraction to children, especially with regards to therapeutic goals. In response, one can note that it is common for individuals to question why they are attracted to who they are, and this may be even more true for those with sexual attraction to children. The recognition that one has an attraction to children can elicit many different feelings, including fear, confusion, denial, and self-hatred. Research on the etiology of attraction to children may help people

come to terms with their attraction and to recognize it not as a character flaw, but a valid part of who they are. Perhaps more importantly, continued research in this area could be used to better educate the public on sexual attraction to children and potentially decrease stigma. Instead of seeing sexual attraction to children as a choice, the public may come to recognize it as an orientation, something which is generally accepted within the forensic sexology field (e.g., Seto, 2012).

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Attraction to Physical and Psychological Features of Children in Child-Attracted Persons

Martijn, F. M., Babchishin, K. M., Pullman, L. E., Roche, K., and Seto, M. C.

The Journal of Sex Research: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2021.1948957>

This article by Martijn et al. (2021) seeks to determine what features in children are most attractive to adults who are sexually attracted to them. Mild correlations are made between some of those features and the adults' falling in love with children, and also between some features and the adults' sexual offending, but the conclusions reached shed little new light on these matters.

The authors use the term child-attracted persons (CAPs) rather than minor-attracted persons (MAPs) as the majority of participants in this study were persons attracted to prepubescent children, though many of them were also attracted to older children and/or adults.

The researchers found that, while many studies have been done on the features that make adults sexually attractive to one another, very few exist on the specific features that adults find attractive in children. In fact, only three such studies have been undertaken, one qualitative and two quantitative. The present study seeks to deepen our understanding of the qualities that make adults attracted to children, and specifically to children aged 11 and under.

Martijn et al. recruited 274 CAPs online; they were chosen out of 388 who responded to an invitation to

participate. The researchers were primarily interested in persons attracted to children under 11, but 7% of the sample were attracted only to children 12 and over. Female and gender-diverse CAPs were excluded since little prior research has been done on them. Of the 274 CAPs, 65% were under 40, 86% were white, 65% were employed, and 77% were not currently in a relationship with another person. The CAPs were first asked five identifying questions: 1) what are the ages of the children to whom you are attracted? 2) are you attracted only to children or also to adults? 3) are you attracted to boys, to girls, or to both? 4) have you ever fallen in love with a child? and 5) have you ever committed a sexual offense?

In categorizing CAPs, the study defines pedophilia as attraction to ages 0-11, hebephilia as attraction to ages 12-14, and ephebophilia as attraction to ages 15-18. (The article later grants that chronological ages are not always accurate measures of sexual maturity.) The study divides CAPs into a large number of categories: pedophilic, pedohebephilic, pedohebe-ephebophilic, hebephilic, hebe-ephebophilic, and pedo-ephebophilic. For the sake of this review, we will abbreviate them respectively as P, PH, PHE, H, HE, and PE. Of the 274 participants, 26% were P, 41% were PH, 26%

were PHE, 2% were H, 5% were HE, and 1% were PE.

The researchers were primarily interested in the specifically pedophilic attraction of the CAPs since these were asked about the features they found attractive in children 11 and under. Even though two-thirds of the CAPs (41% PH + 26% PHE + 1% PE) were not exclusively attracted to prepubescent children, no indication is given as to the degree to which they were P, H, and/or E. The CAPs were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale the degree of their attraction to different ages (0-3, 4-7, 8-11, 12-14, 15-18), but no information regarding these measurements is offered either in the body of the article or in the supplementary materials. Such information would have been interesting and useful.

Regarding exclusivity of attraction to children, the study found that 79% of the participants (n = 217) were attracted to adults as well as to children. This elevated percentage might appear surprising, but the study does not comment on its significance. It does note, however, that 119 of these 217 non-exclusive CAPs were strongly attracted to children, 62 were preferentially attracted to children, and 36 were equally attracted to children and adults.

Participants were also asked whether they were attracted only to boys, only to girls, or to both boys and girls. The study found that 27% were attracted only to boys, 24% only to girls, and 49% to both.

Regarding CAPs attracted to both boys and girls, no indication is given as to whether the attraction was equal for both or more for one gender than the other. When asked whether they had ever fallen in love with a child, 74% of the CAPs responded that they had. The study found, as hypothesized, that those who experienced falling in love were moved more by the children's psychological features than by the physical ones. The attraction thus had a romantic quality.

The final identifying question measured histories of sexual offending. Of the 274 participants in the study, 41 had been convicted of a sexual offense. Of these, 31 had committed an offense related to child pornography, 5 had committed a non-contact offense (like voyeurism), and 15 had been “arrested, charged, or convicted” for a contact sexual offense. Of this last group, it is not clear whether all were actually “convicted” as opposed to simply being arrested or charged. Furthermore, as the study later notes, it is not clear whether the contact offenses were against children or adults.

In the quantitative component of the study, the researchers inquired about 9 physical features and 12 psychological features of children. Unfortunately, they made the mistake of listing the features in a very general fashion (slimness, complexion, curiosity, charm, etc.) As a result, almost all participants found all the features highly attractive, rating them 4 or 5 on a Likert scale of 5. This

universally high rating was problematic for the researchers, who were interested in discovering whether any correlations existed between the identifying characteristics of the CAPs and the physical or psychological features of children they found attractive. The study found only small effect sizes in almost all the categories and was consequently able to draw few conclusions in this regard.

After supplying identifying information and responding to the quantitative part of the survey, participants were invited to describe specific features that they personally found attractive in children. A majority (52%, $n = 143$) took advantage of the invitation, and almost all of these (136) named physical features, while some 44 named psychological features. The researchers classified the 352 physical suggestions into 6 overarching themes, further subdivided into 29 descriptive codes. The 94 psychological suggestions were classified into 5 overarching themes, divided into 10 descriptive codes.

Two charts are offered listing the themes, the descriptive codes, and some direct quotes from the submissions of the participants. The researchers distinguish between three “styles of response”: the “simple” consisted of just a word or two (hair, smile, gait, boldness, playfulness, sensitivity); the “descriptive” offered a bit more detail (bright eyes, lack of body hair, desire for adventure, lack of

drama); and the “lyrical” expressed enthusiasm (“I absolutely adore the way boys smile, that big cheeky grin or that small, delicate smile”; “I love that boys are so themselves and haven’t learned to be fake like adults always seem to be”).

The fact that almost all the CAPs gave very high ratings to almost all the attractive features in children frustrated two principal aims of the researchers: 1) determining whether any correlation existed between certain features of children and the likelihood of adults’ falling love with them, and 2) determining whether any correlation existed between certain features of children and the likelihood of adults’ committing sexual offenses against them. The 74% of CAPs who had fallen in love with a child tended to rate psychological features only slightly higher than CAPs who had not, and there was no difference in the two groups’ rating of physical features. The researchers express surprise that the small number of participants who had a sexual offense history rated physical features slightly lower and psychological features slightly higher than those without such a history.

In listing the limitations of their study, the researchers indicate that due to issues with the study design, the correlations were inconclusive. Another important failing of this study is its somewhat simplistic view of attraction. Whether the attraction is to children, to adolescents, or to adults, it inevitably depends on a highly complex combination

of qualities in the attractive person, not just particular features. The researchers suggest as much in the very last sentence of the article: “The results of this study point toward attraction to children being a complex and multifaceted sexual and

romantic phenomenon, as we find with the complex construct of sexual orientation for gender.” It is to be hoped that the researchers will be able conduct future studies with a more sophisticated design to further investigate this interesting topic.

Toward a Theory of Chronophilic Sexual Orientation in Heterosexual Men

Schmidt, A. F. and Imhoff, R. (2021)

In book: Sexual Deviance: Understanding and Managing Deviant Sexual Interests and Paraphilic Disorders (pp.41-52), Wiley-Blackwell

The precise ways sexual orientation is experienced is still a major lacuna in the field of sexual psychology, and gives room to much controversy and anxiety within the profession and out. This controversy and anxiety are greatly amplified when it comes to the study of chronophilia and its relation to the prevention of sex offenses. A new book chapter by Schmidt and Imhoff, called “Toward a Theory of Chronophilic Sexual Orientation in Heterosexual Men” aims to formulate a conceptual basis for sexual attractions to people within a certain age category and make sense of this misunderstood phenomenon.

The obvious implications for this research are geared towards understanding the nature of attraction to minors though, as the authors state, before a theory can be posited about how certain men experience an attraction to minors, one first needs to understand how men experience an attraction to adults. Hence, this study focused primarily on heterosexual teleiophilic men. Applying the knowledge that the male sexual selection process is oriented around key visual cues or traits, the question was hypothesizing what conglomeration of these traits on a woman would be most appealing on average to a typical teleiophilic man. The authors settled on four

physical characteristics in females which they divided into two stimulus sets, signifying a) neoteny and youthfulness (large eyes in relation to face size; large head in relation to shoulders) and b) maturity (pronounced waist-to-hip ratio WHR; large breasts). In terms of reproductive viability, features of maturity such as large breasts and a small WHR should indicate the onset of puberty and birthing capacity, while features of youthfulness such as smooth skin and neotenous facial features should indicate many remaining years of reproductive viability and the absence of menopause. As all of these features peak at different stages in a female’s development - neoteny is highest in childhood, WHR is lowest between ages 16 and 21, and breast size begins increasing at puberty and can continue throughout adulthood - the authors surmise that heterosexual teleiophilic men are drawn towards what they call an “optimal combination” of these traits that puts the general age range of their desired targets at young adulthood.

From this, one could speculate that heterosexual men with “abnormal” or “socially deviant” chronophilias have certain inoperative detectors which disproportionately focus their mate selection criteria to one or another extreme. For instance, heterosexual

male pedophilia could result from a fully functioning interest in youthfulness with a minimal or absent interest in maturity, leaving them with a predominant attraction to children and females in early adolescence. Furthermore, some of these men may even experience an aversion to maturity indicators. Meanwhile, mesophilic men (i.e., men primarily attracted to middle-aged adults [Seto, 2016]) would have significantly less interest in youthful facial features, smooth skin, and WHR, while exhibiting a strong interest in large breasts (as breast size is known to increase slightly with age even into middle adulthood).

The first step in testing this theory is to see if this framework of balancing youthfulness with maturity offers a satisfying explanation of teleiphilia in heterosexual men. If it does, then theoretically if one was able to maximize both youthfulness and maturity in a single female, the end result would be most visually appealing to the typical teleiphilic man (i.e., man attracted to adults (Blanchard, 2000)). Since such a figure could hardly exist in nature, to test this prediction the authors created a series of images taking influence from the hentai art style. In each image, they increased or decreased one of the four modules (breast size, WHR, eye size, head size). Ultimately, 225 images were created for both stimulus sets: youthfulness and maturity, making 450 in total. 25 heterosexual teleiphilic men were then asked to rate their attraction to each image.

The results of this survey wound up confirming some of what the authors suspected. WHR turned out to be the feature with the most pronounced effect, and the men reported increased attraction to the images as WHR shrunk. Enlarging the breasts also increased the respondent's feelings of attraction, though the effect was not as significant. Not all predictions were supported, however. The two signifiers of youthfulness which the authors attempted to recreate in these images had a quadratic instead of a linear effect on reports of attractiveness. Eye size was divided into three categories: small, regular, and large. Likewise with head size: regular, large, and extra-large. The assumption was that the highest of these values would indicate the most youthfulness, and therefore glean the most reports of attraction, though it was the middle value of both of these features which were rated most attractive.

In explanation, the authors speculate that perhaps this naturally unusual combination of features appearing at once produced an overall effect that was more unnerving than attractive. In particular, the authors reference the design of the "large" eyes which were used in these images. These eyes were not only large but also distinctly less shaded compared to the other two eye sizes. This may have unintentionally made the females in the drawings look uncanny as opposed to young. Issues in the research design such as this may prove challenging to mend, as modules of attractiveness localized in the face are extraordinarily intricate and may not be

as easy to adjust in a fictitious image as other features like WHR and breast size.

Another detail worth contemplating within this line of inquiry, though this was not mentioned in the study, is the oft occurring emotional and social preference for people within a certain age range which often coincides with that person's chronophilic interests. One possibility, as it relates to minor-attracted people, is that a person's sexual attraction to children and early adolescents due to inoperative maturity detectors may influence that person's social and emotional preference to make it correspond to their age of attraction. Or perhaps it is vice versa - that an emotional and social preference for children and early adolescents may annul a person's maturity detectors in the mate selection

process. These possibilities must remain speculative for now, but hopefully, social scientists will consider this conundrum in future research.

Overall, the authors offer keen insight on the role of age in a person's sexual attraction, note the difference between sexual orientation/motivation and sexual behavior, and take long strides towards demystifying chronophilia. As the authors note, there are some noticeable hitches in the framework of this research design that need to be remedied before it can be used to amass reliable data on sexual desires on a large scale. Still, with some fine-tuning, this has the potential to provide us with a great new metric for understanding the inner workings of attractions to minors.

Stigmatization of Paraphilias and Psychological Conditions Linked to Sexual Offending

Lehmann, R. J. B., Schmidt, A. F. and Jahnke, S. (2021)

The Journal of Sex Research: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2020.1754748>

The stigma faced by minor attracted people (MAPs) is the premise of Lehmann, Schmidt & Jahnke's (2021) paper. It builds upon earlier work by one of the authors (Jahnke & Imhoff, 2015) which studied the stigma directed towards individuals who are sexually attracted to prepubescent children when compared to other groups associated in the public consciousness with criminality or immorality. The present research widens the scope of comparison, by investigating public attitudes towards people with a pedophilic sexual attraction, as well as other paraphilias and psychological conditions linked to sexual offending.

The paper outlines two studies which collected survey data in Berlin, Germany. The first (n=720) explored public attitudes towards individuals with pedophilia, defined in the article as a sexual interest in prepubescent children, sexual sadism, defined as the derivation of pleasure from the physical suffering and humiliation of another, and antisocial tendencies, defined as disregarding the rights of others. The authors include anti-social behavior as it is a risk factor for sexual offending, despite not being of a sexual nature itself. The second study (n=210) compared public attitudes towards pedophilia with attitudes towards other paraphilias which are documented in the literature as rare, more

“deviant” than sexual sadism (when sexual sadism is enacted consensually), and likely to have associations with criminality in the public consciousness. These other paraphilias were necrophilia and zoophilia, defined as a dominant sexual interest in corpses and a dominant sexual interest in animals, respectively.

Within both studies, attitudes were measured across 3 areas: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Cognitive included beliefs and stereotypes about a person's dangerousness towards adults and children and the controllability of a paraphilic interest. Affective assessed fear, anger, and pity towards individuals with the respective paraphilias. Behavioral encompassed discriminatory behavioral intentions towards individuals. For instance, “X would be accepted in my neighborhood”, “X, should be incarcerated” and “I would accept X as colleagues at work”. Despite choosing these conditions due to their links to sexual offending, participants were made aware that the groups they were rating had not committed any crimes.

Overall, study 1 (pedophilia vs. sexual sadism vs. antisocial tendencies) replicated the findings of the earlier Jahnke et al. (2015) study, but in a larger sample. It found a stronger overall public stigma

directed towards people attracted to children, except for the ratings of controllability and dangerousness to adults. Findings from study 2 (pedophilia vs. necrophilia vs. zoophilia) found that 90% of people endorsed the statement that pedophiles pose the greater threat to children and adolescents compared to a threat to adults (comparatively, 25% endorsed the same statement for necrophilia and 15% for zoophilia). In terms of affective reactions, pedophilia received more feelings of anger: approximately 70% of the sample, compared to 25% and 46% endorsing the anger reaction for necrophilia and zoophilia respectively. Generally, pedophiles were perceived as less in control of their attraction and more dangerous to children, and they had more fear and social distance directed towards them.

Overall, the findings from both studies suggest that when compared to other conditions which, according to the DSM-5, involve “deviant sexual fantasies” and carry the potential for harm if enacted upon, pedophilia emerges as more stigmatized. While the inclusion of other stigmatized paraphilias as a comparison with pedophilia can be theoretically justified, the execution of this comparison is limited. For instance, only pedophilia had an item directly related to its sexual interest (i.e., harm to children and adolescents). There was no comparable item for zoophilia or necrophilia (e.g., asking about potential harm to animals or wrongdoing towards corpses). It arguably makes sense for participants to rate pedophilia more highly in relation to the potential of

harm to children when compared to the other groups, and as such a meaningful comparison is missing and provides a limited utility to the overall findings of the study.

A shortcoming of this study is the underlying assumption that the conditions addressed (pedophilia, necrophilia, zoophilia, and anti-social tendencies) are considered risk factors for offending and or re-offending. It is difficult to ascertain whether this consideration is related to the literature which outlines these conditions as risk factors, or whether it is based on participants’ perceptions of these paraphilias as risk factors. However, this literature itself is disproportionate. While research exists that outlines pedophilia as a risk factor for re-offending (Hanson, 2005; Mann, 2010; Helmus, 2015), as a precipitating factor for offending (Seto, 2019) there is less evidence (Bartels, 2019). In addition, the evidence base for necrophilia and zoophilia being linked to offending behavior is limited, as mentioned by the authors themselves.

Adding to this confusion is the behavioral levels measure, which states that individuals had “so far not broken the law” (emphasis added). Such formulations reinforce existing prejudices and stigmatizing assumptions about MAPs, which could prime participants to expect subsequent offending, thus reflecting the stronger negative attitudes towards pedophilia. The distinction between “offending” and “non-offending” MAPs becomes

obfuscated when thinking about what the term “pedophilia” evokes in the public consciousness. Within these studies, it is difficult to ascertain participants’ own knowledge, judgments, and biases. However, it is the authors’ assertion that pedophilia is stigmatized more heavily than other paraphilias, irrespective of actual criminal behavior. In addition, the advantage of including paraphilias that are (supposedly) similar in terms of rarity could also be a disadvantage; the comparison groups of zoophilia and necrophilia are likely less known in public consciousness and underdeveloped in the academic literature. The prominence of pedophilia as a powerful social taboo may put it at a disadvantage when compared to other paraphilias.

At various points in the article, the authors consider explanations for the unique level of stigma directed toward MAPs. Much insight into this question could be gained from a widening of perspective. The authors offer as an explanation the aforementioned association of pedophilia with offending or reoffending, and the potential for serious harm to children. It would be helpful to compare stigma directed toward MAPs with stigma directed toward those with addictions or other conditions associated with non-sexual behaviors or offenses that can severely harm children (e.g., physical or emotional abuse). Research shows that non-sexual abuse is no less harmful or common than sexual abuse (Spinazzola et al., 2014). If people with such conditions are stigmatized at levels similar to those

attracted to children, then support for the authors’ explanation would be strengthened. If not, then the question becomes: why are conditions associated with sexual offenses stigmatized more than those associated with other kinds of severe harm to children? A consideration of sociocultural factors, such as those found in the moral panic literature (e.g., Jenkins, 1998; Lancaster, 2011), could be quite productive.

Nevertheless, aspects of the study design were well-thought through with consideration given to factors critiqued in other psychological research. Firstly, the study gains strength as a replication study, given the need in social sciences for producing replicable findings. This was enabled and enhanced by the authors’ use of the same scales as previously used in the Jahnke and Imhoff (2015) paper, meaning that the concepts that were being measured had the same operational definitions as before. In addition to its methodological replicability, the notion of reinvestigating the phenomenon of publicly held attitudes towards pedophilia assists in maintaining an up-to-date narrative on this population. Secondly, special consideration was given to sampling, which utilized a combination of students and the general public, thus giving a diversity of ages and backgrounds. Consideration was also afforded to the theoretical limitations of the first study (Jahnke & Imhoff, 2015) by including groups which may be more similarly perceived in public consciousness (on

sexual and moral grounds) rather than other stigmatized groups that may hold little to no similarity (e.g., those with alcohol dependence - used in the original study). In this sense, it is one of the closest empirical works that illustrate that even where other paraphilias that may have similar characteristics in terms of rarity, perceived “sexual deviance”, and the potential of harm to others (if enacted upon), pedophilia receives higher levels of discrimination.

While the paper is novel in investigating the attitudes towards other paraphilias, its implications are unclear. The article’s primary focus is on what popular attitudes imply for the stigmatization of people attracted to children, however its focus on (potential) offending in the article narrative, possible priming in the methods to link pedophilia to offending behavior, and its perspective limited by excluding conditions associated with non-sexual

abuse of children make its conclusions unclear. Future research could compare attitudes toward MAPs with those toward people with non-sexual conditions associated with non-sexual offending or non-sexual abuse of children and consider sociocultural explanations for the stigmatization of MAPs. It could also use alternative terms such as “minor attracted person” to mitigate some of the negative stereotypes surrounding pedophilia and see if this has an impact on attitudes. There is a clear need to move away from research that focuses on pedophilia in the same context as sexual offending. What this article does highlight is a wider issue within the field of how we can meaningfully demarcate the public’s perception of pedophilia’s link to sexual offending, versus what is increasingly understood as a sexual orientation within the academic community, both of which provide implications for how we frame future research.

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Men with paraphilic interests and their desire to interact with a sex robot
Marečková A., Androvicova R., Bártová K., Krejčová I., & Klapilová K. (2021)
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This article by Marečková et al. aims to explore the desire for Sex Robot Experience (SRE) among two target samples of men with “paraphilic interests” (“PI groups”), namely, men with sexual interest in minors, in one case, and men with sexual interest in non-consent/ violence”, in the other case. A control group representative of the national Czech population of men was also included. The authors found greater desire for SRE in the target groups rather than in the control group, with men with a PI in minors being more open to the idea of SRE. This is overall a quite interesting piece in a field that is both nascent and significantly under-researched, presumably not only because it is new, but also because it is perceived as highly controversial. This study, which examines whether individuals with paraphilic interests want to interact with a sex robot, is important in the broader context of research that concerns whether sex robots can be of use in efforts to “prevent actual sexual crimes” or in the “clinical management of paraphilias” (p. 2).

The authors recruited a representative control sample of 806 Czech men online, through a sociodemographic agency. For their target groups, they recruited 48 men with PI in minors and 57 men with PI in non-consent/ violence, again online. Inclusion criteria for the PI groups were determined

by questions based on a five-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from “definitely not” to “definitely yes”. The questions to determine whether men qualified for inclusion in the group with PI in minors were whether the men found sexually arousing “intimate contact with a minor without physical signs of adolescence (up to 12 years of age)” or “[i]ntimate contact with pubescent girls/boys (minors with signs of adolescence aged 12–15 of age” (p. 4). Inclusion in the group with PI in non-consent/ violence was decided based on questions about whether respondents found any of the following arousing: “[c]omplete immobilization of a stranger (female or male), potentially using violence, and preventing them from resisting you”; “stalking and seizing a stranger”; “sodomasochistic activities involving physical or mental subordination or humiliation”, and “sodomasochistic activities that involve beating or other forms of torture” (p. 4). Respondents had to reply “yes” or “definitely yes” to these questions in order to be included in the PI groups. All participants (i.e., control sample and target samples) were administered a questionnaire which asked them to express whether they agreed with the statement “I desire sexual experience with a sex robot/doll” (p. 3) and had to indicate their agreement using a 4-category scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The results

showed that desire for SRE was expressed by 18% of participants in the control group, 37.5% of participants in the group with PI in minors, and 26% of participants with PI in non-consent/ violence. The authors mention that, although differences did not reach a level of "practical significance" across all groups, the results still showed that the group with PI in minors expressed a relatively greater desire for SRE.

This study is important in that it looks into whether men who are attracted to minors would want to interact sexually with a sex-robot. As recognized by the authors, this willingness and self-motivation is "a prerequisite for the currently extensively developing discussions about the use of sex robots in clinical management of paraphilic disorders" (p. 8). However, it is important to differentiate between a desire to interact with a sex robot in general, for whatever reason, and a desire to use sex robots specifically in the context of "therapy" or "clinical management" of a "paraphilic disorder". The researchers acknowledge that this is a limitation of their study, and this is an area for future research to explore. To assume that persons attracted to minors would -or should- only desire to have an experience with sex robots in the context of "managing" their "paraphilic interests" is problematic and fails to take into consideration the depth, complexities, and (positive) impact that such an experimentation might have on someone's sexuality, outside the scopes of "clinical management" and "prevention".

Relatedly, it is worth asking whether there were any implications resulting from the fact that the participants of the control group were engaged in a project called "Love and intimacy in the Czech population", whereas the participants of the target groups were asked whether they would want to participate in "a newly launched project of primary prevention of sexual offending in the Czech Republic" (p. 4). To their credit, the researchers acknowledge that the differences in "recruitment strategies" are the first limitation of their study (p. 8). However, if one and the same study was framed as part of a "love and intimacy" project in the case of the control group, while being presented as part of an effort to prevent sexual offending in the case of the target groups, then this is quite problematic. Such a discrepancy would seem to assume that a desire for SRE is seen as part of men's love lives, unless they are persons with "paraphilic interests," in which case SRE is only intelligible in the context of prevention. In any case, it is not clear how the study was presented to potential participants before their recruitment, and the article could benefit from more clarity in this regard.

Importantly, the authors briefly reflect on the differences between sex dolls and sex robots, with the latter including more interactive possibilities and features than the former, and they recognize that they should have accounted for those differences in their questionnaire, instead of grouping sex dolls and robots together in the same question. Considering

that the main concept running throughout the piece is SRE, and the very title of the article only mentions sex robots, it is indeed worth wondering why sex dolls were included in the questionnaire in the first place, and without even differentiating between them and a sex robot. This must have been confusing for participants. Of course, many of the arguments about the potential uses of sex robots apply to sex dolls as well, but there are significant differences between the two, which should have been considered for the purposes of this study.

Another critical point to raise is the fact that only men were recruited for the purposes of this study. The authors justify this by mentioning that they "focus solely on men because paraphilic interests seem far more prevalent amongst men than women" (p. 3), but this ignores growing research evidencing

the existence of female MAPs – see the three articles on this topic reviewed here – and offers no discussion on why this tendency persists. If future research utilizes secure and anonymous online recruitment methods which can reach and be tailored to a larger, more general audience, then more females with “paraphilic interests” might come forward. Despite its limitations, most of which are recognized to some degree by the authors, this is a significant study that adds another step in the exploration of the important topic of sex robots and whether they can be viewed as "a legal surrogate of [the] desired partner" (p. 3) for persons who are attracted to minors. Of course, in this case, questions around the actual "legality" of child-like sex robots across different jurisdictions remain of pivotal importance.

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.

Harriet Dymond, PhD Student University of Nottingham



Harriet Dymond is currently pursuing a doctorate in Forensic Psychology at the University of Nottingham, England, a professional doctorate combining both research and applied practice. Many years before studying psychology at the undergraduate level, Harriet's interest in the minor attracted community was sparked when she was a teenager, watching a documentary entitled "The Paedophile Next Door" that aired on mainstream television in the UK one evening. Harriet recalled feeling incredibly drawn to the documentary, whereby a minor attracted person in the community spoke about their attraction and experience to the documentarian. It made Harriet consider several thoughts and questions about the way society presents and responds to those who are attracted to minors. This then became her main motivator to pursue psychology as a discipline.

Harriet pursued an undergraduate degree in psychology, followed by a Master's degree in Forensic Psychology at the University of Nottingham. There, while considering a topic for her thesis, Harriet was determined to understand the experience of minor-attracted people in the UK and conducted a qualitative project investigating this. Harriet found the project so rewarding and insightful that she decided long before its completion that she would continue her academic and practical career as a psychologist by helping this population any way she could.

Following the aforementioned project's publication, Harriet began her doctorate and first established contact with B4U-ACT in 2019, to discuss research prospects. For her doctoral research, Harriet wished to conduct research into concepts and issues above and beyond the forensic literature she had been accustomed to seeing, and collaboratively with B4U-ACT, designed a project investigating the role of self-acceptance on the mental health and well-being of MAPs. The data is currently undergoing analysis and Harriet is optimistic about submitting it for publication and continuing to promulgate the importance of collaborative research with B4U-ACT.

Harriet feels fortunate to be involved in the B4U-ACT academic community alongside her work as a lecturer and feels privileged to have been trusted with the experiences and feelings of brave members of the MAP community.

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/?event=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-2/>)