

B4QR

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



It is again with personal and organizational pride and enthusiasm that I introduce the beginning of the sixth year of B4U-ACT's quarterly research review journal. SIX YEARS!

When I co-founded B4U-ACT 22 years ago, our goal was simply to connect Maryland MAPs with Maryland therapists who would provide welcoming, non-stigmatizing therapy focused on the MAPs' well-being. I never imagined that we would have international recognition and participation. I certainly didn't think we would produce a research review journal for six years, with MAPs as editor-in-chief, members of the editorial board, and among the research reviewers. It is truly revolutionary that MAPs now have a voice in the research on

them. It is also very encouraging to see the number of recent research articles focusing on the lived experiences and well-being of MAPs. It is important for everyone involved to recognize how far we have come in 22 years!

During this time in history, when there is such extreme polarization and hatred of people who are perceived to be different than the majority or the in-control group, it is so important to have scientific research about the realities of the minority groups. It is vital to both preserve and amplify the voices of minority group members.

Just as B4U-ACT has made incremental changes over the years, so too, in our efforts to continue improving the quality and diversity of our reviews within B4QR, we have made a few changes to how we conduct reviews. For a more detailed description of these changes, please see the following Introduction by Allen Bishop, our Editor-in-Chief.

Any researcher interested in joining our MAP-Research email group should contact Allen Bishop at science@b4uact.org. We also host a monthly online discussion group, "Dialogue on Therapy," involving therapists, researchers, students, and MAPs. We have guest researchers who come to present their work at some of these monthly meetings. If interested in participating in these discussions, contact Richard Kramer at rkramer@b4uact.org.

I want to thank the editor-in-chief, Allen Bishop, the other journal editors, and 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 readers of B4QR will tell others about it to increase readership of this unique review journal.

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

Welcome to the sixth volume of B4QR. This new volume marks the completion of five full years of our journal's history: half a decade of reviewing articles dedicated to minor-attracted people (MAPs), with a focus on core issues that are meaningful to MAPs themselves, such as mental health and stigmatization. Five years of B4QR represent 116 reviewed articles, 45 reviewers, 19 honored young scholars, 10 editors, 1 designer, and 1 editor-in-chief. Our journal has been read more than 3,000 times on the academic publication platform ResearchGate, where it has achieved a "Research Interest Score" in the 90th percentile of all accounts created since 2021. Our total readership is, of course, considerably higher when we include the thousands of additional views recorded on our own website.

We have taken this milestone as an opportunity to reflect on our practices and introduce a few adjustments to our review format. Feedback from members of our community – both readers and contributors – has suggested that our reviews have sometimes been quite extensive, occasionally approaching a level of detail that may lead readers to consult the original articles directly rather than our summaries of them. In response, we have decided to modestly streamline our reviews by reducing the target length from approximately 1,500 words to around 1,000. At the same time, we are placing greater emphasis on the critical dimension of our reviews, encouraging our reviewers to engage even more than before with both the strengths and the limitations of the works under discussion. We hope that these adjustments will make our reviews more focused and engaging, and ultimately more useful to our readership.

This twentieth issue of our journal covers a very diverse range of subjects, beginning with an article on a theme which, to our knowledge, has not previously been addressed in the MAP literature. Jacobson, C., Laabdallaoui, and Jones (2025) explore the role of faith and religion in the lives of MAPs, both as a source of coping and support and as a potential source of conflict.

The researchers recruited 70 participants from an online support group. The survey results present a very heterogeneous picture of MAPs' relationship to faith and religion: 42.8% reported feeling "close" to God, while 21.4% felt "distant" and 35.7% reported no belief in a higher being. The authors argue that religion cannot be understood as uniformly harmful or uniformly protective for MAPs.

From spirituality, we move to love and romance. Julia Levitan continues her series of publications on the topic of romantic attraction in MAPs. With co-author Michael Seto, she recruited 317 MAPs online, with the goal of comparing MAPs' experiences of romantic attraction to that of the general population. Participants were asked to reflect on their feelings toward the child they were romantically attracted to "most recently," while they "still care(d) for them in a romantic way." Nearly all (95%) participants reported a romantic attraction, although the average intensity of the components of romantic love (intimacy, passion, and commitment¹) was slightly lower

¹ Based on Sternberg's "Triangular Love Scale."

than in the general population. As a possible explanation, the authors point to the various social, legal, and moral constraints that may limit the full development of these love components.

Our next article explores these different types of constraints that MAPs face on a daily basis, with an emphasis on the various “prosocial strategies” that MAPs employ to remain within the law. Phillipps and Willis (2025) analyzed the answers given by their 86 participants, recruited from the B4U-ACT and Virtuous Pedophiles forums, to the open-question “What helps you not to act on your sexual interests/attraction?” The authors grouped their findings under very creatively-named themes such as “Not being a psychopath helps” and “All those years in jail just wouldn’t be worth it.” Our reviewers note a certain tension between the authors’ anti-stigmatizing aims and some of their methodological choices that tend to reinforce that very stigma, such as the use of forensic models in the interpretation of their findings.

A similar tension is found in our fourth article, which also aims to identify features that distinguish law-abiding MAPs from MAPs who have committed sex crimes. Using an impressive sample of over 600 minor-attracted participants, Stewart and Campbell (2025) analyzed data that measure developmental, social, and psychological characteristics and compared MAPs with and without a criminal history. They also compared MAPs with non-MAPs who reported arousal to paraphilias such as voyeurism or sexual masochism. Their latent class analysis led them to categorize participants into three vulnerability-related groups – low (28%), moderate (46%), and high (25%) –, a questionable approach for a sample largely (96%) composed of MAPs without a reported criminal offense. The results showed no clear patterns in differences between the various groups.

Our last article by Jacobson et al. (2025) is a descriptive report on the impact of a virtual therapy group for MAPs. The five participants, aged between 26 and 76 and recruited from Virtuous Pedophiles, met once a week online with a therapist for structured sessions that focused on daily functioning and personal development. At the one-year mark, they completed a survey rating the perceived helpfulness of the program and answered open-ended questions about their motivations and experiences. All participants rated the program very favorably, describing it as a “safe space” and a valuable resource for stress management and self-understanding.

Our twentieth honored young scholar for this issue is Hannah Bolt, a psychology PhD student at the University of Portsmouth in the UK. Hannah’s research explores psychological experiences associated with attraction to children. Her dissertation project is still in its early stages, and she is co-developing it in partnership with B4U-ACT and other community voices, to ensure that its structure, tone, and goals are shaped by what MAPs themselves would identify as meaningful, ethical, and beneficial.

We hope that readers will find this revised review format both useful and engaging. As always, we welcome feedback from members of our community, whose engagement continues to play an important role in the development of the journal. Comments and suggestions may be sent to science@b4uact.org.

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

Reviewed Publications

Jacobson, C., Laabdallaoui, C., and Jones, L. (2025)

"Faith and Forbidden Feelings: A Brief Report on Religion as a Source of Conflict and Coping Among Minor-Attracted Persons"

International Journal of Psychosexual Therapy, Vol. 1 (1), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.64207/35v8f494>.

Jacobson et al. address an understudied but clinically salient question: how religion operates as a source of both meaning and distress for law-abiding adults who experience sexual and/or romantic attractions to minors. The lead author, Caleb Jacobson, is a clinical psychologist, sex/relationship therapist, and bible scholar, with an upcoming textbook on the topic.²

Here the authors seek to illustrate the intersections between religious identity, internalized stigma, coping strategies, and psychological well-being within this highly stigmatized population. Jacobson et al. (2025) situate their work within the broader literature on sexual minorities' experiences with religion, religious coping, and stigma, while highlighting the relative absence of empirical research focused specifically on minor-attracted persons (MAPs).

The study employs a mixed-methods, anonymous online survey of 70 self-identified MAPs. Participants were adults recruited from a private, moderated online community dedicated to

supporting the psychological well-being of law-abiding MAPs. While the authors do not name which online community they recruited from, their recruitment strategy nevertheless enabled them access to a hard-to-reach population while preserving anonymity. Eligibility criteria required participants to be at least 18 years old, and to report persistent sexual and/or romantic attraction to persons below the age of legal consent.

The survey instrument combined structured quantitative items with open-ended qualitative questions organized around five domains: (1) religious affiliation and level of observance, (2) theological interpretations of minor attraction, (3) perceived support or rejection within religious communities, (4) psychological and emotional outcomes associated with religious engagement, and (5) spiritual and secular coping strategies. Quantitative data assessed demographic variables and religious involvement using Likert-type scales. Qualitative responses were subjected to inductive thematic analysis to identify recurrent cognitive, affective, and behavioral patterns. The study procedures were approved by an institutional review

² The Therapist's Workbook to Understanding and Treating Minor Attracted Persons: Evidence-Based Clinical Interventions (Bloomsbury Publishing, estimated 2026).

board, and participation was voluntary and anonymous, with no identifying data collected.

The quantitative results reveal that religion is highly salient for many participants. Sixty percent of respondents identified as somewhat or very observant, suggesting that religious identity and practice continue to structure self-concept and life meaning for a substantial proportion of MAPs. At the same time, religious belief was not monolithic. In terms of “perceived relationship with God,” 42.8% reported feeling “very close” or “somewhat close,” while 21.4% felt “distant.” Additionally, 35.7% reported no belief in God, underscoring heterogeneity in spiritual orientation within this group.

Regarding theological interpretation of attraction, most participants (67.1%) rejected the idea that their experience constituted a divine “test from God,” while a minority endorsed or expressed ambivalence toward that framing. These findings suggest a spectrum of meaning-making strategies ranging from secular understandings, to religious narratives of trial, burden, or moral challenge. The qualitative analyses add depth to these numerical patterns and form one of the paper’s key contributions. Three primary themes emerge.

First, some participants framed their attraction in terms of moral fortitude and self-control. For these individuals, religion provided a vocabulary of struggle, discipline, and personal responsibility.

They described their experience as a burden or cross to bear, emphasizing abstinence, restraint, and moral purpose. This framing positioned religious belief as a structure supporting self-regulation and a source of meaning in participants' sexual orientations.

Second, the theme of coping through faith highlights religion’s potential benefits. Participants reported that prayer, scripture, and private spiritual practices helped regulate difficult emotions, reduce shame, and reinforce personal values. For some, religious identity provided affirmation of intrinsic worth and countered dehumanizing public narratives. Faith thus served as a psychological anchor, enabling resilience in the face of stigma and internal conflict.

Third, many participants described spiritual distress and religious rejection; here, religion functioned as a source of pain rather than support. Narratives included feelings of divine condemnation, fear of disclosure, exposure to hostile religious rhetoric, and experiences of exclusion from faith communities. Some participants reported spiritual despair or disaffiliation as a consequence of perceived incompatibility between their internal experiences and religious teachings. These accounts underscored religion’s potential to intensify shame and isolation.

The discussion integrates these findings with existing theoretical frameworks. The authors argue that religion cannot be understood as uniformly harmful or uniformly protective for MAPs; instead, its effects are mediated by individual beliefs,

community context, and specific coping strategies. Positive religious coping — meaning making, supportive spiritual practices, ethical anchoring — may promote psychological well-being and reinforce commitments to non-offending behavior. Conversely, negative religious experiences such as condemnation, doctrinal rigidity, and rejection can exacerbate internalized stigma and spiritual suffering.

From a clinical standpoint, the article emphasizes the importance of spiritually informed, trauma-sensitive psychotherapeutic approaches. The authors advocate an individualized exploration of how religious frameworks shape identity, coping, and emotional functioning. This recommendation is particularly important given that many MAPs report navigating multiple layers of stigma—having moral, legal, social and spiritual concerns. The article also gestures toward relevance for pastoral care, urging religious leaders to recognize the complex psychological needs of this population.

Overall, Jacobson et al. (2025) make a meaningful contribution to a sensitive area of inquiry characterized by substantial stigma and limited empirical data. The article's greatest strengths lie in its ethically careful recruitment of a hard-to-reach population, its integration of quantitative and qualitative findings, and its nuanced treatment of religion as neither inherently detrimental nor inherently protective. This balanced approach advances scholarly understanding and provides

practical implications for clinicians and pastoral professionals alike. Importantly, the authors also avoid making causal or behavioral claims. The study does not assess behavioral outcomes or risk, nor does it attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of religious coping strategies. Its contribution is descriptive rather than predictive; this restraint strengthens the credibility of the findings, as conclusions remain proportionate to the data collected.

Still, the authors are careful to note certain limitations of their study, including the use of self-selected samples which may over-represent MAPs who are engaged in peer-support communities. Likewise, absence of demographic data may have obscured differences pertaining to gender diversity, neurodiversity, race and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the study did not inquire into participants' specific religious traditions and doctrinal nuances that can shape MAPs' experiences with religion. To overcome these limitations in future research, the authors recommend applying standardized psychometric instruments and longitudinal designs, as well as diversifying samples and measuring for demographic differences.

Regarding the article's tone when discussing this highly marginalized population, the authors raise the bar for objective, humanizing research on MAPs, focusing on their personal subjectivities and psychosocial well-being rather than treating them

like objects for discipline and control. The authors contextualize attraction to minors within the broader literature on sexual minorities' experiences with religion, and avoid categorizing it as a psychiatric malformation or personal flaw.

Rates of some degree of religious affiliation among MAPs underscores the deep need for exploring religion's potential for providing community and comfort to MAPs, as well as its dangers of alienating them, exacerbating their internal stigma, and

publicly vilifying them. Future research should further explore (among other things) religious meaning-making among MAPs, the effects of disclosure within faith-based settings, the effects of religion on MAP youth, sexual and romantic satisfaction among religious MAPs, and religious leaders' competency in understanding and giving holistic support to MAPs in their church. This article is an important step in breaching this understudied area of research.

Levitan, J. and Seto M. C. (2025)

"Understanding romantic attraction to children through exploration of its patterns, components, and correlates"

The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality, Vol 34 (2), DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjhs-2025-0012>.

Research on minor-attracted persons (MAPs)³ has predominantly focused on sexual attraction, leaving romantic attraction, and how it might function for this population, largely neglected. Levitan and Seto (2025) provide an empirical foundation for this emerging area by examining the patterns, components, and correlates of romantic attraction to minors among MAPs. The authors note that romantic attraction is a near-universal human experience, yet no prior studies have directly compared sexual and romantic attraction patterns among MAPs in terms of intensity, age, gender, or exclusivity. Additionally, the experiential components of romantic feelings toward children have not been examined using validated measures. This study addresses these gaps, aiming to broaden understandings of attraction to children beyond the traditional focus on sexuality alone.

The study employed an anonymous online survey with 317 self-identified child-attracted men recruited

from several online forums for MAPs, including B4U-ACT. Respondents rated their sexual and romantic attraction across eight maturity stages on a 7-point scale; to ensure shared understanding and retain construct validity, the authors commissioned a medical illustrator to create standardized anatomical reference images. To assess romantic attraction components, respondents were asked to reflect on their feelings toward the child they were romantically attracted to "most recently," while they "still care(d) for them in a romantic way," using Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale (STLS), which measures intimacy, passion, and commitment. Additional measures captured potential correlates including emotional congruence with children, emophilia (tendency to fall in love easily and frequently), romantic beliefs, personality traits, internalized stigma, psychological distress, loneliness, suicidality, and detected offense history.

Nearly all respondents (95%) reported romantic attraction to children, with sexual and romantic attraction patterns largely aligned across age, gender, and exclusivity dimensions. Notably, sexual attraction intensity was rated statistically significantly higher than romantic attraction intensity. On the STLS, respondents endorsed all three components (intimacy, passion, and

³ The authors use the term CAP ("child-attracted persons") instead of MAP. They define CAPs as "individuals with intense and enduring pedophilic attraction to prepubescent children (roughly up to age 11) or hebephilic attraction to pubescent children (roughly ages 12–14)." Although they do not justify their rejection of the term MAP, it appears to be motivated by their exclusion of ephebophilia (attraction to older adolescents) from their study, which the term "minor" would technically include. In this review, we follow the more common practice of using the term MAP to refer to individuals attracted to pre- and/or early-pubescent minors, and we use a similarly narrow sense of "minors" to refer to children and early adolescents.

commitment) toward the child they felt most recently romantically attracted to, with intimacy emerging as the strongest ($M = 6.56$ out of 9, compared to 6.20 for passion and 6.14 for commitment). Notably, respondents' scores were lower than those typically reported in the general population, where means range from 7.01 to 7.78. However, this comparison is purely descriptive; the authors did not conduct formal inferential statistics or calculate effect sizes between the two samples.

Regarding correlates, the near-universal prevalence of romantic attraction precluded meaningful comparisons between those with and without such attraction; consequently, the analysis focused exclusively on the intensity of these feelings. Exclusivity of attraction emerged as the strongest unique correlate. Emotional congruence with children and (surprisingly) the personality trait of openness were the only other unique correlates identified, though both associations were weak. The authors note that the modest nature of the association with emotional congruence suggests that romantic attraction to children is a distinct phenomenon that cannot be reduced to congruence – challenging previous theoretical assertions.⁴ Finally, no other unique correlates reached significance, including psychological difficulties (such as loneliness) or, interestingly, offense history, as the analysis could

not discriminate between those with and without prior offenses at a rate better than chance.

This study represents the authors' second examination of romantic attraction in minor-attracted individuals, building on their 2024 qualitative investigation of lived experiences (Levitan et al., 2024). By employing Sternberg's Triangular Love Scale (STLS), widely used in the general population of adult-attracted individuals, the authors now offer a quantitative framework for measuring romantic attraction components in MAPs. While this scale was not designed for this population, its use reveals how MAPs' scores may be shaped by the constraints of their lived realities (limited opportunities for reciprocal relationships, inability to act on commitment) rather than reflecting inherent differences in how they experience romantic feelings. This highlights areas where future measures may need adaptation. The finding that respondents' overall STLS scores were lower than those typically reported in the general population, with intimacy emerging as the strongest component while passion and commitment lagged behind (a pattern consistent with the general population⁵), is itself instructive. It suggests that while MAPs form meaningful emotional bonds with children, the full development of romantic love components may be constrained by the legal, social, and moral realities of adult-child relationships. This pattern calls for

⁴ See Martijn et al. (2020), Mundy (2022), and Paquette & McPhail (2020).

⁵ Sorokowski et al. (2021) showed that, in the general population, intimacy is typically rated highest and passion tends to peak early before fading over time.

future development of measures specifically adapted to this population's unique context. Additionally, the study's design reflects a clear commitment to understanding MAP mental health, incorporating four separate well-being measures assessing internalized stigma, psychological distress, loneliness, and suicidality. Finally, the authors acknowledge that “romantic attraction to children may additionally have protective effects for some MAPs,” citing prior qualitative findings that many MAPs reported a wish to protect romantically loved children from harm, including harm they themselves might cause.⁶

Despite these strengths, the study's inclusion of offense risk analyses warrants critique. The authors combined respondents with contact offenses, non-contact offenses, and offenses involving illegal sexual images of minors into a single group of 37 individuals to increase statistical power. However, these offense types differ markedly in nature and associated risk profiles, making this aggregation analytically problematic. The resulting analysis found no significant association between romantic attraction intensity and offense history – the model performed at chance level. Yet the authors still report descriptive statistics broken down by offense type, noting that 58.8% of those with contact offenses reported romantic attraction to a child involved. Without adequate contextualization, such figures risk being extracted and misinterpreted as evidence that

romantic attraction predicts offending. This concern is not hypothetical; research showing high rates of violent or unconventional sexual fantasies among individuals who have committed a sex crime has been similarly misused to infer that such fantasies predict offending, conflating correlation with causation – a pattern so pervasive it has influenced criminal convictions.⁷

The null findings regarding psychological well-being also merit scrutiny. While this was not the study's primary aim (and thus may not warrant the same level of methodological rigor as the core analyses) the design still lacks construct validity. Respondents were asked to reflect on a recent romantic bond and separately complete mental health measures, but the negative psychological experiences qualitative research associates with romantic attraction to children – grief, shame, the pain of unfulfillability – were not embedded in the measurement context. Without prompts that situate respondents in these emotional realities, the study may have captured baseline mental health rather

⁶ Levitan et al., 2024.

⁷ Prentky et al. (1989) found that 83% of serial sexual murderers reported violent sexual fantasies, a finding widely cited as evidence that fantasy drives offending. Williams et al. (2009) documented how such research was misused in *Colorado v. Masters* (2001), where a defendant with no history of violence was convicted primarily based on sexually graphic drawings—the prosecution's expert cited fantasy behavior research from offender samples to argue his fantasies predicted he would offend. Williams et al. subsequently demonstrated that 95% of non-offending males reported at least one unconventional sexual fantasy, with only 38% of frequent fantasizers acting on them, cautioning that such fantasies “are rampant among non-offender samples and should not be solely used to infer corresponding deviant behavior” (p. 218).

than the psychological toll uniquely tied to romantic attraction.

While the inclusion of offense risk analyses may reflect second author Michael Seto's background in forensic psychology and the funding realities of that field, the study's core contribution stands. By demonstrating that MAPs score lower on the Triangular Love Scale than the general population, with intimacy (feelings of emotional closeness and

connection) strongest while commitment remain underdeveloped due to the constraints on reciprocal adult-child relationships, Levitan and Seto identify precisely where the MAP romantic experience diverges. This creates a promising foundation for future developments on romantic-attraction measures that more accurately reflect the lived realities of MAPs, rather than relying on frameworks designed for adult-attracted populations.

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Phillipps, M.E.R. and Willis, G.M.. (2025)

"I have no desire to hurt a child": prosocial navigation of sexual attraction to children"

Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2025.2546305>.

In this qualitative study, Phillipps and Willis (2025) investigate how adults sexually attracted to children navigate their attractions without committing child sexual offenses. Specifically, in response to the stigmatizing societal assumption that individuals with this attraction inevitably perpetrate abuse, the authors aim to document the diverse range of “prosocial navigation” strategies used by those who aim not to do so.

Data were drawn from an anonymous online survey targeting adults aged 18+ who reported sexual attraction to minors aged 14 and under. Participants were recruited through two online forums for individuals attracted to children that each oppose child sexual offending: Virtuous Pedophiles and B4U-ACT’s peer support forum. Of 195 respondents, 86 provided analyzable responses to the focal open-ended question: “What helps you not to act on your sexual interests/attraction?” These 86 respondents were aged 26 to 63 years old ($M = 36.35$; $SD = 14.22$), and were predominantly White/Caucasian (77.22%, $n = 61$). Sex or gender of respondents was not specified. Responses (ranging from two to 190 words) were analyzed using an inductive, critical realist approach to reflexive thematic analysis, in which salient themes in the data are derived from the data itself rather than imposed

by pre-existing theory. The authors include a detailed positionality statement, noting the first author’s roles as a criminal defence lawyer and parent, as well as the reflexive practices used to manage potential biases including maintaining a reflexive journal and discussing themes with colleagues.

Five overarching themes were generated. Theme 1 (“Not being a psychopath helps”) captured respondents’ emphasis on moral values, empathy, and a lack of desire to harm children as primary reasons for not offending. Some reported never experiencing “urges to offend”; others acknowledged desire but described knowledge of harm as overriding. Theme 2 (“All those years in jail just wouldn’t be worth it”) reflected fear of legal and social consequences as a secondary deterrent. Theme 3 (“I express my sexual feelings as fully as I can”) described sexual self-regulation strategies, including masturbation to fantasies and use of legal or “legally ambiguous” materials (e.g., animated depictions, dolls). Respondents often framed these practices as harm reduction tools that decreased risk of perpetrating contact or sexual material depicting children. Theme 4 (“Making a positive community centered around being good people”) concerned socio-emotional and emotional regulation strategies

to alleviate distress and enhance wellbeing, including seeking online peer support, selective disclosure, and therapeutic engagement. Theme 5 (“Hard lines in clear territory”) involved practical self-imposed boundaries, such as avoiding certain environments involving children, restricting online behavior, and distracting oneself with various activities.

In the discussion, the authors interpret findings through the Motivation-Facilitation Model of sexual offending (MFM⁸) and a protective factors lens (e.g., the Structured Assessment of Protective Factors against Sexual Offending or SAPROF-SO⁹). They argue that although respondents shared a motivating factor for offending—sexual attraction to children—they generally appeared to lack facilitating factors such as antisociality or self-regulation deficits, and instead demonstrated strong internal protective factors, such as empathy and self-control. The authors also highlight clinical implications, particularly the need for strengths-based, stigma-informed approaches, and caution against assuming all clients sexually attracted to children require offense-prevention strategies. The article additionally raises policy questions regarding the criminalization of fictional or nonhuman child sexual materials (described as artwork, 3D CGI, text stories, and/or even plastic dolls), suggesting their potential for harm reduction.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on prosocial navigation of sexual attraction to children. Its qualitative design allows for nuanced accounts that are often inaccessible in quantitative research. The authors’ reflexive transparency is a notable strength; the positionality statement and description of peer consultation enhance analytic credibility and demonstrate methodological care in a highly sensitive domain. The decision to use an anonymous online survey for data collection likely facilitated participation from individuals who might not engage in alternative methods (e.g., interviews) due to stigma and fear. Conceptually, the study helps disentangle attraction from behavior, reinforcing existing evidence that sexual attraction to children does not deterministically translate into abuse. Clinically, the emphasis on stigma, self-acceptance, and general mental health needs is well-supported.

At the same time, several limitations should be noted. First, recruiting participants exclusively from prosocial online forums introduces selection bias, in that some themes identified may reflect shared norms and discourse within these communities rather than solely individual processes of navigating attraction. Further, studies of individuals sexually attracted to children commonly recruit participants from these two online forums, in particular, and findings based on these largely demographically and morally homogeneous samples may limit generalizability¹⁰. The authors acknowledge this

⁸ Seto (2019).

⁹ Willis et al. (2022).

¹⁰ Roche et al., 2025.

limitation (writing that both forums “explicitly condone child sexual abuse” though they presumably meant ‘oppose’ child sexual abuse).

Second, the wording of the single focal survey question (“What helps you not to act on your sexual interests/attraction?”) warrants critique. While the study aims to challenge the stigma that equates attraction with abuse, this phrasing implicitly reinforces that association by implying that individuals sexually attracted to children must actively resist offending. Indeed, the authors find that some respondents who reported no desire to offend objected to the wording accordingly. Relatedly, there is similar tension between the study’s purported anti-stigmatizing aim and its emphasis on models of sexual offending in the interpretation of findings—namely, the MFM¹¹ and the SAPROF-SO¹².

Third, reliance on responses to a single open-ended survey question may have constrained analytical depth. Many of the responses were brief, limiting contextualisation. For instance, respondents’ claims of having “no desire” to harm children are seemingly taken by the authors at face value. Without follow-up questions, it is difficult to distinguish between stable absence of desire, effective suppression, or impression management.

Fourth, the analysis sometimes adopts respondents’ framing with limited critical distance, despite a stated critical realist approach. For example, the narratives within Theme 1 (“Not being a psychopath helps”) are presented compellingly, but the authors do not sufficiently consider how these framings might at least partly reflect socially desirable responding, perhaps in an attempt to counter stigma. The study may have benefited from more critical engagement with the potential role of social desirability, especially given the taboo nature of the topic.

Fifth, the ethical and interpretive complexities surrounding Theme 3 (“I express my sexual feelings as fully as I can”) could have been discussed with greater nuance. The authors present use of “legally ambiguous” materials and dolls as potential harm reduction strategies, and suggest that policy restrictions “require careful consideration.” While this suggestion does not signal conclusive endorsement of the use of these materials, a more balanced discussion might have emphasized the anecdotal nature of respondents’ perceptions regarding their use for harm reduction, acknowledged that empirical evidence for their harm reduction potential remains limited, and offered counterarguments or precautions.

Sixth, respondents’ criminal histories were not assessed. The authors note this as a limitation, but they do not elaborate on its implications. For instance, it is possible that certain prosocial

¹¹ Seto (2019).

¹² Willis et al. (2022).

navigation strategies used by individuals who have never committed a sex crime involving a minor differ from those used by individuals who have. Understanding such distinctions could help inform more tailored and effective treatment recommendations.

Finally, the study's contribution should be considered in light of earlier research with similar aims, methods, and findings. Specifically, the authors reference studies by Stevens and Wood (2019) and Jones et al. (2021) that each used thematic analysis to analyze posts from the Virtuous Pedophiles forum, and identified themes related to strategies to not engage in sexual contact with children including self-regulation strategies, avoidance of risk situations, use of legal sexual outlets, and the role of social support. Although the present study differs in analyzing responses to a targeted survey question rather than naturally occurring forum discourse, it remains unclear how its findings significantly extend or diverge from these prior works.

In conclusion, Phillipps and Willis offer a qualitative contribution that emphasizes the roles of moral values, self-regulation, and social support in prosocial navigation of sexual attraction to children. The study extends prior research¹³ primarily through its methodological approach, using a targeted open-ended survey question on the topic. Future research could build on this work by including larger

samples drawn from more diverse online MAP communities.

¹³ Stevens and Wood (2019); Jones et al. (2021).

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Stewart, H. and Campbell, M.A. (2025)

"The Vulnerability Typology: Developing a Biopsychosocial-Sexual Understanding of Men With Sexual Interests in Children"

Sexual Offending: Theory, Research, and Prevention, Vol. 20, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5964/sotrap.13925>.

Stewart and Campbell's study represents an ambitious attempt to understand the diverse characteristics of men attracted to children under the age of 15, who have not committed sex crimes.¹⁴ The authors position their work as addressing a critical gap in the literature, arguing that most research focuses on justice-involved Minor-Attracted People (MAPs), while MAPs who have not committed sex crimes remain understudied. Their aim was to identify distinct groupings of people with shared characteristics within the law-abiding MAP community that could inform targeted intervention approaches, potentially improving secondary prevention services for law-abiding MAPs.

Using Latent Class Analysis (LCA), the authors analyzed survey data that measured various developmental, social, and psychological characteristics of participants to 1) develop a "typology" of law-abiding MAPs, and 2) compare the profiles of law-abiding MAPs ($n = 584$) with a) minor-attracted men who had been convicted of child sexual offenses ($n = 25$), and b) men who were not attracted to minors, but who reported arousal to paraphilias such as voyeurism or sexual masochism

($n = 224$). MAPs and "other paraphilia" participants were recruited through a variety of online sources, including MAP-related forums, other social media forums, listservs, and MTurk. The sample of MAPs included in the final study is relatively large compared to other studies of law-abiding MAPs, reflective of a strong effort to recruit a diverse sample. The high response to recruitment may have been supported by a clear effort to protect participant anonymity through the use of tools such as SoSciSurvey. However, while the study's large sample size and breadth of assessment constitute clear methodological strengths, a fundamental tension runs throughout the paper: the research applies a risk-focused framework developed for men who have committed sex crimes, to men who have not offended, thereby situating sexual attraction within a risk-management framework. This may reinforce associations between attraction and behavioral risk, inadvertently reinforcing stigma and discouraging help-seeking.

The LCA identified three groups within the study's law-abiding sample: *Low Vulnerability* (28.3% of the law-abiding men), *Moderate Vulnerability* (46.2%), and *High Vulnerability* (25.5%). The authors assigned these labels based on each group's average scores across survey items, interpreting these as

¹⁴ Referred to as "men with sexual interests in children; MSICs" or "men with pedohebephilic interests" in the paper, but referred to in this review article as minor-attracted men or MAPs.

reflecting low, moderate, and high levels of traditional "risk factors" for child sexual offending, respectively. Importantly, the study's findings highlight the heterogeneity of MAPs, challenging assumptions about the uniformity of the needs or challenges with which help-seeking MAPs may present. However, the framing of the findings also reveals the central contradiction in the study: the sample comprises men who have not committed sex crimes against children, yet the analysis imposes a "vulnerability" framework that presupposes risk. Without any criminal behavior to predict, labeling these groups as varying in "vulnerability" assumes that attraction itself requires risk assessment and management. The authors acknowledge this tension, noting uncertainty about whether traditional risk frameworks actually apply to law-abiding MAPs. Yet the authors proceed to interpret their findings through a risk lens, recommending "risk-informed intervention" for MAPs seeking help for coping with stigma or general mental health concerns, even if they are not initially seeking help for risk-related concerns. This approach to setting treatment goals *for* clients rather than *with* clients has been highlighted as a major barrier to help-seeking in previous research (Levenson & Grady, 2019). This framing also perpetuates harmful stigma by treating sexual attraction as inherently risk-producing rather than examining what these profiles reveal, given the law-abiding sample population.

Examining what the profiles reveal is further complicated by the choice of characteristics that

were included in the LCA. A comprehensive biopsychosocial framework was used to guide the selection of a broad range of measures included in the survey, covering five related domains: developmental, self-regulatory, sexual, cognitive, and socio-affective. While the use of a theoretical framework to guide survey development is in one respect a strength of the study, the included variables are arguably of mixed relevance to the study's aim of informing future treatment and support for law-abiding MAPs. Stewart and Campbell include both historical risk factors (e.g., adverse childhood experiences) and dynamic risk factors for engaging in sexual crimes against children (e.g., hypersexuality, impulsivity) in their modelling. Static and dynamic risk factors may be expected to cluster based on existing research using convicted samples, however the authors also include general wellbeing indicators that have not previously been linked with sex crimes, and therefore do not represent traditional 'risk factors' (e.g., personality traits, mental health, attachment styles). Given that these different kinds of variables represent theoretically distinct constructs, and are largely derived from offender-based risk models, it is not clear why these particular variables should be expected to cluster meaningfully in a law-abiding minor-attracted population. Critically, the study also omits any protective factors that might inform supportive interventions, such as employment stability, resilience, adaptive coping strategies, positive sexual identity development, social support

networks, or successful emotion regulation skills (Levenson et al., 2020). This absence indicates an underlying assumption oriented primarily toward vulnerability and risk management, despite studying people who haven't engaged in sexual crimes against children. A wellbeing-focused approach would ask how these wellbeing-relevant characteristics cluster among the MAP population, rather than comparing variables that may be predictive of reoffending among convicted populations but whose validity with law-abiding populations is unclear.

The study's second research question compared the law-abiding MAP typologies with both a group of minor-attracted men who had been convicted of sexual crimes against children, and men with reported paraphilias. Results showed no clear systematic patterns in differences between groups, with different “vulnerability” groups sometimes resembling the sample of MAPs with convictions on certain variables but not others. This pattern is likely influenced by statistical and theoretical considerations related to the construction of the comparison groups. The group with convictions contained only 25 participants, which limits the reliability of analyses with this group. Additionally, although the inclusion of the “other paraphilia” group was intended to provide a comparison against which unique characteristics of law-abiding MAPs could be differentiated from characteristics of people with paraphilias more broadly, the theoretical integration of this group could have been more fully articulated. In the absence of a clear articulation of

who or what is theoretically captured by this group, it is difficult to draw meaning from the comparisons made. The absence of a non-clinical, non-forensic comparison group of people attracted to adults is also noteworthy, and suggests that the authors view attraction to minors as fundamentally pathological.

The authors' terminology choices throughout the study reflect the deeper conceptual problems highlighted previously. In particular, the study measures attraction by asking about “*arousal to sexual activity involving children*,” a measure that frames attraction (a sexual orientation) exclusively in behavioral terms (i.e., through behavioral fantasies). The authors also frame attractions as phenomena requiring “management,” implicitly treating attraction to children as a problem to be controlled rather than as an aspect of identity that exists independently of behavior (Schaefer et al., 2023). This language reinforces the equation between attraction and action, undermining efforts to separate the two conceptually and clinically. Further, the authors describe their law-abiding sample as men who “*denied detected child sexual abuse offences*.” This language casts inferred suspicion on participants' honesty, implying that these individuals *may* have offended but are simply concealing it, rather than accepting their self-reported non-conviction status at face value. While being cautious about self-reported engagement (or non-engagement) in child sexual abuse offences is methodologically appropriate, selectively and repeatedly emphasizing uncertainty around

self-reported non-offending status in a study of law-abiding participants may inadvertently reinforce assumptions of concealed criminality within an already-stigmatized population, especially when this language is not commonly seen in other equivalent population-based offending research.

In summary, Stewart and Campbell's study offers notable strengths, including a large community sample of law-abiding MAPs and comprehensive assessment across multiple life domains. However, future research would benefit from fundamentally reorienting toward examining MAPs' wellbeing needs, rather than defaulting to risk-prevention

frameworks developed for offending populations. Understanding what supports thriving, resilient MAPs, rather than focusing on identifying "vulnerabilities," should guide intervention development. Critically, and in line with emerging research and scholarship, researchers must separate attraction from behavior in their theoretical models, research designs, and clinical recommendations. As this field develops, empirical work with law-abiding MAPs requires stronger theoretical foundations that recognize sexual attraction as distinct from sexual crimes against children, ensuring research serves rather than stigmatises the communities it studies.

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Jacobson, C., Jones, L. E., Laabdallaoui, C., & Mage, G. (2025)

"Designing a virtual group therapy program for MAPs: a one-year case study"

Sexual and Relationship Therapy, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14681994.2025.2598107>.

The Jacobson et al. paper describes a one-year online group therapy program for minor-attracted people (MAPs) in response to major barriers to care, particularly where mandatory reporting laws and stigma discourage help-seeking. The authors (including a therapist based in Germany) leveraged post-COVID normalization of telehealth and Germany's lack of mandatory reporting requirements for clinicians working with MAPs to run a weekly virtual group. The program served five self-identified MAPs (ages 26–74, from the US/UK) and used a structured session format focused on daily functioning and personal development. The study is primarily a descriptive case report based on participant feedback over 52 weekly sessions, plus a survey at the 12-month mark. The survey combined Likert-scale ratings of perceived helpfulness, support, and nervousness with open-ended questions about participants' motivations, experiences, and perceived impact. Participants rated the group highly across several domains.

The paper addresses an important and understudied problem: MAPs often encounter formidable barriers to accessing mental health services, including stigma, limited clinician training, and mandatory reporting requirements. These obstacles are consistent with broader research, especially regarding fears about confidentiality, judgment, and

legal consequences as major deterrents.¹⁵ The authors argue that improving access is both an ethical imperative and a potential public health contribution, since untreated distress and isolation may be associated with increased risk factors for offending.

A central strength of the intervention is its explicit focus on facilitating social adaptation and enhancing everyday functioning, in contrast to models that emphasize immediate prevention of sex crimes or impulse control. The authors recognize that minor-attracted people are whole individuals with a wide range of life experiences, and that isolation and depression, driven in part by social stigma, can impair functioning across work, relationships, and everyday life. By participants setting weekly goals that range from self-care and household tasks to career development and personal reflection, the group supports autonomy and dignity. This focus on well-being and quality of life aligns with recent scholarship urging clinicians to prioritize more optimal treatment targets for people attracted to children and/or adolescents, rather than only emphasizing risk management.¹⁶

¹⁵ Levenson, Willis & Vicencio (2017)

¹⁶ Lievesley et al. (2022)

Regarding the study's ethical safeguards, IRB approval was obtained from the School of Sex Therapy, informed consent procedures emphasized participant rights, and the authors reviewed the tensions between obligations of confidentiality and mandatory reporting in different jurisdictions. At the same time, the paper provides little concrete information about how participants were screened, what inclusion or exclusion criteria were used, or how any safety incidents would have been handled if they arose. These omissions make it difficult to fully evaluate the robustness of the risk management protocol, especially given the sensitivities around providing group therapy to MAPs.

One of the paper's most important contributions is its qualitative material and attempt to combat MAP stereotypes. Open-ended survey responses include quotes such as "It feels like a safe place in a world where being a MAP isn't safe at all" and "I know they understand how I feel and it helps to explain things I am struggling with," which convey the depth of participants' need for nonjudgment, understanding, and community. The sample includes an older participant describing more than 60 years of living with this attraction without committing sex crimes and younger participants using the group to disclose previously unshared experiences, illustrating a range of individuals within a very small cohort. While these accounts are not statistically generalizable, they provide concrete examples of the kinds of support participants found most meaningful.

The authors acknowledge several important constraints, most notably the small, self-selected sample recruited from a single online community (Virtuous Pedophiles). This recruitment strategy likely overrepresents help-seeking, digitally engaged MAPs with Internet access, limiting the generalizability of findings to the broader MAP population. Additionally, the study reports minimal demographic detail beyond age range and country, making it difficult to assess how representative participants were. No data on recruitment numbers, enrollment, session attendance, fee structure, or retention rates are provided, which prevents a clear assessment of program reach, engagement, and feasibility beyond this small group of respondents.

Although the authors reference cognitive-behavioral influences and comparison programs such as the Berlin Dissexuality Therapy (BEDIT), they do not clearly articulate the specific theoretical framework guiding their eight-component structure, which limits comparison to established treatment models. All outcome data derive from a brief satisfaction survey and facilitator-generated observations, with no baseline measurements, no comparison or control groups, and no validated assessment instruments. This severely limits what can be concluded from these numbers, particularly regarding impact, generalizability, or the durability of change. In practice, the study documents how a small group of participants experienced the program and how they rated its helpfulness, rather than providing evidence that the intervention causes specific changes in

mental health, functioning, or offending risk. Also, framing improved well-being primarily in terms of its potential to reduce offending risk may inadvertently suggest that MAP mental health is valuable chiefly for its preventive function rather than as an end in itself.

The quantitative results are informative as indicators of participant satisfaction but cannot be treated as evidence of measurable treatment effects. The high average ratings for helpfulness, openness of discussion, and peer support, together with the reported reduction in nervousness about attending sessions, suggest that the group felt safe and valuable to those who stayed. However, the use of unvalidated rating scales, the very small sample size, and the absence of any objective or behavioral outcomes severely limit what can be concluded from these numbers. Self-report ratings collected by the same clinician who designed and facilitated the group are also vulnerable to social desirability and expectancy effects, especially in a context where

affirming services are limited or difficult to access. Methodologically, the study is best understood as a qualitative program description and feasibility exploration rather than a test of the authors' stated hypotheses about therapy access and risk of committing sex crimes.

Overall, this paper presents a clinically important innovation for an underserved group of minor-attracted people. The authors present the program clearly, and participants report high perceived value and a sense of safety. However, the methodological constraints mean that the findings cannot be generalized or treated as evidence of intervention efficacy. Despite these constraints, the paper adds to the applied literature on support for MAPs and helps clarify both what participants value in an affirming group context and what more rigorous future studies would need to do to evaluate such programs more definitively.

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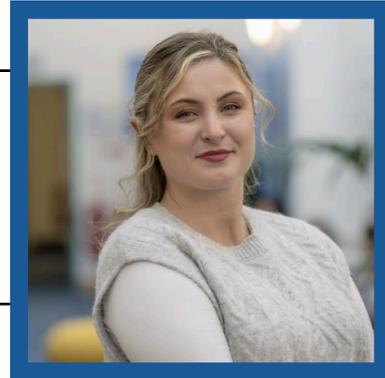
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Meet the New Generation

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.

Hannah Bolt
PhD Student, Psychology Department,
University of Portsmouth (UK)



Hannah Bolt is a PhD student in Forensic Psychology at the University of Portsmouth in the UK, supervised by Dr Zarah Vernham, Dr Sarah Paquette, and Professor Derek Perkins. Her doctoral research is funded by the South Coast Doctoral Training Partnership (SCDTP), supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Hannah's research explores psychological experiences associated with sexual attraction to children, with a particular focus on how individuals understand and navigate their attractions across their lifespan. Her work examines areas including sexual fantasy, belief systems, and understandings of consent, with the aim of informing compassionate, evidence-based approaches to support.

Hannah's earlier research has been grounded in offender psychology, which has shaped her broader interest in understanding diversity in psychological experiences. Building on this foundation, her current and future research focuses increasingly on the wellbeing of MAPs, including why some individuals experience significant distress, shame, or isolation, while others develop stable lives shaped by their own values and goals. Hannah is particularly interested in how research can be used to improve education, reduce stigma, and support professionals and community organizations working with MAPs. Her work emphasizes non-judgmental, person-centered approaches that recognize MAPs as individuals deserving of dignity, understanding, and access to appropriate support.

Alongside her doctoral research, Hannah is involved in teaching and mentoring in Forensic Psychology and Criminology at the University of Portsmouth. She also contributes to the wider research community and is an active member of the International Centre of Research in Forensic Psychology (ICRFP) at the University of Portsmouth. Hannah is honored to be recognized by B4U-ACT and deeply values the organization's commitment to advocacy, education, and improving the wellbeing of MAPs through ethical and compassionate research.

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/>)