

What The APA Should Have Known

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**Deconstructionists argue that distinctions between the genders are arbitrary and political.
Now, the same argument is being advanced by man-boy love advocates
about the distinction between the generations.**

An article published last summer in the American Psychological Association's *Psychological Bulletin* has drawn a recent firestorm of criticism. Talk show hosts and congressmen are calling for investigations. The outrage has focused on the authors' conclusion, based on their analysis of child-molestation studies, that "the negative effects [of sexual abuse] were neither pervasive nor typically intense."

The article was entitled "A Meta-analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples."

APA spokeswoman Rhea Faberman defended publication of the article as part of the scientific work of the organization, saying, "We try to create a lot of dialogue." She labeled "ridiculous" the claim of radio talk-show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger that publication of the article and the attempt to normalize pedophilia were in any way related.

Contrary to Ms. Faberman's assertion, however:

- 1) There is a real and growing movement to legitimize and also legalize sexual relations between boys aged 10 to 16 and adult males;
- 2) Robert Bauserman, one of the authors of the article, has associated himself with the pedophilia movement through a previous article;
- 3) The movement's strategy is to promote the "objective" study of child/adult sex, free of moral considerations;
- 4) The APA should have known this before they published the article.

Those who are interested in legalizing sexual relations between adults and children want to change the parameters of the discussion from the "absolutist" moral position, to the "relative" position that it can sometimes be beneficial. The A.P.A. article furthered exactly this position.

Deconstructionists have argued—with some success—that distinctions between the genders are arbitrary and politically motivated. Now, the same argument is being advanced about the distinction between the generations.

In a recent lead article of the *Journal of Homosexuality* (1), for example, Harris Mirkin says the "sexually privileged" have

disadvantaged the pedophile through sheer political force in the same way that blacks were disadvantaged by whites before the civil-rights movement.

The Movement to Legitimize Pedophilia

In 1981, Dr. Theo Sandfort, co-director of the research program of the Department of Gay and Lesbian Studies at the University of Utrecht, Netherlands, interviewed 25 boys aged 10 to 16 who were currently involved in sexual relationships with adult men. The interviews took place in the homes of the men.

According to Sandfort, "For virtually all the boys ... the sexual contact itself was experienced positively..." Could an adult-child sexual contact, then, truly be called positive for the child? Based on the research presented, Sandfort answered that question in the affirmative.

The study was severely criticized by experts in the field of child sexual abuse. Dr. David Mrazek, co-editor of *Sexually Abused Children and Their Families*, attacked the Sandfort research as unethical, saying:

"In this study, the researchers joined with members of the National Pedophile Workshop to 'study' the boys who were the sexual 'partners' of its members ... there is no evidence that human subject safeguards were a paramount concern. However, there is ample evidence that the study was politically motivated to 'reform' legislation.

"These researchers knowingly colluded with the perpetuation of secret illegal activity ... In the majority of cases, these boys' parents were unaware of these sexual activities with adult men, and the researchers contributed to this deception by their action."

Child sexual-abuse expert Dr. David Finkelhor also criticized the Sandfort research, pointing to the numerous studies which show adult-child sexual contact as a predictor of later depression, suicidal behavior, dissociative disorders, alcohol and drug abuse, and sexual problems. Dr. Finkelhor strongly defended laws against child/adult sex, saying that many of those now-grown children are very active in lobbying for such protection.

In 1990, the campaign to legalize man-boy sex was furthered by the publication of a two-issue special of the *Journal on Homosexuality*, reissued as *Male Intergenerational Intimacy: Historical, Socio-Psychological, and Legal Perspectives*.

This volume provided devastating information on the way psychologically immature pedophile men use vulnerable boys who are starved for adult nurturance and protection.

In the forward, Gunter Schmidt decries discrimination against and persecution of pedophiles, and describes

"successful pedophile relationships which help and encourage the child, even though the child often agrees to sex while really seeking comfort and affection. These are often emotionally deprived, deeply lonely, socially isolated children who seek, as it were, a refuge in an adult's love and for whom, because of their misery, see it as a stroke of luck to have found such an 'enormously nurturant relationship'."

There is another deeply disturbing article in the volume, revealingly titled, "The Main Thing is Being Wanted: Some Case Studies on Adult Sexual Experiences with Children." In it, pedophiles reveal their need to find a child who will satisfy their desire for uncritical affirmation and a lost youth. One of the men justifies his activity as a search for love, and complains that: "Although I've had physical relationships with probably, I don't know, maybe a hundred or more boys over the years, I can only point to four or five true relationships over that time."

The volume also contains an introductory article which decries society's anti-pedophile sentiment. The authors complain about the difficulty studying man-boy relationships in "an objective way," and they hope the social sciences will adopt a broader approach which could lead to understanding of the "diversity and possible benefits of intergenerational intimacy."

Bauserman Defends Sandfort's Research

The same volume contains an article by Robert Bauserman—co-author of the A.P.A. study--which complains that objective research is impossible in a social climate that condemns man-boy sexual relationships. Bauserman decries the prevailing ideology that labels all boys as "victims" and all adult pedophiles as "perpetrators." He attacks researchers Mzarek and Finkelhor as being driven by a "particular set of beliefs about adult-juvenile sex." Bauserman looks for a new "scientific objectivity," with the explicit call for research that will challenge the social-moral taboo against adult/child sex. The meta-analysis which he co-authored, and which the American Psychological Association published, can be seen as Bauserman's follow-up to his *Journal of Homosexuality* article.

More Recent Defenses of Pedophilia

Harris Mirkin recently wrote a lead article in the *Journal of Homosexuality* entitled "The Pattern of Sexual Politics: Feminism, Homosexuality and Pedophilia." Using social-constructionist theory, he argues that the concept of child molestation is a "culture- and class-specific creation" which can and should be changed.

He likens the battle for the legalization of pedophilia to the battles for women's rights, homosexual rights, and even the civil rights of blacks.

He sees the hoped-for shift as taking place in two stages. During the first stage, the opponents of pedophilia control the debate by insisting that the issue is non-negotiable--while using psychological and moral categories to silence all discussion.

But in the second stage, Mirkin says, the discussion must move on to such issues as the "right" of children to have and enjoy sex.

If this paradigm shift could be accomplished, the issue would move from the *moral* to the *political* arena, and therefore become open to negotiation. For example, rather than decrying sexual abuse, lawmakers would be forced to argue about when and under what conditions adult/child sex *could* be accepted. Once the issues becomes "discussible," it would only be a matter of time before the public would begin to view pedophilia as another sexual orientation, and not a choice for the pedophile.

The response to the APA article shows that for the present, social opposition to pedophilia continues to be strong. Finkelhor's response to Bauserman, which was included in *Male Intergenerational Intimacy*, explains why:

"Some types of social relationships violate deeply held values and principles in our culture about equality and self-determination. Sex between adults and children is one of them. Evidence that certain children have positive experiences does not challenge these values, which have deep roots in our worldview."

To pedophile advocates, any discussion of the benefits of child-adult sex is a victory. The APA should have understood this, should have known about Bauserman's connections, and should have been well aware of--and vocally resistant to--the growing movement to legitimize pedophilia.

Endnote

Mirkin, Harris, "The Pattern of Sexual Politics: Feminism, Homosexuality and Pedophilia," *Journal of Homosexuality* vol. 37(2), 1999, p. 1-24. ■