

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

PEDOPHILIA, PEJORATION, AND PREJUDICE: INQUIRY BY INSINUATION, ARGUMENT BY ACCUSATION

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Editor's Note: The purpose of the Personal Perspective section is to encourage the expression of views that are either supportive of or in conflict with contemporary sexual norms. This essay by David Riegel, author of the book *Understanding Loved Boys and Boylovers*, presents a view that is extremely divergent from contemporary sexual norms. *Sexuality & Culture* does not endorse any particular view and encourages the submission of essays that express dissenting views.

As I and others before me have learned, holding politically incorrect views on the issues involved in what is commonly referred to as "pedophilia" can attract a lot of unfavorable attention. Publicly stating or publishing those views frequently generates scathing criticism from politicians (Rind et al., 2000), radical right-wing groups, the media, and even from the supposedly open minded and truth-seeking ivory towers of academia. These criticisms sometimes involve the substance of the issues, but are most frequently *ad hominem* attacks on the character of the targeted individual and the "immorality" of his views. For those who agree with me, defending my character and/or the "morality" of my views is unnecessary; in the case of my detractors, it is of minimal concern and would be wasted effort. However, I would like to examine the at-

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tacks and their perpetrators, and my positions on the substantive issues which have elicited vitriol from at least three of the four sources noted above.

In March of 2000 a small volume that I authored, *Understanding Loved Boys and Boylovers*, appeared in print and was offered to the public by Amazon.com. This book is not, as some have claimed, a "how-to molest boys" instruction manual, or a manifesto or set of demands; it is a statement and exposition of admittedly controversial views and a plea for open-minded consideration. It has sold modestly, but I and the book have been targeted repeatedly for attacks by, among others, a right wing religious group which calls itself the "United States Justice Foundation," the online newspaper *WorldNet Daily*, a Philadelphia TV station, Fox Television News, and several U.K. newspapers including the London-based *Sun*. As one example of many such attacks, a passage from the introduction to the book has been repeatedly misquoted as reading "Men who sexually pursue young boys are not monsters but are instead sincere, concerned, loving human beings who simply have a sexual orientation that is neither understood nor accepted by most others." In fact, the phrase "Men who sexually pursue young boys" does not occur anywhere in the book.

Then, in the December 2001 issue of the *Psychological Bulletin* (Dallam et al., 2001), I was accused by an impressive consortium of "victimologists" of being a "pedophile advocate." This pejorative and all encompassing label falsely insinuates that I advocate each and every behavior that these victimologists have dumped into their self-defined "pedophile" barrel. This is a personal affront as well as being patently absurd; nothing could be further from the truth. I will address the issue of being an "advocate" later, but first it is necessary to examine carefully the concept of pedophilia and the pedophile.

When considering all the widely diverse elements that are indiscriminately lumped together under the heading of pedophilia, one is prone to think of the tongue-in-cheek description of a camel as a racehorse designed by a committee. In the jargon that currently seems to be in vogue, I would like to "deconstruct" that camel and examine both its components and its creators, i.e., those like

Finkelhor (1981) who originated victimological theory and the basis for the “child sex abuse industry.”

First, even the word itself is corrupted and misused. “Pedophilia” (or “paedophilia” if one happens to be under the spell of the Queen’s English), comes from the Greek *pais* (παῖς, child or youth, not gender specific, the combining form is *paedo* or *pedo*) and *philia* (φιλία, friendly love or affection—it would be *eros* [ἔρως] if it meant physical or sexual love) (Liddell, 1888). So pedophilia is by etymology the non-sexual love of a child or youth—not sexual lust after a minor, as it has been corrupted in today’s usage. Every parent, grandparent, uncle, and aunt is—or at least should be—a pedophile.

Now let’s look at the incredibly broad and indiscriminate brush which is used to paint the picture of pedophilia and the pedophile as these terms are currently misused. Consider the following two scenarios:

- (1) A father has forced vaginal intercourse with his eight-year-old daughter. The little girl attempts to resist, she screams but either is not heard or is ignored, she is in pain, and she is bleeding. She desperately tries to get away, but she is unsuccessful in escaping her situation, and this trauma is repeated time and again. She is only able to bring this very real abuse to an end several years later when she leaves home. This is a composite of various incidents of which I have heard and/or read.
- (2) A fully clothed boy insistently rubs his genital area against his significantly older cousin’s knee, and the cousin impulsively tickles the boy’s crotch in return. The boy smiles and giggles, and later returns to ask “Do it some more, I like it!” At the boy’s coaxing this continues over time, and he eventually succeeds in persuading his cousin to masturbate him to orgasm. These and other related consensual sexual activities continue over the next several years, but gradually draw to a close by mutual agreement in the boy’s mid-teens. The boy finishes university, marries, and now has a profession, a family and a happy, stable life. He and his cousin have remained close friends, and both retain fond memories of their “secret.” I have changed some details and omitted others in order to protect the participants, but this is essentially a story which I know to be true.

In the eyes of the victimologists, the “child sex abuse industry,” and, regretfully, the law, both of these men are “pedophiles,” and

both of the scenarios involve a “perpetrator,” a “victim,” and “child sexual abuse.” Both cases would be prosecuted with equal vigor in most—if not all—jurisdictions, and both would result in draconian sentences. In the first scenario, such punishment would, from a cursory examination of the stated facts, seem to be quite justified. However, in the second case, interference undoubtedly would have been traumatic for the boy and destructive for his extended family. It would have probably sent the cousin to jail for decades, if not for the rest of his life, adding even further guilt trauma for the boy.

More than one older boy or man involved in nothing more—and often considerably less—than the second scenario is presently serving a substantial prison term that, apart from questionable societal “wrongfulness,” has absolutely no justification in that actual harm caused by the relationship was never demonstrated, only assumed. Evidence from study after study (Bernard, 1985; Eglinton, 1964; Okami, 1991; Rind et al.; 1998, Rossman, 1979; Sandfort, 1987; Sandfort, 1992; Tsang, 1981; Wilson, 1981; among others) indicates that there is minimal, if any, harm to a boy from his consensual sexual relationships with an older male. So if the boy is harmed, it is most probably from the inappropriate and overblown reactions of parents, teachers, law enforcement personnel, counselors, etc., rather than from the relationship itself.

One must also ask the question of how many unsolved cases of boys who were murdered, or who simply disappeared, were those who became the unfortunate victims of panic stricken, pathetic older boys or men who had stumbled into sexual relationships with these boys, and in a moment of mindless terror at their horrifying prospects, felt they had no other way out but to do away with the only one who knew about the incident. One thinks of 15-year-old Sam Manzie, who, after being subjected to inappropriate reactions and treatment by both his parents and social workers over his voluntary sexual relationship with an older male, impulsively murdered a younger boy (Dribben, 1997). Others have taken their own lives rather than suffer through the ordeal they knew was ahead of them. Absent the current reign of terror against all age variant sexual activity, many of these boys and men who were murdered or committed suicide might be alive today living happy and productive lives.

Although I am in my eighth decade, my principal career was in another field, and my studies in psychology, and more specifically in the sexuality and sexual relationships of boys, began only some five years ago. However, I soon found that there was a huge and inexplicable gap between the "harm" model of Consensual Age-variant Boyhood Sex (CABS) as espoused by a vocal portion of the psychological community, and the reality with which I am repeatedly confronted in countless encounters on the internet with those who have first hand knowledge of non-clinical and non-judicial situations. My first thought was that this gap might be due to a lack of adequate scientific investigation, but this did not prove to be the case. As I noted above, study after study, decade after decade, found not only minimal, if any, harm in CABS relationships, but that there were indeed many reports of positive and beneficial relationships. However, let me emphasize here that I am quite well aware of the higher levels of reported harmful effects on boys in nonconsensual situations, and on young females in general.

Why, then, in direct contradiction of the vast amounts of data that have been gathered, the repeated analyses that have been done, and the large number of papers and books that have been published, does the "victimological" model of CABS still seem to prevail? And why does the deliberate and ongoing use of pejorative, misleading, and negatively biased terminology (Okami, 1990, Rind & Bauserman, 1993), which serves primarily to buttress victimology, continue unabated? Is it politics intruding into science? Is it simply that victimologists spend more time making louder noises? Have some researchers wrongly generalized a worldview from a limited amount of atypical clinical and prison data? Have those psychologists and sociologists who see through the victimological smoke screen been frightened into silence? Is it the effect of religion, primarily Christianity, in making the arbitrary decision that CABS is absolutely "morally wrong," in spite of all the evidence that it does little, if any, actual harm? The probability is that it is some combination of all of these.

At various times and in various societies throughout history, and even in some areas of the world today that have remained free of exogenous cultural influences, the right of boys and older males to

form bonds of association and mentorship, and the right of boys of any age, if they so choose, to include sexual experimentation and play in these chosen associations, have been recognized and sometimes encouraged to the point of being considered the social norm (Adams, 1986; Ford & Beach, 1951). So why, then, does this hysteria about these voluntary boy/older male associations exist and persist in North America, western Europe, and other parts of the world that have been influenced by western civilization?

There is something terribly amiss in this aberrant conflation of religion, morality, politics, and science. It is puzzling to observe the utter disregard for empirical facts on the part of some of those who claim to be scientists, and one is impelled to search for explanations. No doubt misplaced and oversized egos enter in, but one also has to realize that victimologists and the rest of the psychology industry (Dineen, 2000) have a very real economic interest in continuing the status quo. If there were substantially fewer boy "victims," there would be less call for treatment of them, less need for law enforcement to retain "expert witnesses" to prosecute the older boys and men, and there would be a diminution of the lucrative business and monetary income of the victimologists and other child sex abuse industry operatives.

I shall now turn to the issue of my being an "advocate." The laughable myth of absolute detached objectivity persists in the social sciences, and therefore to be an advocate is politically incorrect and unacceptable. But when all of the pharisaical facades have been stripped away, anyone who has ever expressed a position on any question is an "advocate." The authors and coauthors of the two critical papers in *Psychological Bulletin* (Dallam et al., 2001, Ondersma et al., 2001) are obviously blatant and unrepentant advocates of their positions that no matter how overwhelming is the evidence to the contrary, all age variant sex is by their definition invariably "wrong" and must therefore be condemned. So I do not accept that I need to be reticent or apologize for being an advocate, and I feel that those who sanctimoniously hurl "advocate" as some sort of pejorative epithet are hypocritical. But while I unabashedly accept that I am an advocate, I do want to set the record straight as to exactly what it is that I advocate:

- I advocate the separation of the various disparate issues now lumped together under the single pejorative label of "pedophilia" into scientifically meaningful categories delineated by well-defined facts such as demonstrable harm, motivation, gender, activities, and consensuality. The victimologist's pedophile barrel needs to be upended on the laboratory bench and its contents carefully identified and sorted by impartial examiners. Those items lacking scientific credibility need to be discarded, and new containers found for some others. A few, such as the first of the above described scenarios, can be correctly placed back in that barrel, which, since we have noted that "pedophilia" has nothing to do with either sex or abuse, requires a new and more truthful label.
- I advocate extensive, repeated, careful, meticulous, objective and, so far as it is possible, unprejudiced empirical research into CABS by many and diverse investigators who are searching for truth, and not simply serving their egos or their pocketbooks.
- I advocate an end to the use of pejorative, prejudiced, and misleading terminology such as "pedophile," "perpetrator," "victim," "abuse," etc. There are less value laden and more accurate terms, and the only reason to cling to the old ones is to deliberately insert bias and prejudice into scientific investigations or discussions. This is negative advocacy in one of its most virulent forms.
- I advocate that science should be science, and that as such it must be completely separated, isolated, and insulated from religion, politics, and so called "morality." The search for truth through pure and uncorrupted science encompasses both the noblest aspirations and the highest achievements of mankind, and such science should not in any way be subservient to lesser entities.
- I advocate that empirically demonstrated and specifically attributable harmfulness must be an absolute necessity for any scientific definition of so-called wrongfulness; morality, religion, and politics should have no part. In fact, I even question whether "wrongfulness" is a needed and valid scientific concept; it is quite probable that "harmfulness" by itself is sufficient and complete. We have hopefully left behind the dark ages when autocratic authority, religion, and other superstitions ordered lives and arbitrarily defined what was right and what was wrong. It makes no sense in a rational world to defend, excuse, or ignore an odious and obviously erroneous position simply because it is based upon an outmoded moral doctrine or an unreasoned political ideology.
- I advocate an end to the unconscionable abrogation of the fundamental right of boys to their own sexuality, and of their right to make responsible sexual choices based on awareness of the need to avoid doing harm to themselves or others. Responsibility and choice are two sides of the same coin, and boys are held responsible for their actions from a very early age.

Requiring a boy to answer unconditionally for everything he does, while concurrently insisting that he is not capable of making his own choices, sexual or otherwise, is both illogical and grossly unfair. Boys today have many sources of reliable information about sex, and therefore should not be dismissed as not having the background to make rational decisions in this area. A boy of 12 currently cannot legally consent to what he judges to be harmless sexual activities with an older boy of 17, but he can be held fully accountable, tried, and convicted of, for example, "sexual assault" of a younger boy. Denying to a boy his right to make choices and his freedom to give sexual consent, arbitrarily based on chronological age, is an anachronism sorely in need of reconsideration.

- I advocate the thorough review, reevaluation, and revision of existing laws that are predicated upon the presupposition of "harm" where such harm has already been repeatedly and conclusively shown to be minimal or nonexistent.

I am up in years, I have no remaining family, I am retired, and I have no regard for political correctness or social standing. I can therefore, without concern for any possible repercussions, condemn what I see as wrong and openly advocate for the corrections I see as necessary. But I sympathize with the plight of younger academics and professionals who stand to lose prestige, status, financial backing, and perhaps even their positions if they stand up against the entrenched victimologists and their collaborators in the profit driven child sex abuse industry, the vociferous religious right, and the ultimately self serving field of politics. However, the data exposing these evils and showing the need for change are out there, they are massive, longitudinal, and cross-cultural. They speak overwhelmingly, almost unanimously, of not only the very minimal harm in boy/older male sexual experiences *so long as they are consensual*, but go beyond the lack of harm to point out that these relationships are quite often developmentally, emotionally, and sociologically beneficial. It is high time that this shameful harassment of boys and older males be identified and exposed for what it is: an unscientific, unwarranted, counterproductive, and iatrogenically disastrous assault on human dignity.

I am neither the first, nor probably the last, "advocate" for a reasoned examination of CABS to be thus indicted by insinuation, arraigned by accusation, and condemned by cabal. The hullabaloo

over the Rind et al. paper (2000) wound up with an absurd "condemnation" by the U.S. congress. After Professor Harris Mirkin (1999) authored a paper on the political issues of pedophilia, the Missouri legislature retaliated by cutting \$100,000 from the budget of his institution, the University of Missouri-Kansas City. "Doctor Laura" Schlessinger, on her nationally broadcast radio talk show, viciously attacked respected author and professor emeritus Vern Bullough (2000). Theo Sandfort (1987, 1992) was pressured until he gave up his investigations of beneficial boy/older male relationships. Despite high demand, Paul Wilson's book, *The Man They Called a Monster*, was never reprinted, and is unavailable today. Science is supposed to be a search for truth, but as long as those whose purpose it is to ignore facts and concentrate on maintaining their status quo are in control and can effectively silence any opposition, the search for truth about CABS is not likely to succeed.

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