

‘Querying’ the Queering of Science: Response to Yuill and Durber

David L. Riegel

Published online: 28 February 2009
© Springer Science + Business Media, LLC 2009

Yuill and Durber (Y&D), in their article discussing boys’ sexually expressed relationships with older males in this journal (2008), begin with the common but mistaken assumption that the sometimes sexually expressed mutual attraction between peripubertal/early adolescent boys and older males (Feierman 1990; Frederiksen 1993; Hertoft 1980; Sandfort 1987; Vanggaard 1969; etc.) is somehow related to “gay, lesbian, bisexual, and ‘trans’ peoples” (Y&D, p. 258) and has only recently been exorcised from “contemporary gay organizations and cultures,...” (ibid, p. 259). But so-called adult male “homosexuality” and what has come to be known as “boylove” constitute two different and only peripherally related worlds (Riegel 2007, pp. 65–71). Boy/older male relationships can be semantically construed as homosexuality, but in practice are viewed as a separate and different non-homosexual paradigm by the participants (Frederiksen 1993; Hertoft 1993; Tindall 1978; Sandfort 1987; Vanggaard 1969; Wilson 1981). “Gays” who are partially or preferentially sexually attracted to adolescent and/or prepubertal boys are also, by definition, boylovers, but even though they may have one foot in each world, they do not unite the two. Furthermore, there are no demonstrated connections, nor credible evidence, that boyhood sexual experiences with older males are predictors of future adult male homosexuality, much less that they “cause” boys to become gay. Y&D’s errors are further compounded when they refer to boy/older male relationships as unidirectionally “man-boy,” while the authors cited earlier in this

Yuill and Durber, in *ad hominem* attacks on this present author, assign him an “identity” without providing any documentation, and imply positions regarding “advocacy” while either failing to be aware of, or choosing to ignore, positions previously stated quite explicitly in Riegel (2005). However, these specious attacks will not be dignified with any further responses.

D. L. Riegel (✉)
Philadelphia, USA
URL: <http://www.shfri.net/dremail>

paragraph have indicated that such relationships are almost always bidirectional (cf. Riegel 2007, 2007a, b). Another blunder is their assumption that the older partner is always an “adult,” whereas in a recent study of 517 self-identified boy-attracted pedosexual males (BPM, singular or plural), over a quarter of the sample reported that they were aware of their sexual attraction to boys three or more years younger than themselves by age 12, nearly three quarters by age 15, and 88% before age 18, i.e., while the respondents were minors themselves (Riegel 2007b).

In a woefully inadequate review of the literature in the area of sexually expressed child/older person relationships, Y&D correctly delve into Sandfort’s study of 25 boys (1987), but then quote the false suggestion by Mrazek (1991) that “[T]estimonies from boys could have been given under pressure...” without noting that this is specifically refuted within the Sandfort book. They touch briefly on the work of Leahy (1992), but then devote much more space to the miniscule sample of six “gay” youth respondents to the lead author’s own inquiry, principally to one individual who occupies the bulk of page 264. They do not seem concerned that they are not able to present—and apparently do not have—any heterosexual youth respondents. The authors also either failed to search out, or else simply ignored, much other significant published research in this area (e.g. Bender and Blau 1937; Constantine and Martinson 1981; Gebhard et al. 1965; Hertoft 1993; Ingram 1981; Levine 2002; Money 1988; Okami 1991; Riegel 2007, 2007a, b; Tallman 1953; Tindall 1978; Wilson 1981; etc.).

Late in the paper, Y&D embark on a queer deconstructionist voyage in which they attempt—for poorly delineated purposes—to separate the “body of the adolescent boy” from the person of that boy. They assert that this adolescent body—rather than the boy as a person—is the boylover’s “true object of desire,” and that boylovers only “want to use [this adolescent body] for their own gains” (p. 271). However, in the first place, research has indicated that the median age of boys when they first become sexually involved with an older male is 12 (Riegel 2007, p. 30, 2007a), when most boys are not yet adolescents, but rather prepubertal, or at the most peripubertal. Furthermore, Wilson (1981), after investigating the some 2,500 consensual sexual relationships that Clarence Osborne had with both prepubertal and adolescent boys, concluded that “[M]en who have [sexually expressed] relationships with boys [i.e., “boylovers”] often do so for benevolent reasons.” (p. 134), an observation that is reinforced by many other researchers (e.g. Hertoft 1993; Ingram 1981; Sandfort 1987; Tindall 1978; Trobriands 1993; etc.). In the previously mentioned investigation of 517 self-described BPM (Riegel 2007b), of an estimated 3,175 contacts between the respondents and boys, approximately 44% were reported as non-sexual, while 37% may have involved sexual contacts of a strictly consensual and non-predatory type. Only 6% involved blatant seduction, and 1% were coercive. The razor-sharp reefs of truth and fact thus bring this unlikely postmodernist cruise of the Wyandee to its well-deserved end.

Unwanted and traumatic sexual encounters between boys and older males do occur, and this present paper neither ignores nor attempts to justify these crimes. Under laws which have nothing to do with sex, these acts are assaults, and the perpetrators should be apprehended and appropriately punished, a position which BPM themselves endorse (Riegel 2007, pp. 49–50). However, there is no evidence

that these criminals are in any way typical or representative of the vast majority of “benevolent” (Wilson 1981, p. 134) or “non-aggressive” (Riegel 2007b) boylovers, any more than the occasional rapist is typical or representative of most heterosexuals. In the vast majority of boy/older male encounters, some of which may become sexual while others may not, both boys and society would be better served if the victimological myths of rampant child sexual abuse and omnipresent predators which both academia and society have constructed and magnified (Jenkins 1998) were to be superseded by a model of boyhood psychosexual developmental motivations and behaviors that is built upon honest and unbiased empirical observations, truth, and reality; a genuinely scientific paradigm that accurately reflects, and properly serves, the fundamental qualities and needs of boys.

References

- Bender, L., & Blau, A. (1937). The reaction of children to sexual relations with adults. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 7, 500–518.
- Constantine, L., & Martinson, F. (1981). *Children and sex*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Feierman, J. (1990). *Pedophilia: Bio-social dimensions*. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Frederiksen, A. (1993). What science tells us. In Trobriands (Eds.), *Crime without victims*. Amsterdam: Global Academic.
- Gebhard, P., Gagnon, J., Pomeroy, W., & Christenson, C. (1965). *Sex offenders: An analysis of types*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hertoft, P. (1980). *Klinisk sexologi* [Clinical sexology]. Kobenhavn, Danmark: Munksgaard.
- Hertoft, P. (1993). Paedophiles don’t hurt children. In Trobriands (Eds.), *Crime without victims*. Amsterdam: Global Academic.
- Ingram, M. (1981). Participating victims: A study of sexual offences with boys. In L. Constantine & F. Martinson (Eds.), *Children and sex. New findings, new perspectives*. Boston: Little Brown.
- Jenkins, P. (1998). *Moral panic*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Leahy, T. (1992). Positively experienced man/boy sex: The discourse of seduction and the social construction of masculinity. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 28, 71–88.
- Levine, J. (2002). *Harmful to minors: The perils of protecting children from sex*. Duluth, MN: University of Minnesota.
- Money, J. (1988). Commentary: Current status of sex research. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 1, 5–15.
- Mrazek, D. (1991). Response to the Bauserman critique. In T. Sandfort, E. Brongersma, & A. van Naerssen (Eds.), *Male intergenerational intimacy*. New York: Huntington Park.
- Okami, P. (1991). Self-reports of “positive” childhood and adolescent contact with older persons: An exploratory study. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 30, 437–457.
- Riegel, D. (2005). Pedophilia, pejoration, and prejudice: Inquiry by insinuation, argument by accusation. *Sexuality & Culture*, 9(1), 88–97.
- Riegel, D. (2007). *We were NOT abused!* Philadelphia, SafeHaven. Also available as an “E-Book”: <http://www.wwnotabused.info>.
- Riegel, D. (2007a). *Self-reported effects and retrospective perceptions of sexually expressed boyhood relationships with older males: An Internet convenience sample*. Unpublished manuscript, expanded version of Chapter 4 in Riegel (2007), available as of December 20, 2008, at <http://www.sebrom.info>.
- Riegel, D. (2007b). *Motivational and behavioral characteristics of boy-attracted pedosexual males*. Unpublished manuscript, expanded version of Chapter 5 in Riegel (2007), available as of December 20, 2008, at <http://www.mbcbbpm.info/>.
- Sandfort, T. (1987). *Boys on their contacts with men*. Elmhurst, NY: Global Academic.
- Tallman, F. (1953). *California sexual deviation research*. California: Department of Mental Hygiene, State of California.

- Tindall, R. H. (1978). The male adolescent involved with a pederast becomes an adult. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 3, 373–382.
- Trobriands (Eds.). (1993). *Crime without victims*. Amsterdam: Global Academic Press. Originally published in Danish (1986) as *Forbrydelse uden offer*. Copenhagen: Tiderne Skifter.
- Vanggaard, T. (1969). *Phallos*. New York: International Universities.
- Wilson, P. (1981). *The man they called a monster*. North Melbourne, Australia: Cassell.
- Yuill, R., & Durber, D. (2008). “Querying” the limits of queering boys through the contested discourses on sexuality. *Sexuality & Culture*, 12(4), 257–274.