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An Analysis of Human Sexuality Textbook Coverage of the Psychological Correlates of Adult-Nonadult Sex

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Browne and Finkelhor (1986) cautioned that it is important that child abuse researchers not exaggerate or overstate the intensity or inevitability of negative consequences for children or adolescents who experience sex with adults. In recent years a number of researchers have argued that this problem has been increasing, with negative repercussions. The purpose of the current research was to analyze possible overstatement (i.e., bias) from one important source: human sexuality textbooks. To assess bias, a review of the literature on correlates of adult-child and adult-adolescent sex was first conducted to determine the criteria with which to make judgments. This review revealed that findings from clinical and legal samples, which typically indicate highly negative correlates, do not generalize beyond clinical/legal populations. Three nationally representative samples and a large number of college samples indicate that correlates are much less negative in the general population. Based on the criteria that emerged from the review, 5 coders made 14 judgments concerning biased reporting and invalid inferences for each of 14 current human sexuality textbooks. Results were that 9 textbooks presented highly biased information, 3 textbooks were moderately biased, and 2 were unbiased. Bias in reporting correlates was indicated by an overreliance on findings from clinical and legal samples, exaggerated reports of the extent and typical intensity of harm, failure to separate incestuous from nonincestuous experiences, failure to separate experiences of females from those of males, inaccurate discussions of sex differences in reactions, inappropriate generalizations, and inappropriate causal attributions. I concluded that the overreliance on using reports from clinical and legal samples resulted in many of the other biases. Problems that may arise from these biased presentations were discussed.

Human sexuality textbooks are an important source of sex information for the many college students who take a human sexuality course. For them, these textbooks are likely to serve as the primary, if not exclusive, source of authoritative reading material. These students are unlikely to read primary source material, and when they do, the range of topics about which they read is likely to be narrow. Therefore, students' exposure to most primary source material is likely to come in the form of second-hand accounts presented in their human sexuality textbooks. The degree to which human sexuality textbooks present comprehensive and representative reviews of the primary source material on the topics they cover thus takes on considerable importance.

In the current research, I focused on examining human sexuality textbook coverage of adult-child and adult-adolescent sexual experiences—typically referred to by the public, the media, and professionals as “child sexual abuse.” In scientific

discussions of this form of sexual behavior, the indiscriminate use of the term *child sexual abuse*, as well as related terms to describe the younger and older persons involved (e.g., *victims*, *survivors*, *offenders*, *perpetrators*), is problematic because it confuses harm done to children or adolescents with violations of social norms (Kilpatrick, 1987; Okami, 1990; Rind & Bauserman, 1993). Because of this problem, I will use nonjudgmental terminology. Furthermore, the term *adult-nonadult sex* will often be used as a simplified term to represent both contact and noncontact sexual experiences between adults and prepubescent children and between adults and adolescents under the age of consent, which is generally between 16 and 18 in the United States.

Discussions of adult-nonadult sex in the professional literature have grown steadily since the late 1970s (Okami, 1990; Willis, Bagwell, & Campbell, 1991). Although initially some of these discussions were non-condemnatory and even took a permissive stance toward adult-

nonadult sex under certain circumstances (e.g., Constantine, 1983; Constantine & Martinson, 1981), most recent discussions have been unambiguously condemnatory, have focused on adult-nonadult sex as a major cause of short-term and long-term maladjustment, and have stated or implied that this maladjustment has a high likelihood of occurrence (e.g., Briere & Elliot, 1994; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993; Mendel, 1995). A number of researchers have criticized the role of advocacy and/or the moral tone that many of these recent discussions have taken (Gardner, 1993; Goodyear-Smith, 1993; Okami, 1990; Kilpatrick, 1987; Kutchinsky, 1992; Seligman, 1994). Okami (1990) argued that much recent research in the area of

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adult-nonadult sex has been more social criticism than social science. This development is problematic because issues such as the likelihood and extent of harmfulness of this type of sex may become exaggerated (Kutchinsky, 1992), which may lead to iatrogenic harm (Okami, 1990; Seligman, 1994). These concerns were concisely articulated by Browne and Finkelhor (1986) in their often cited literature review of the initial and long-term effects of adult-nonadult sex:

it is important that advocates not exaggerate or overstate the intensity or inevitability of these consequences. In addition to policymakers, victims and their families wait for research findings on the effects of sexual abuse and they may be further victimized by exaggerated claims about the effects of sexual abuse. It is not possible to maintain two sets of conclusions about the effects of sexual abuse: a dire one for political purposes, and a hopeful one for family members. Thus the presence of both audiences requires that those who conduct and interpret research in this field maintain a posture of objectivity and balance (p. 178).

Although adult-nonadult sex cannot be equated with other disapproved or taboo forms of sexual behavior because of its greater potential for exploitation and consequent harm, parallels nevertheless can be made. Exaggeration and overstatement by professionals in past discussions of the consequences of many of these other forms of sexual behavior have occurred, in which the reported harmfulness of these behaviors was inferred from their "wrongfulness" (Levine & Troiden, 1988; Money, 1979; Mosher, 1989; Myers, 1981). A mere generation ago, masturbation, homosexuality, fellatio, cunnilingus, and sexual promiscuity were considered pathological by the American Psychiatric Association (*DSM-I*, 1952). Discussions about masturbation and homosexuality, in particular, were biased. The medical profession from the

mid-1700s to the early 1900s was dominated by physicians who believed that masturbation caused a large number of symptoms, ranging from acne to insanity (Bullough & Bullough, 1977; Hall, 1992; Money, 1985). Medical pronouncements of dangerousness were accompanied by moral tirades. For example, Dr. John Harvey Kellogg (1891), who promoted Kellogg's Corn Flakes in part to reduce the incidence of masturbation, warned that the "sin of self-pollution is one of the vilest, the basest, and the most degrading that a human being can commit" and that it "wastes the most precious part of the blood, uses up the vital forces, and finally leaves the poor victim a most utterly ruined and loathsome object" (p. 231). The mental health profession's view of homosexuality until the 1970s was similarly pathologizing and moralistic. One psychiatrist, writing in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, called homosexuality "a dread dysfunction, malignant in character, which has risen to epidemic proportions" (Socarides, 1970).

The history of professional overstatement of the harmfulness of taboo sexual behavior in general, along with the occurrence of overstatement in recent discussions of adult-nonadult sex in particular (Kutchinsky, 1992; Okami, 1990), suggests that this problem may occur in current human sexuality textbooks in their treatment of the consequences of adult-nonadult sex. With this possibility in mind, I examined human sexuality textbook coverage of the psychological consequences of adult-nonadult sex for the nonadults involved. This narrow focus seemed particularly relevant and important for several reasons. First, researchers using college samples who have investigated consequences of adult-nonadult sex have generally found either no effects on psychological adjustment attributable to this experience (e.g., Cole, 1987; Fromuth, 1986; Harter, Alexander, & Neimeyer, 1988; Hat-

field, 1987; Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Hrabowy & Allgeier, 1987; Pallotta, 1991; Predieri, 1991; Silliman, 1993; Zetzer, 1990), or only a few effects out of many measures—effects that have been small in terms of effect size (e.g., Alexander & Lupfer, 1987; Bergdahl, 1982; Edwards & Alexander, 1992; Fromuth & Burkhart, 1987; Haugaard & Emery, 1989; Sarbo, 1984; White & Strange, 1993). Thus, college students who have experienced sex with adults when they were younger do not, as a group, exhibit the kind of maladjustment that has been frequently reported in clinical studies (for reviews of clinical studies, see, e.g., Beitchman, Zucker, Hood, DaCosta, & Akman, 1991; Beitchman et al., 1992). Consequently, for these college students to read in a human sexuality textbook an exaggerated or overstated account of the intensity or inevitability of negative outcomes resulting from adult-nonadult sex is problematic, because this misinformation may become self-fulfilling (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Aside from this potential problem, another important issue is that human sexuality textbooks are presented to students as works of social science. As such, these textbooks are expected to adhere to standard scientific conventions in reporting and interpreting research. Students are likely to accept the textbook summaries and interpretations of research as scientifically valid information. If the information is not scientifically accurate, then problems may arise (Mosher, 1979).

To assess human sexuality textbook coverage of adult-nonadult sex, it is first necessary to review what the full range of literature has revealed about the psychological correlates for nonadults who are sexually involved with adults. This review will help to provide a broad overview of the information available about correlates and will also suggest the methodological criteria with which to assess the coverage of

correlates of adult-nonadult sex that is provided in current human sexuality textbooks.

Review of the Psychological Correlates of Adult-Nonadult Sex

Since 1981, a number of reviews of the literature concerning the effects of adult-nonadult sex have been published (Beitchman et al., 1991; Beitchman et al., 1992; Black & DeBlassie, 1993; Briere & Elliot, 1994; Briere & Runtz, 1993; Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Constantine, 1981; Glod, 1993; Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993; Kilpatrick, 1987; Mendel, 1995; Urquiza & Capra, 1990; Watkins & Bentovim, 1992). These reviews have consisted mostly or exclusively of clinical and legal samples, and, except for Constantine (1981) and Kilpatrick (1987), have been focused on the findings from these samples to evaluate the effects of adult-nonadult sex. The results of these clinically and legally focused reviews are uniform: nonadults sexually involved with adults react negatively to these experiences and complain of many problems, including anger, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, inappropriate sexual behavior, aggression, drug abuse, suicide attempts, low self-esteem, and post-traumatic stress disorder, among others. However, clinical and legal samples cannot be assumed to be representative of the entire population of persons with these experiences. Nonclinical and nonlegal research, as reviewed by Constantine (1981) and Kilpatrick (1987), presents a different picture in which reactions range from negative to positive and psychological adjustment is frequently comparable to that of controls.

This different picture presented by nonclinical and nonlegal research is well illustrated by research using college samples, which has grown over the past 15 years to include more than three dozen studies that can be located through databases such as *PsycLit* and *Dissertation Abstracts*. As noted previously, researchers have

generally found either no effects on psychological adjustment or only small effects on a minority of the measures. Furthermore, researchers using college students to measure reactions to these experiences have shown that they are variable, ranging from negative to positive, with about two thirds of men and one third of women on average reacting in a neutral or positive way (Condy, Templer, Brown, & Veaco, 1987; Finkelhor, 1979; Fromuth & Burkhart, 1987; Goldman & Goldman, 1988; Landis, 1956; Li, West, & Woodhouse, 1993; O'Neill, 1990; Schultz & Jones, 1983; Urquiza, 1988). Positive short-term reactions in the nine studies just cited ranged from 6% to 69% for males ($M = 39\%$) and from 2% to 28% for females ($M = 14\%$), indicating a sizable sex difference. A number of researchers have commented on these differences in reactions. Fritz, Stoll, and Wagner (1981) observed that "[f]emales tended to assign a decidedly harmful, negative quality to their pre-pubescent sexual experience while males were neutral or even positive about it" (p. 56) and that "[m]ales are likely to view pre-pubescent contacts as sexual initiation while females view such encounters as sexual violation" (p. 59). Schultz and Jones (1983) came to similar conclusions by noting that "[m]ales tended to see sexual experiences as an adventure and as curiosity-satisfying, while most females see it as an invasion of their body, or a moral wrong" (p. 101). Although these samples cannot be assumed to be representative of the entire population, they are nevertheless valuable for gaining some insight into the correlates of adult-nonadult sex in the general population, because more than 50% of U. S. adults have some college experience (Fritz et al., 1981). Moreover, findings from these college samples are valuable because they are directly relevant to the audience of human sexuality textbooks—i.e., college students.

Other nonclinical researchers have reached similar conclusions to

those researchers using college students. Kilpatrick (1986), who surveyed 501 predominantly middle class women, found that those women who had sexual contact with adults when they were nonadults were not less well adjusted than women who did not have these contacts, except when factors such as pressure or force were present. In the case of convenience samples typically involving males who had sexual experiences with male adults when they were children or adolescents, positive reactions have frequently been reported (Bernard, 1981; Davis, 1990; Ingram, 1981; Leahy, 1992; Money & Weinrich, 1983; Nelson, 1986; Okami, 1991; Sandfort, 1984; Tindall, 1978). Although these samples cannot be generalized to all such contacts, they show that the positive reactions reported in college samples also occur in other nonclinical populations—a finding that reinforces the idea that reactions span the full range rather than being restricted to the negative pole.

Child abuse researchers have argued that college samples are not meaningful in terms of evaluating the effects of adult-nonadult sex on the typical person in our society because they represent an unusually well-functioning population (e.g., Briere, 1988; Fromuth, 1986; Pallotta, 1991). Furthermore, child abuse researchers have been generally dismissive of "positive" convenience samples studies, such as Sandfort's (1984), because they question whether these samples generalize to any other group of persons who, as nonadults, were involved in adult-nonadult sex (e.g., Finkelhor, 1990; Kendall-Tackett et al., 1993). These researchers are thus arguing that clinical findings are more generalizable. Clearly, clinical samples, college samples, and convenience samples are all limited in their generalizability. The relative value of these different sample types is clarified through research using representative samples. Three studies using national

probability samples that have addressed the correlates of adult-nonadult sex (Baker & Duncan, 1985; Finkelhor, Hotelling, Lewis, & Smith, 1989; Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, & Michaels, 1994) have been published in the past decade. In Baker and Duncan's (1985) study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a nationally representative sample of participants 15 years of age and over in Great Britain. Of the male respondents who had sexual encounters with adults before they were 16, 4% reported permanent damage; 33% reported being harmed at the time, but with no long-lasting effects; 57% reported no effects at all; and 6% reported that these encounters had improved the quality of their life. For the female respondents in this study, 13% reported permanent damage, 51% reported harm at the time but that was not long lasting, 34% reported no effects at all, and 2% reported improvement in the quality of their life. In short, reports of permanent harm were rare (4% for males and 13% for females), and reports of nonnegative effects were common (63% for males and 36% for females).

Finkelhor et al. (1989) reported data collected by the *Los Angeles Times* poll in 1985, in which researchers interviewed by telephone a national random sample of 2,630 U. S. men and women over 18 years of age. Of the many questions asked, Finkelhor et al. argued that three of these were relevant to assessing respondents' level of current functioning: extent of marital disruption, satisfaction with intimate relationships with the opposite sex, and being a religious nonpractitioner. Finkelhor et al. divided respondents into three groups (victims with intercourse, victims without intercourse, and nonvictims) and found significant differences in the expected direction for all three measures for both sexes. In a discriminant analysis, performed to hold constant a variety of background factors, sev-

eral of these differences disappeared. The differences reported by Finkelhor et al. had small effect sizes, using Cohen's (1988) rule that small, medium, and large effect sizes correspond to $r = .10$, $.30$, and $.50$, respectively. In contrasting the two victim groups with the nonvictim group for men and women separately, the average effect size before holding background factors constant was $r = .07$ for men and $r = .09$ for women. Although Finkelhor et al. did not report these effect sizes, they acknowledged them by noting that discussions of the long-term impact of sexual abuse have to be tempered with caution because the results of the *Los Angeles Times* poll study indicated that most victims did not suffer any impairments.

In their recent study of Americans' sexuality based on face-to-face interviews of about 3,000 respondents selected via national probability sampling, Laumann et al. (1994) presented correlates of adult-nonadult sexual contacts. Of the many questions the interviewers asked respondents, 21 questions were analyzed separately for men and women who had been and had not been sexually touched by an adult before they reached puberty. Two questions dealt with adjustment, 10 questions dealt with sexual problems, and the remaining 9 dealt with current sexual activity. For the first two sets of questions, which can be taken as indices of the impact of the sexual touching, 6 of 11 measures for men and 6 of 10 measures for women were significant in the direction of a negative impact for being touched. The mean effect size for these two sets of measures for men was $r = .07$, with a range from $.02$ to $.12$, and for women was $r = .05$, with a range from $-.11$ to $.12$. Thus, the effect sizes were small for all measures. Although the authors did not report these effect sizes, they did note that the differences between groups were modest and stated that "[a]t no point is there any evidence that a majority of those with child-

hood sexual encounters have problems in their adult sexual lives" (p. 346). The authors also noted that men were less likely to react negatively to their experiences than were women. When asked whether their experience had affected their lives, considerably fewer men (45%) than women (70%) said that it had (usually in a negative way), $\chi^2(1) = 24.12$, $p < .01$. Fewer men (80.7%) than women (94.5%) answered this question, $\chi^2(1) = 21.10$, $p < .01$. Together, these findings suggest that nonresponding was associated with nonnegative effects. Thus, the true percentage of sexually touched men and women who had negative experiences was likely to have been lower than 45% and 70%, respectively. A lower bound estimate of negative effects, assuming all reports of effects were negative and all nonreports were not, is 36% for men and 66% for women. The authors cautioned against making causal inferences from these data because plausible alternative explanations existed that might account for the small differences obtained (e.g., the touched group was also more sexually active as adults, which could have had a bearing on adjustment and sexual problems).

Taken together, the three studies using national probability samples indicate very small differences in outcome between persons who have and have not experienced adult-nonadult sex. As Laumann et al. (1994) noted, however, these differences must be interpreted cautiously in terms of cause and effect because factors other than the sexual experiences may be responsible for them. The three studies also indicate that about two thirds of males and one third of females do not report being negatively affected by these experiences at any point in their lives. These results are remarkably similar to the college data but are inconsistent with the clinical and legal data.

The "third variable" problem raised by Laumann et al. (1994) is

an important consideration in evaluating the cause-and-effect relationship between adult-nonadult sex and later adjustment (Briere, 1988; Yama, Tovey, & Fogas, 1993). Researchers who measured family background factors in addition to current adjustment among college students usually found that differences appeared in these family background factors between the "abused" and control groups, irrespective of whether differences in adjustment measures occurred (e.g., Alexander & Lupfer, 1987; Cole, 1987; Edwards & Alexander, 1992; Fromuth, 1986; Harter et al., 1988; Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Pallotta, 1991; Yama et al., 1993; Zetzer, 1990). In college studies in which these background factors have been held statistically constant, differences that were present in adjustment scores have tended to disappear (e.g., Cole, 1987; Fromuth, 1986; Harter et al., 1988; Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Pallotta, 1991). The argument is that a disrupted family may lead to later maladjustment and may also make children more vulnerable to agree to participate in counternormative behavior (e.g., sex with adults). Thus, the correlation between maladjustment and adult-nonadult sex may be spurious. Briere (1988) questioned whether family disruption and sex abuse are separable, but he nevertheless acknowledged that the issue of cause and effect is not resolvable with the correlational data used in this type of research.

One more important issue is the influence of moderating variables on reactions and outcomes. Based on his literature review of both clinical and nonclinical studies, Constantine (1981, 1983) concluded that adult-nonadult sex is not harmful per se because reactions and outcomes, instead of being necessarily negative, vary with a number of moderator variables, particularly the use of force, perception of freedom to participate, and knowledge of and personal values about sex. The studies based on the college and convenience

samples support Constantine's conclusion. Another important moderating variable is intrafamilial versus extrafamilial sex. Research indicates that incest is likely to be more problematic than nonincest because of its greater association with factors such as family disruption and the use of force and coercion (Herman, 1981; Hilton, 1984; Pallotta, 1991; Russell, 1986).

Criteria for Assessing Textbooks

A biased human sexuality textbook account of the psychological correlates of adult-nonadult sex can be defined as one that misrepresents population characteristics or that provides information from which faulty inferences about population characteristics are likely to be made by readers. The brief review of the literature based on clinical, legal, college, convenience, and nationally representative samples suggests which components should be contained in a textbook account so as to avoid bias.¹

First, studies using all the various sample types should be included. Clinical and legal samples alone are inadequate because they do not represent general population characteristics. Second, the common belief that adult-nonadult sex is likely to be traumatic with lasting impairment in the general population is not supported in nonclinical research. Thus, it should not be stated or implied that reactions and outcomes are typically highly negative. Third, the full range of reactions from negative to positive occurs and should be reported. Positive and neutral reactions are not rare, especially for males. Fourth, incest should be separated from nonincest because the former is more likely to be associated with negative reactions and outcomes. Fifth, when reporting the results from nonrepresentative samples (e.g., clinical or legal), it is important to qualify these results, stating that they cannot safely be generalized to other populations. Sixth, reactions for males and females are different in all types of

nonclinical research, and hence these differences should be pointed out. Moreover, it is inappropriate to generalize from the experiences of girls to the experiences of boys, and vice versa. Seventh, causal inferences from early experiences of adult-nonadult sex to later maladjustment are invalid. Although case studies conducted by clinicians may provide compelling anecdotal evidence, unqualified causal attributions are nevertheless questionable, especially when applied to persons in the general population who have these experiences. Causal inferences should therefore generally not be made, and alternative explanations (e.g., third variables) should be discussed. Eighth, reactions to adult-nonadult sex are not necessarily negative with a large negative effect on later adjustment. Nonclinical research shows that, although negative reactions and findings of negative correlates are common, reactions can also be neutral or even positive with no measurable relationship to later adjustment. These differential reactions and outcomes are associated with moderator variables. Thus, it should be noted that adult-nonadult sex may not necessarily be harmful per se; its impact may depend on contextual factors.

Presenting information that conforms to these criteria is not synonymous in any way with condoning adult-nonadult sex. Rather, the value of such a presentation is to reflect accurately what is known so

¹Laumann et al.'s (1994) results from their nationally representative sample were not available to be included in any textbooks reviewed in the current study. Nevertheless, their findings are completely consistent with the other two nationally representative samples. Their findings concerning self-reported effects were virtually identical to Baker and Duncan's (1985), and their effect sizes on measures of adjustment were virtually identical to those in Finkelhor et al.'s (1989) report. The importance of the Laumann et al. study, therefore, is that it confirms the results from the other two representative samples and thus points to the importance of including discussions of nationally representative samples in textbooks to avoid biased coverage.

that readers will have exposure to scientifically valid information. Invalid information about the consequences of adult-nonadult sex may lead to problems (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Kutchinsky, 1992; Okami, 1990; Seligman, 1994) and is therefore of concern.

Method

Sample of Textbooks Included

Fourteen human sexuality textbooks published in the U. S. were obtained for analysis (see Table 1). The dates of publication of these textbooks ranged from 1987 to 1994. The mean year of publication was 1992 ($SD = 2.07$). These college-level textbooks were obtained from three sources. First, I attended two Eastern Psychological Association conferences in 1993 and 1994 and asked all publishers exhibiting at the conferences whether they carried human sexuality textbooks. If they did, I requested and received examination copies. This method yielded eight textbooks. Second, I requested examination copies from publisher representatives who visited me during the academic year while they were on their rounds at my university. This method produced two textbooks. Third, I borrowed textbooks from colleagues who had used them in human sexu-

ality courses that they had taught. This method accounted for four textbooks.

Although more than 14 human sexuality textbooks are currently on the market, the obtained sample contains the most widely used textbooks (e.g., Allgeier & Allgeier, 1991; Crooks & Baur, 1993; Hyde, 1994; Kelly, 1990; Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1992; Rathus, Nevid, & Fichner-Rathus, 1993). This sample occupies a large portion of the human sexuality textbook market and thus has wide exposure among human sexuality students. The contents of these textbooks are therefore important because of the large number of U. S. students who read them.

Coding Instrument

For each textbook, all pages containing information relevant to the correlates, consequences, or effects of adult-nonadult sex were located and photocopied. The relevant pages were located in two ways. First, page numbers were found by checking key words in the textbook's index (e.g., *child sexual abuse*, *pedophilia*). Second, chapters that typically contain discussions of adult-nonadult sex were examined. These chapters were variously entitled "Sexual Variations" (Luria, Friedman, & Rose, 1987), "Exploitative and Atypical

Sexual Behavior" (Turner & Robinson, 1993), and "Sexual Coercion" (Rathus et al., 1993), among others.

Based on the 8 criteria for assessing textbook coverage of adult-nonadult sex presented previously, 13 items were developed for coders to use in assessing each textbook (see the Appendix for a listing of all items and their response formats). The first item assessed whether a textbook focused on clinical and legal samples or used a broader range of samples. The second and third items assessed the most typical reaction or outcome presented or implied and the range of reactions reported. The fourth and the fifth items assessed whether incest was treated separately and how it was compared in terms of its effects with nonincestuous adult-nonadult sex. The next two items assessed the extent to which a textbook included inappropriate generalizations—i.e., generalizing from unrepresentative samples without qualification and stating or implying that reports of negative effects included in the textbook are typical of all adult-nonadult sex. The eighth and the ninth items assessed whether sex differences were discussed and how the reactions of boys were compared to those of girls. The next two items assessed whether reports on girls' reactions and outcomes were inappropriately generalized to those of boys and vice versa. The last two items assessed inappropriate causal inferences: stating or implying without qualification that later maladjustment is causally linked to adult-nonadult sex and stating or implying that the sex per se is harmful regardless of context. For items assessing a range of possibilities in which bipolar adjectives were appropriate for end-points (e.g., *very negative* and *very positive*), seven-point scales were used. For the remaining items in which the extent of some feature of coverage was being assessed, four-point scales anchored by *not at all* and *very much* were used. These four-point

Table 1

List of 14 Human Sexuality Textbooks Analyzed for Coverage of Consequences of Adult-Nonadult Sex

Textbook	Year of Publication	Pages Analyzed	Symbol ^a
1. Allgeier & Allgeier (3rd ed.)	1991	664-667	AA
2. Byer & Shainberg (4th ed.)	1994	618-619, 622	BS
3. Crooks & Baur (5th ed.)	1993	656	CB
4. Haas & Haas (1st ed.)	1993	559-561	HH
5. Hyde (5th ed.)	1994	499, 501-502	Hy
6. Katchadourian (5th ed.)	1989	390-391, 393	Ka
7. Kelley & Byrne (1st ed.)	1992	380-381, 385-387	KB
8. Kelly (2nd ed.)	1990	354-357	Ke
9. Luria, Friedman, & Rose (1st ed.)	1987	580-581	LFR
10. Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny (4th ed.)	1992	461-464	MJK
11. Rathus, Nevid, & Fichner-Rathus (1st ed.)	1993	594-595	RNR
12. Strong & DeVault (1st ed.)	1994	751-753	SD
13. Turner & Robinson (1st ed.)	1993	569-570, 572-576	TR
14. Wade & Cirese (2nd ed.)	1991	370, 599-601	WC

^aSymbols, or abbreviations, are used in Tables 2 and 3 and Figure 1.

Table 2

Mean Ratings of Measures Assessing Coverage of Consequences of Adult-Nonadult Sex in 14 Human Sexuality Textbooks

Item	AA	BS	CB	HH	Hy	Ka	KB	Ke	LFR
1. Use of clinical/legal samples ^a	2.6	7.0	6.8	6.2	5.4	3.0	6.8	6.0	5.4
2. Most typical reaction/outcome ^a	3.0	1.0	1.2	2.0	2.2	3.2	1.8	2.6	2.2
3. Range of reactions: worst ^a	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.4	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	1.2
best ^a	5.8	2.0	1.8	3.6	3.8	5.6	2.8	4.0	5.4
4. Incest treated separately ^b	3.2	3.2	1.2	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.2	1.0
5. Incest vs. nonincest in effects ^a	2.6	3.2	2.8	4.2	3.4	2.6	3.8	3.4	4.0
6. Sample results qualified ^b	3.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.8	3.8	1.0	2.4	2.0
7. Negative findings generalized ^b	1.6	3.8	3.8	3.6	2.8	1.6	3.6	2.4	3.0
8. Sex differences addressed ^b	2.0	3.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	3.0	1.0	3.6	3.0
9. Boys vs. girls in reactions ^a	4.6	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	5.2	4.0	4.2	5.4
10. Generalized from girls to boys ^b	3.0	2.0	3.6	2.8	3.4	2.2	3.8	3.0	2.8
11. Generalized from boys to girls ^b	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	2.2	1.0	1.0	1.0
12. Causal attributions made ^b	1.8	4.0	3.8	3.4	3.0	1.8	4.0	2.6	3.4
13. Sex per se is harmful ^b	1.8	3.8	4.0	3.2	2.4	1.8	3.6	2.4	2.8

Item	MJK	RNR	SD	TR	WC	Original Alpha ^c	New Alpha ^d	Criteria for Bias
1. Use of clinical/legal samples ^a	7.0	6.4	6.8	6.8	6.6	.97	.98	≤ 2 or ≥ 6
2. Most typical reaction/outcome ^a	1.6	1.2	1.6	1.6	1.4	.87	.90	≤ 2 or ≥ 6
3. Range of reactions: worst ^a	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	(94%) ^e	(94%) ^e	≥ 2
best ^a	3.6	2.6	2.2	2.2	2.8	.97	.98	≤ 4
4. Incest treated separately ^b	3.4	2.2	2.2	3.4	1.2	.90	.95	≤ 2
5. Incest vs. nonincest in effects ^a	3.4	2.4	4.0	3.8	4.0	.64	.75	≥ 4
6. Sample results qualified ^b	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	.95	.98	≤ 2
7. Negative findings generalized ^b	3.4	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.6	.93	.95	≥ 3
8. Sex differences addressed ^b	1.0	2.6	1.0	1.6	2.8	.82	.94	≤ 2
9. Boys vs. girls in reactions ^a	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	.79	.83	≤ 4
10. Generalized from girls to boys ^b	3.2	3.8	3.8	3.6	3.6	.61	.79	≥ 3
11. Generalized from boys to girls ^b	1.2	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	(91%) ^e	.94	≥ 3
12. Causal attributions made ^b	4.0	3.8	4.0	3.6	3.8	.90	.92	≥ 3
13. Sex per se is harmful ^b	3.8	4.0	4.0	3.8	3.6	.96	.96	≥ 3

^a7-point scale^b4-point scale^cOriginal Cronbach alphas when each of five coders coded independently^dCronbach alphas after coders consulted and discussed others' codings^eNot calculable because almost all responses = 1; in parentheses = percent of exact agreement among coders

scales acted as expanded no/yes response formats, in which coders could also choose options indicating mostly no or mostly yes.

Coding Procedure

Five coders coded the textbooks. The coders included the author and another college professor, two graduate students, and a criminal defense attorney who works with child abuse cases. All coders were familiar with the child abuse literature. Each coder independently read the material from the 14 textbooks and coded it. All coders, except for the author, were masked with respect to the names of the authors of the textbooks. In a second step, the codings of other coders were shared and discussed to clarify any

discrepancies, after which the individual coders were given the option of making changes. This second step was taken to increase the accuracy of the lengthy coding procedure, which took on average about three hours and required 196 judgments by each coder.

Results

Interjudge Reliability

The coders' judgments for each item were assessed for interjudge reliability in two ways. First, Cronbach's alpha was computed for each item before the coders examined each other's judgments and discussed discrepancies. Table 2 presents these original alphas. The alphas ranged from .61 to .97, with a

mean alpha of .86. For two items (worst reaction and generalizing from boys to girls), the alphas were not computable because of zero variability in the codings of some coders. In these two cases, the percentage of exact agreement among the coders for each textbook was computed, resulting in 94% and 91% agreement for the two items, respectively. These results show that the items were reliable when used independently by the coders. The second step of allowing coders to refine their judgments by examining others' codings and discussing discrepancies resulted in 75 modifications out of 980 possible changes (7.65%). The percentage of changes among the coders ranged from 5.6% to 10.2%. The new Cronbach's alphas

Table 3

Biases in Coverage of the Consequences of Adult-Nonadult Sex in 14 Human Sexuality Textbooks

Item	AA	BS	CB	HH	Hy	Ka	KB	Ke	LFR	MJK	RNR	SD	TR	WC	Number of Texts Showing Bias
1. Use of clinical/legal samples		•	•	•			•	•		•	•	•	•	•	10
2. Most typical reaction/outcome		•	•	•			•			•	•	•	•	•	9
3. Range of reactions: worst															0
best		•	•	•	•		•	•		•	•	•	•	•	11
4. Incest treated separately			•						•				•	•	3
5. Incest vs. nonincest in effects				•			•		•				•		4
6. Sample results qualified		•	•	•			•		•	•	•	•	•	•	10
7. Negative findings generalized		•	•	•			•		•	•	•	•	•	•	10
8. Sex differences addressed	•		•	•	•		•		•			•	•		8
9. Boys vs. girls in reactions		•	•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	10
10. Generalized from girls to boys	•		•		•		•	•		•	•	•	•	•	10
11. Generalized from boys to girls															0
12. Causal attributions made		•	•	•	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	11
13. Sex per se is harmful		•	•	•			•		•	•	•	•	•	•	9
Biases per Textbook	2	8	11	10	5	0	11	3	5	10	9	10	11	10	

• indicates methodological or reporting bias

ranged from .75 to .98, with a mean of .91 (see Table 2). For the item assessing the worst reaction presented, the alpha continued to be uncomputable but had the same high agreement percentage (94%). These modified judgments were thus highly reliable and were used in the subsequent analyses.

Assessment of Textbook Coverage

Mean ratings for each textbook on each item were calculated by averaging the coders' ratings. These mean ratings are provided in Table 2. To determine whether the textbooks performed inadequately on the various items in terms of showing a methodological or reporting bias, numerical criteria (cut-off points) were developed for each item. These cut-off points were based on the "criteria for assessing textbooks" presented previously and on the particular scale of measurement used for a given item. If the mean rating for an item for a particular textbook fell at or below (or above, if appropriate) the cut-off point for that item, then the textbook was judged to show bias for that item. For example, for the item assessing the samples included, a value of 6 on the 7-point scale was used as a cut-off point. A mean rating for a textbook greater than or equal to 6

indicated that the textbook used a large majority or more of clinical and legal samples, which represents bias. The value of 6 is a conservative cut-off point because, on the 7-point scale, the scale value of 6 ("a large majority") represents an interval ranging from 5.5 to 6.5. Hence, the value 5.5 would be a valid, although more liberal, cut-off point for determining bias. For all 7-point scales, conservative cut-off points were similarly chosen. For the 4-point scales, the conservative interval from 1 to 2 (or 3 to 4, if appropriate) was used, instead of using the midpoint of the scale (2.5), which would have been a more liberal cut-off point. For example, for the item assessing whether sex differences were addressed, a mean rating less than or equal to 2 ("not at all" to "a little") indicated bias. Table 2 provides a list of cut-off points for all items, and these cut-off points are explained further next.

Samples. For the first item, a mean less than or equal to 2 ("none" to "a small minority") on the 7-point scale would indicate too little attention to clinical or legal samples, whereas a mean greater than or equal to 6 ("a large majority" to "all") would indicate too much focus on clinical or legal samples. Table 3 presents the results based on these criteria, in which bullets next to the

item and below a textbook heading indicate bias. Ten of the 14 textbooks (71.4%) focused too much on clinical or legal samples ($M = 6.64$ for these 10 textbooks), indicating an almost exclusive reliance on these sample types.

Type and range of reactions and outcomes. For the second measure, a mean less than or equal to 2 ("very negative" to "negative") on the 7-point scale indicated that typical reactions and outcomes were reported as being more negative than is justified by the national probability data and other nonclinical data (e.g., college samples). This bias was reflected by statements such as "[c]hild sexual abuse often inflicts great psychological harm on the developing child . . ." and "[e]ffects of childhood sexual abuse are often long-lasting" (Rathus et al., 1993, p. 594) or "adult-child sex is likely to be traumatic for victims and leave lasting psychological wounds" (Wade & Cirese, 1991, pp. 599-600). Nine textbooks (64.3%) fell below 2 ($M = 1.49$ for these nine textbooks), indicating that they implied that typical reactions and outcomes were highly negative. For the third measure, all textbook authors reported very negative reactions, which correctly represents the worst reactions. A mean less than or equal to 4 ("very negative" to "neutral") on

the 7-point scale indicated a biased reporting of best reactions, because best reactions are positive. The authors of 11 textbooks (78.6%) failed to report these reactions. Their mean of 2.85 indicates that the best reaction reported was in the negative range.

Incest versus sex with nonrelatives. For the fourth measure, a mean rating less than or equal to 2 ("not at all" to "a little") on the 4-point scale indicated inadequate separation of incest from nonincest. Three textbooks (21.4%) showed too little attention to this difference ($M = 1.13$ for these textbooks). For the fifth measure, a mean greater than or equal to 4 ("no difference" to "much better") on the 7-point scale indicated a failure to describe incest as having a generally more negative impact. Four textbooks (28.6%) gave the impression that incest and nonincest were equal in their effects.

Generalizations. For the sixth measure, a mean less than or equal to 2 ("not at all" to "a little") on the 4-point scale indicated an inadequate discussion of the limitations in generalizability of the particular samples that were used—a problem that could apply to positive convenience samples as well as to clinical samples. This inadequacy occurred only for clinical/legal samples and was indicated, for example, when a textbook presented a list of symptoms, supported this list with a series of clinical citations, and then stated or implied that these symptoms apply to the general population rather than being limited to the clinical population. Ten textbooks (71.4%) provided an inadequate discussion ($M = 1.12$ for these textbooks), with eight of them failing completely to qualify the sample results. A notable exception to this tendency was the observation by Allgeier and Allgeier (1991, p. 664) that "the samples on which these conclusions [of harm] are based have come from court referrals or psychotherapy clients, and generalizations from such biased samples should be made very

cautiously." For the seventh measure, a mean greater than or equal to 3 ("to a fair degree" to "very much") on the 4-point scale indicated overstating the generalizability of the negative effects that appeared in the samples included in the textbook. Overstatements were indicated, for example, by listing specific negative effects based on particular studies and then stating that these effects "often" occur, are "likely" to occur, or affect "many" victims, thereby incorrectly characterizing the entire population of persons with these experiences. Ten textbooks (71.4%) showed this bias to a considerable degree ($M = 3.63$ for these textbooks).

Sex differences. For the eighth item, a mean less than or equal to 2 ("not at all" to "a little") on the 4-point scale indicated a failure to address adequately sex differences in reactions. Eight textbooks (57.1%) showed this inadequacy ($M = 1.20$ for these textbooks), with six textbooks failing completely to differentiate between the sexes. For the ninth item, a mean less than or equal to 4 ("much worse" to "no difference") on the 7-point scale indicated a failure to report correctly that males react less negatively or more positively on average than do females. Authors of 10 textbooks (71.4%) failed to provide adequate information on this point ($M = 4.00$ for these textbooks), stating or implying in all cases that reactions are the same. For example, Rathus et al. (1993, p. 594) stated that "[r]esearchers generally find more similarities than differences between the genders with respect to the effects of sexual abuse in childhood." For the tenth and eleventh items, means greater than or equal to 3 ("to a fair degree" to "very much") on the 4-point scales indicated inappropriately generalizing from the experiences of girls to those of boys and vice versa. Authors of 10 textbooks (71.4%) inappropriately used data on samples involving females to discuss reactions and outcomes for both males and females ($M = 3.48$ for

these textbooks). For example, Kelley and Byrne (1992, p. 386) supported their claim that the "effects on the victim are usually long-lasting" with two clinical studies, one involving 50 adult women and the other 200 female streetwalkers. On the other hand, no author generalized from male reactions or outcomes to female reactions or outcomes.

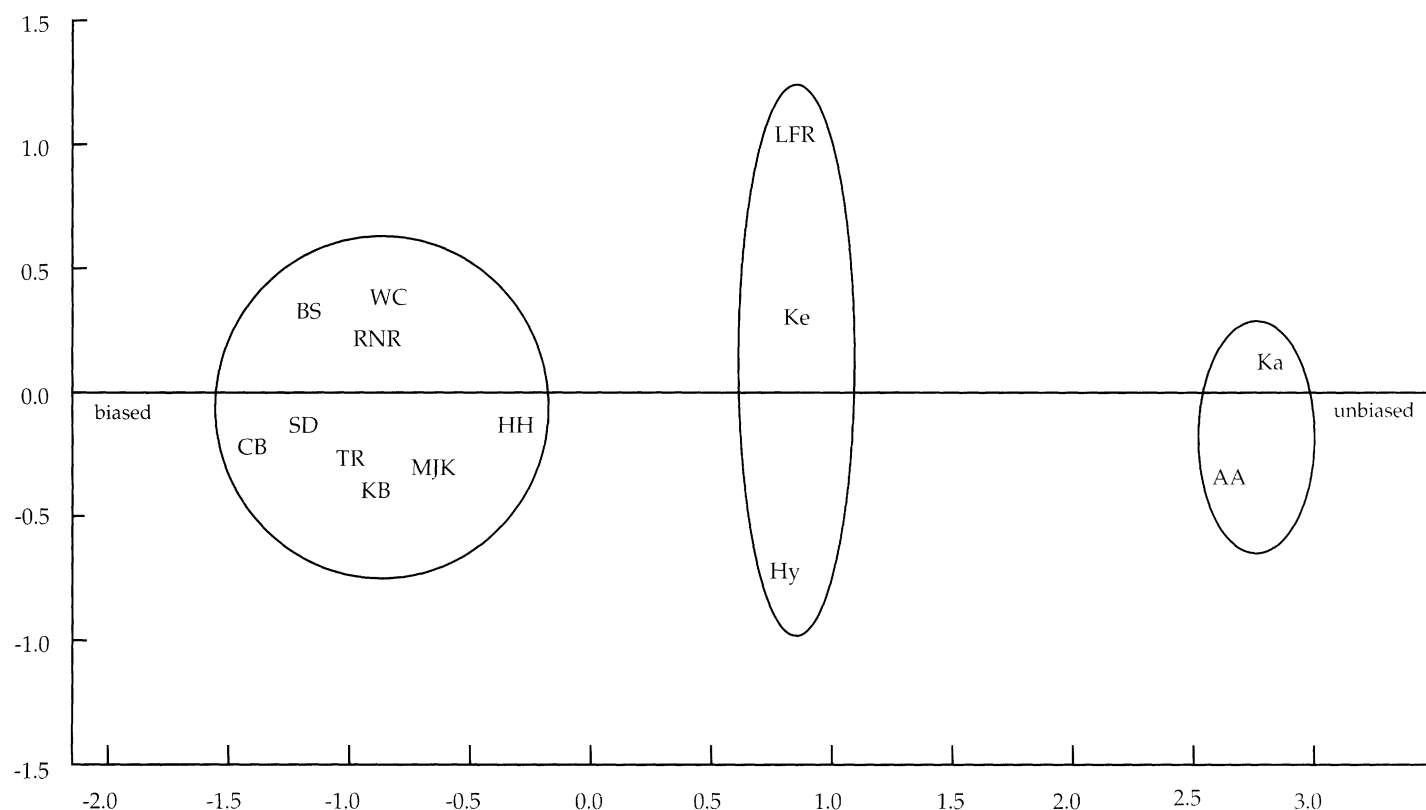
Causal attributions. For the twelfth and thirteenth measures, means greater than or equal to 3 ("to a fair degree" to "very much") on the 4-point scales indicated, respectively, making inappropriate causal attributions about the effects of adult-nonadult sex and inaccurately stating or implying that sex per se is harmful regardless of circumstances. Authors of 11 textbooks (78.6%) made inappropriate causal attributions ($M = 3.71$ for these textbooks), which were indicated, for example, by noting the occurrence of adult-nonadult sex and later maladjustment, using causal language (e.g., "effects" instead of "correlates") and failing to discuss alternative explanations for the negative outcomes. Authors of nine textbooks (64.3%) attributed too much weight to the sex itself in causing harm ($M = 3.76$ for these textbooks). In a notable exception, Katchadourian (1989, p. 391) noted that it "may be that the consequences of childhood sexual experiences with adults are not a function of the sexual activities but of the circumstances under which they take place."

Individual Differences in Textbook Coverage

The last row of Table 3 provides the number of biases for each of the 14 textbooks. The range of biases ran from 0 to 11 ($M = 7.50$, $SD = 3.76$), which represents a 53.6% overall bias rate based on 14 possible biases.

To examine the differences among these textbooks further, a multidimensional scaling analysis was conducted (Kruskal & Wish, 1983), in which the goal was to create a map of

Figure 1. The 2-Dimensional Multidimensional Scaling Solution to the Dissimilarities Data from 14 Human Sexuality Textbooks



Note: Textbook abbreviations are provided in Table 1. Textbooks close to each other are similar, and those farther away are dissimilar in their coverage of the psychological consequences of adult-nonadult sex. Clusters of similar textbooks are enclosed in ovals. From left to right, textbooks range from biased to unbiased in their coverage.

the 14 textbooks in one, two, or more dimensions that represented how similar or dissimilar each textbook was to the others in terms of its coverage of the consequences of adult-nonadult sex. Using the mean ratings presented in Table 2, each textbook was compared to every other textbook in terms of how different they were. Dissimilarity scores between every pair of textbooks were derived by computing the squared Euclidean distances for each pair. That is, for two textbooks, the differences between their mean ratings for each measure were squared and then summed. The resulting dissimilarity matrix was analyzed using the ALSCAL procedure on SPSS. The measurement level used was ordinal, and 1 through 4 dimensionality solutions were examined.

The appropriate dimensionality is chosen based on two measures. The first measure is SSTRESS, which assesses the goodness-of-fit of the

computer-derived coordinates with the dissimilarity data for a given dimensional solution. The lower the SSTRESS value, the better the fit. SSTRESS decreases with higher dimensions; the dimension in which SSTRESS drops the most indicates that that dimension is an appropriate solution (Kruskal & Wish, 1983). The second measure is RSQ, which is the squared correlation between the observed distances and the computer-derived distances among the objects—i.e., textbooks. The SSTRESS values for a 1, 2, 3, and 4 dimensional solution were .057, .029, .019, and .010, respectively, indicating that a 2-dimensional solution was appropriate. The RSQ values for the 1, 2, 3, and 4 dimensional solutions were .978, .994, .998, and .999, respectively, further supporting a 2-dimensional solution.

Figure 1 shows the two-dimensional solution. The 14 textbooks clearly fall into three clusters, which

are enclosed in circles or ovals, in accordance with a neighborhood's approach to interpretation (Kruskal & Wish, 1983). Textbooks grouped together are similar to each other and are different from textbooks farther apart. The mean bias scores, using the bias scores from Table 3, were calculated for each cluster. The left-most cluster had a mean of 10.00 ($SD = 1.00$), the center cluster had a mean of 4.33 ($SD = 1.15$), and the right-most cluster had a mean of 1.00 ($SD = 1.41$). These means differed significantly, $F(2, 11) = 76.2$, $p < .0001$, with the left-most cluster of textbooks showing greater bias than the center cluster, which in turn showed greater bias than the right-most cluster of textbooks, based on a Tukey-Kramer post-hoc test. These results indicate that the horizontal dimension can be interpreted as running from biased on the left to unbiased on the right, as is indicated in the figure.

Discussion

The objective in the current study was to examine human sexuality textbook coverage of the psychological correlates of adult-nonadult sex. I argued that how textbooks treat this issue is important for several reasons. First, college students who have experienced adult-nonadult sex in the past tend not to be affected by these experiences in the same way that clinical patients have been reported to be affected—i.e., highly negatively. Specifically, college students with these experiences on the whole do not show as great a negative impact as persons from clinical populations; in many college studies, negative impacts have not been found. Therefore, a textbook presentation that exaggerates or overstates the intensity or inevitability of these consequences by reporting results from clinical studies and failing to qualify these results may be creating unnecessary problems or exacerbating already existing, but relatively minor, problems in students who have experienced adult-nonadult sex (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986). Second, human sexuality textbooks are likely to be seen by students as an authoritative source of scientifically valid information. Therefore, it is important that these textbooks follow standard methodological protocols in reporting data about the correlates of adult-nonadult sex and exercise restraint in drawing inferences from these data. Biased reporting and invalid inferences may have negative repercussions (Kutchinsky, 1992; Mosher, 1979).

In the current study, human sexuality textbook coverage of the psychological correlates of adult-nonadult sex was examined by having five coders judge reporting and methodological biases of 14 human sexuality textbooks. Results were that reporting and methodological biases were common in most of the sample of textbooks. A multidimensional scaling analysis of the 14 textbooks,

based on the reporting and methodological judgments made about them, revealed three distinct clusters that were arranged along the horizontal axis of a two-dimensional multidimensional scaling map. Analysis of the mean bias scores of the three clusters demonstrated their distinctiveness, in which the most populated cluster, consisting of 9 of the 14 textbooks, was highly biased with a mean bias rate of 71%. The mean bias rates for the two smaller clusters were 31% (based on three textbooks) and 7% (based on two textbooks). These results indicate that the modal human sexuality textbook in this sample provided biased reports of and made invalid inferences about the correlates of adult-nonadult sex.

There was a strong tendency for textbook authors to rely almost exclusively on clinical or legal samples to describe the effects of adult-nonadult sex on nonadults. This tendency represents a serious methodological error because reports from clinical or legal populations do not generalize to nonclinical and nonlegal populations. Many other biases detected in these textbooks most likely stemmed from the overreliance on these highly biased and unrepresentative samples. For example, most textbooks gave the impression that the typical reaction and outcome resulting from adult-nonadult sex was highly negative, and most textbook authors reported only negative reactions. These reporting biases would likely not have been made in these textbooks if their literature reviews had been more comprehensive, including information from more representative samples and nonclinical samples.

The focus on clinical and legal samples may have also contributed to the reporting biases regarding sex differences. The national probability and college samples have consistently shown substantial sex differences in reactions, with the majority of females, but only a minority of males, reacting negatively. Most textbook authors in the

current sample incorrectly stated or implied that males and females typically react in the same way—i.e., negatively. A little more than half the authors did not address the issue of sex differences, and almost all authors inappropriately used information about female reactions and outcomes to imply what the effects on males are. Other problems related to the focus on clinical and legal samples concerned invalid generalizations from these samples to the general population and invalid causal attributions. Most authors, when reporting the results from clinical and legal samples, indicating intense and widespread harm, failed to qualify these results. That is, they failed to indicate that these results may not apply to other populations. Most authors stated or implied that early sex with adults is causally connected to later maladjustment. Although anecdotal evidence from clinical case histories may strongly suggest cause and effect, it is nevertheless invalid to claim or imply a causal relationship in general cases of adult-nonadult sex in which later maladjustment occurs, because these data are correlational and additional variables may be responsible for the relationship. Most authors also stated or implied that adult-nonadult sex *per se* is harmful. This has not been supported by nonclinical research, which has shown that negative reactions and outcomes of harm are not necessary consequences of adult-nonadult sex, but are contingent upon a variety of moderator variables such as the use of force by the adult, the perception of willingness of participation by the nonadult, and the nonadult's knowledge about and values related to sex (Constantine, 1981).

Most authors treated incest separately from nonincestuous adult-nonadult sex, although three did not. More than a quarter of the textbook authors stated or implied that the effects of incest and nonincest are the same. This reporting bias is

problematic because it homogenizes events that are different (Hilton, 1984; Pallotta, 1991). Incest experiences do not generalize to nonincest experiences in terms of characteristics or consequences, and it is important to point this out.

It is valuable to discuss once again the importance of presenting unbiased reports of the consequences of adult-nonadult sex in human sexuality textbooks—i.e., those that represent general population characteristics rather than unrepresentative subpopulation characteristics. But first it is important to repeat that presenting an unbiased report of the consequences of adult-nonadult sex is not equivalent in any way to condoning this behavior. Based on the analysis of textbook bias, Katchadourian (1989) provided the least biased presentation. He drew upon results from clinical and nonclinical research, reported the full range of reactions, made distinctions between incest and nonincest in their relative likelihoods to cause problems, was cautious in drawing inferences from particular samples to the general population, provided information that permitted the reader to learn that males and females react differently, did not extrapolate from the experiences of girls to those of boys, and considered third variables as mediators of consequences instead of making causal attributions. Despite this presentation that minimized the potential problems of adult-nonadult sex compared with the presentations in most other textbooks in this sample, Katchadourian was not condoning this behavior. On the contrary, he concluded his discussion of consequences by noting that “[s]uch considerations notwithstanding, society remains strongly opposed to sexual interactions between adults and children under any circumstances” (p. 391) and then presented information for readers to find out more about child sexual abuse education and prevention. The benefit of this kind of treatment of the conse-

quences of adult-nonadult sex is that it “turns down the volume” (Seligman, 1994, p. 235) on a sexual topic that is prone to exaggeration and overstatement because of political advocacy (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986), and that has in fact been discussed with hyperbole (Gardner, 1993; Kutchinsky, 1992; Okami, 1990). These textbooks may be the only authoritative source from which college students will learn about what research has determined about the consequences of adult-nonadult sex. Students’ reactions to this information will be likely to be less negative, and hence more adaptive, if they have had nonnegative or only minimally negative sexual experiences with adults when they were younger. Furthermore, regardless of whether they have experienced adult-nonadult sex, students who go into careers that bring them in touch with people who have had these experiences will be in a better position to interact with these people so as to minimize iatrogenic harm or any other form of secondary victimization. Last, biased reports of consequences and invalid generalizations violate accepted scientific standards of reporting results and drawing inferences from these (Mosher, 1989; Myers, 1981).

Although the generalizability of the findings from this sample of textbooks to the population of current human sexuality textbooks is uncertain because a random sample was not used in selecting these textbooks, the importance of the finding of bias remains, because the textbooks in this sample represent the most widely used human sexuality textbooks on the market. Another possible limitation of this study is that the coders were not masked with respect to its purpose, and therefore, their judgments may have been biased. However, given the coding items, as well as the necessity for using coders who were familiar with the child abuse literature, it would not have been possible to have had a group of naive coders. In the current

study, the distinction between psychological consequences for child-adult and adolescent-adult sex was not examined. This distinction has rarely been addressed in reported studies, but nevertheless is important because child-adult and adolescent-adult sex cannot be assumed to have the same correlates. Whereas the latter type of relation has been commonplace historically and cross-culturally, and thus may fall within the “normal” range of human sexual behaviors, the former type has been uncommon and is thus more anomalous (Bullough, 1990). Researchers should focus more on this distinction in the future.

The typical textbook in the current sample presented a biased account of the psychological correlates of adult-nonadult sex. This bias was characterized by exaggerated and overstated claims and implications regarding the intensity and inevitability of negative consequences for the typical nonadult who experiences this type of sex—a bias against which Browne and Finkelhor (1986) have cautioned.

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Appendix

Items used to Assess Textbook Coverage of Consequences of Adult-Nonadult Sex

I. Samples

1. Of all the samples cited in this textbook to describe the effects of adult-nonadult sex, what part of these do clinical and legal samples, as opposed to nonclinical and nonlegal samples, make up? (7-point scale with labels of *none, a small minority, a large minority, equal, a small majority, a large majority, and all*)

II. Type and Range of Reactions and Outcomes

2. According to the presentation in this textbook, what is the *most typical* reaction or outcome for children and adolescents who have sexual interactions with adults? (7-point scale with labels of *very negative, negative, a little negative, neutral, a little positive, positive, and very positive*)
3. According to the research studies presented in this textbook, what is the range of reactions reported for children or adolescents who have had sexual interactions with adults? To indicate your answer, check *each* scale value on the scale below which was reported or implied. (7-point scale with labels of *very negative, negative, a little negative, neutral, a little positive, positive, and very positive*)

III. Incest versus Sex with Nonrelatives

4. Do the textbook authors specifically discuss differences that do or may exist between reactions by children or adolescents to incest with adults versus sex with adult nonrelatives (discussion can be either separate coverage for the two or comparing/contrasting them)? (4-point scale with labels of *not at all, a little, to a fair degree, and very much*)
5. Based on the authors' presentation, how do children's and adolescents' reactions and outcomes in cases of incest compare with those in cases of sex with adult nonrelatives (if not enough information is provided, then select "no difference")? (7-point scale with labels of *much worse, worse, a little worse, no difference, a little better, better, and much better*)

IV. Generalizations

6. When these textbook authors present effects of adult-nonadult sex based on sample data from a particular population (e.g., clinical), to what extent do they qualify this reporting of effects? That is, to what extent do they say or imply that the reported effects do not necessarily apply to *other* populations of children or adolescents who have sexual interactions with adults? (4-point scale with labels of *not at all*, *a little*, *to a fair degree*, and *very much*)
7. When these textbook authors report negative effects, to what extent do they say or imply that these negative effects generalize to all children and adolescents who have sexual interactions with adults? (4-point scale with labels of *not at all*, *a little*, *to a fair degree*, and *very much*)

V. Sex Differences and Generalizing from One Gender to the Other

8. Do the textbook authors specifically discuss sex differences that do or may exist between boys and girls in their reactions to sexual interactions with adults? This can include separate coverage of reactions of girls versus boys or an explicit comparing or contrasting of their reactions. This comparison can indicate there are no differences. (4-point scale with labels of *not at all*, *a little*, *to a fair degree*, and *very much*)

9. Based on the authors' presentation, how do boys' reactions compare with those of girls when they are involved in sexual interactions with adults? Think of reactions as ranging from negative to positive. Thus, for example, reports of increased aggression for boys, but increased depression for girls, are both negative, indicating that boys and girls react the same, i.e., negatively. (7-point scale with labels of *much worse*, *worse*, *a little worse*, *no difference*, *a little better*, *better*, and *much better*)

10. Do the authors of this textbook summarize research on the effects on girls who have sexual interactions with adults and then state or imply that these same effects apply to boys? (One way they can do this is to describe the results of a study involving the effects on girls and then to use this finding to say what the effects on all children are, both girls *and* boys.) (4-point scale with labels of *not at all*, *a little*, *to a fair degree*, and *very much*)

11. Do the authors of this textbook summarize research on the effects on boys who have sexual interactions with adults and then state or imply that these same effects apply to girls? (One way they can do this is to describe the results of a study involving the effects on boys and then to use this finding to say what the effects on all children are, both boys *and* girls.) (4-point scale with labels of *not at all*, *a little*, *to a fair degree*, and *very much*)

VI. Causal Attributions

12. When the authors discuss maladjustment that is seen in people who, as children or adolescents, had sexual interactions with adults, to what extent do they say or imply that this maladjustment was caused directly by these sexual interactions, rather than by nonsexual factors (e.g., relatedness to the adult, degree of force or coercion)? (4-point scale with labels of *not at all*, *a little*, *to a fair degree*, and *very much*)
13. To what extent do these textbook authors state or imply that sex with adults is likely to be harmful for children and adolescents, regardless of the circumstances under which the sex occurs? (4-point scale with labels of *not at all*, *a little*, *to a fair degree*, and *very much*)

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