

ADULT-CHILD SEXUAL CONTACT

An Introduction

“**P**edophilia” is defined by the American Psychiatric Association’s (1994) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM-IV) as “recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger).” For such a diagnosis to be made, the DSM-IV adds, such urges must cause “clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.” Moreover, the manual warns, an individual should not be included if he or she is in late adolescence and is involved “in an ongoing sexual relationship with a 12- or 13-year-old.” Specifying its definition even further, the DSM-IV requires that for the diagnosis to be valid, the adolescent must be at least 16 years old and at least five years older than the child. To narrow matters down even more precisely, the DSM-IV requests the clinician to specify which type the pedophile falls into—the *exclusive* type, who is attracted only to children, or the *nonexclusive* type, who is attracted to adults as well as children (p. 528).

Most, if not all, true pedophiles, say Davison, Neale, and Kring (2004) are interested in youngsters specifically *because* they are sexually immature. But does that mean that the pedophile can be clearly and unambiguously demarcated from the adult who does *not* experience sexual urges toward children? Yes and no, say Davison et al. As it turns out, roughly one-quarter of the adult population is aroused at the sight of nude pictures of children. Moreover, their arousal is significantly correlated with conventional arousal: The more aroused subjects are by adult heterosexual pictures, the more likely they are to be aroused by pedophile pictures. This might seem a disturbing finding, say Davison et al., but it emphasizes the difference between fantasy and reality. Another way of saying this is that although a substantial proportion of the adult population is sexually aroused by, and has sexual urges toward, prepubescent children, relatively few act on those impulses. Studies suggest that pedophiles, compared with adults who do not approach children sexually, rank low on social maturity, self-esteem, impulse control, and social skills (Finkelhor & Araji, 1986).

The DSM-IV’s definition is psychiatric and clinical, not sociological. Hence, it is inadequate for the sociologist’s needs. This does not mean that it is wrong so much as it addresses a distinctly different set of issues than the ones in which we’re interested. In this chapter, Keith Durkin and Steven Hundersmark distinguish the pedophile from the child molester; pedophile is a psychiatric term, while child molester is a legal term. Not all child molesters are true pedophiles, and not all pedophiles are child molesters. Many men who molest

children do not report recurrent or intense sexual urges toward them. Moreover, the men who do report such urges and act on them, but experience no distress or dysfunction as a result, would not be included in the DSM-IV's definition. And lastly, by this definition, adults who are in their twenties, thirties, and older may engage in sex with girls in their teens yet be excluded from the DSM-IV's definition, and yet, such men are clearly engaging in what most of us—clinicians and the general public alike—would regard as sexual exploitation and abuse (Witt & Greenfield, 2001). Clearly, the *clinical* definition of pedophilia is narrower than the public or popular—or *social*—definition. Hence, sociologically, it is likely to be inadequate.

The DSM-IV's attempt to define pedophilia, compared with our brief excursion into the problems such a definition raises, reminds us that adult-child sexual contact is partly a matter of definition—a social construction, if you will. It raises a host of questions: What is a child? What is an adult? What sort of age difference between the adult and the child does there have to be? How much contact does there have to be? How fixated on children does the adult have to be? How much resistance does there have to be? (And *legally*, an underage child—defined differently in different jurisdictions—is not competent to grant sexual access, although the *public's* conceptualization of the meaning of "resistance" may differ from the law's.) How much harm does the adult inflict on the child? What constitutes sexual contact? Is the child aware that such contact constitutes abuse? How do our relevant and significant audiences judge such behavior? And, relevant for many observers, is the sexual contact heterosexual or homosexual? Certain adult-child sexual contacts would be *universally* regarded as abuse, as pedophilia—as deviant and reprehensible—while others would generate more divided opinions and muted condemnation. In other words, adult-child sexual contact is a category that is clearly defined at the extremes but fuzzy around the edges.

For instance, most of us would not see a consensual affair between an 18-year-old man and a 16-year-old girl as pedophilia or as sexual abuse, and yet in some jurisdictions the law defines it as statutory rape. But if the girl were, say, 12 rather than 16 and the man 21, nearly everyone would agree that it should be illegal and it is a form of sexual abuse. Again, we have a social construction on our hands, although the law's definition and the public's may not always agree.

The social constructionist nature of what constitutes adult-child sexual contact emphasizes the role of audiences, the law and law enforcement and the general public being only two such audiences. Howard S. Becker (1963) reminds us that *moral entrepreneurs* may be central in any definition of behavior as deviant. Becker defined a "moral entrepreneur" as someone who either *creates* a new set of moral rules or who *enforces* moral rules (pp. 147–163). Moral entrepreneurs may be officials (politicians, lawmakers, judges, the police) or unofficial (friends, relatives, neighbors), and in the matter of sexual contact between an adult and a child, moral entrepreneurs may include a child's parents (pp. 147ff.). Clearly, the parents of a 16-year-old girl are likely to have strong reasons to object to their daughter's affair with an 18-year-old man: He belongs to the wrong ethnic group, the wrong social class, he's not college-bound, he uses drugs, he drives recklessly. Or, they simply



Image 5.1 Many forms of deviance have

generated organized societal responses that attempt to protect victims or presumed victims.

A very tiny proportion of child kidnappings are perpetrated by strangers or other non-relatives (most are perpetrated by parents engaged in custody battles); nonetheless, stranger abductions elicit enormous public concern. "Amber alert" is the public notification of the kidnapping of a child. It was named after a 1996 child kidnapping and murder victim, Amber Hagerman.

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tus. Thus, we find that pedophiles, like alcoholics, homosexuals, drug addicts, dwarfs, ex-victs, and transvestites, have banded together to neutralize or reverse the enterprise of deviance-defining moral entrepreneurs. NAMBLA, the North American Man-Boy Love Association, is one of several organizations whose goal is to define adult-child sexual contact as acceptable, nondeviant, even conventional behavior. NAMBLA's goal is to abolish the laws against age of consent and against child pornography and to create a climate of opinion favorable to "man-boy" sexual expression. "We seek freedom from the restrictive bond of society which denies them [children] the right to live, including to live as they choose," declares a NAMBLA bulletin. It is the organization's position that noncoercive sex between an adult and a child is not abusive or inherently injurious. NAMBLA uses strategic alliances with humanitarian and progressive causes and organizations—gay rights, the women's movement, and pro-choice—to create for itself a climate of respectability and legitimacy. In "The World According to NAMBLA," Mary de Young explains the organization's strategies for attaining its goals. Readers are likely to find NAMBLA's arguments distressing and its conclusions repugnant.

believe that a 16-year-old girl—their 16-year-old girl—is too young to have sex. Hence, what would, under many circumstances, have been an acceptable relationship becomes redefined as deviant, not only because of the ages of the parties in question but because of ancillary characteristics of the participants. As Becker says, to define behavior as deviance, an act of *enterprise* is necessary—"somebody blows the whistle" (p. 122). Becker's point is that what makes an act deviant is not solely a function of the behavior in question but also a consequence of whether someone *reacts* to that behavior. In the case of our hypothetical 16-year-old girl and 18-year-old man, such a reaction is not always automatic. But in the case of an adult having sex with a younger child, the reaction is likely to be immediate and intense. Some cases of deviance are socially constructed with respect to where we draw the age line.

In *Odd Man In*, Edward Sagarin (1969)

chronicled the rise of "organizations of deviants" whose goal was to redefine their unconventional, despised, or outsider sta-

In his personal account, "From Victim to Offender," "Dave" (a pseudonym) describes his experiences with molesting children. After two prison sentences, Dave is convinced that sexually molesting children is harmful to the victims. In contrast, "jay_h," the pseudonym for a spokesperson for man-boy love, offers a personal statement of his views. jay_h believes that the laws setting a legal age limit on sex are wrong and should be abolished and that boys should be allowed to have sexual experiences, including with adults. Nearly all of the rest of us disagree and hence are likely to react to this "love manifesto" with moral outrage, even anger. In fact, most of us regard jay_h's advocacy as a form of deviance—*extreme* deviance. As with white supremacy, it is extremely difficult for most of us to step back and be the complete sociologist and "appreciate" such a position. Again, we argue that our position toward extreme deviance can run along two tracks simultaneously. One track says, "I have a right to my position; I find such a belief, and the behavior that expresses such a belief, abhorrent, morally wrong, repulsive in the extreme." The other track insists that advocates of adult-child sexual contact have to be understood and that simple condemnation obliterates our capacity to get a sense of what these people are doing and why. This moral dualism is one of the things that makes deviance one of the most fascinating of sociological topics we might encounter.

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The World According to NAMBLA

Accounting for Deviance

Mary de Young

Look tenderly on little boys

Their softness as fleeting as a flower,

The cheeks like petals such a little hour,

The deepest dimple theirs so transiently

Look tenderly on little boys.

The transience of childhood innocence is an enduring theme in literature and poetry; however, the "Little Boys" poem from which these lines are taken did not appear in a literary anthology, but in the monthly *Bulletin* of NAMBLA—the North American Man-Boy Love Association. Organized in 1978 in the wake of the arrests of 24 prominent Revere, Massachusetts professional and businessmen for sexual activities with adolescent males, NAMBLA is a political, civil rights, and educational organization that advocates and promotes adult sexual behavior with male children. The taboo against adult-child sex, indeed, is consistently and ardently held in this and other cultures (Murdock, 1949), yet when NAMBLA was formed, there already was an international network of organizations of self-proclaimed pedophiles that served as organizational models.

Inspired by their European predecessors, two pedophile organizations that predated NAMBLA also were formed in the United States. The Rene Guyon Society, created in 1962 by a group of seven laypersons after attending a conference on sexuality in Los Angeles, took its name from the French jurist and Freudian psychologist who had been an

outspoken advocate of adult-child sex. It also adopts his motto as its slogan: "Sex by year eight, or else it's too late." The Society advocates the abolition of statutory rape and child pornography laws and encourages its purported 5,000 members to give their own children, and others, early sexual experiences with loving adults (O'Hara, 1981). Although it still maintains a mailing address in the Los Angeles area, the Society is no longer politically and socially active in promoting its cause. Believing that affection transcends age differences, the Childhood Sensuality Circle was founded in San Diego in 1971 to champion sexual self-determination for adults and children. It also advocated the abolition of age of consent laws, promoted the early initiation of young children into sexual behavior with family members, and encouraged children to use their own standards in the selection of adult sexual partners (Davilla, 1981). The organization stopped publishing and mailing its *Newsletter* in 1984 because of the failing health of its elderly founder, Valida Davilla, a former student of Wilhelm Reich.

NAMBLA, then, is the only pedophile organization that remains active in this country, and it has withstood the legal harassment that has closed down many of its European counterparts. Due to their beliefs and practices, all of the pedophile organizations, in fact, have experienced a considerable amount of legal interference, ranging from searches of their headquarters and their members' homes, to seizures of materials for evidence, to the arrest and incarceration of their members. Social

stigma also has been sustained by organizational members. Some have lost jobs when their organizational affiliation was discovered; others have been forced to use pseudonyms to protect their identities; and still others have been ostracized by their professional colleagues and social companions (O'Carroll, 1982).

These pedophile organizations and their members consistently have come up against an unusual degree of consensus on the part of the larger society that adult sexual behavior with children should be taboo, that it is victimizing and exploitative, and that its redress properly falls within the purview of the law. Although not uniform in extent, the strength of the consensus that does exist should not be underestimated. It continually has been demonstrated in studies of attitudes toward crimes and the law conducted by various ethnic and socioeconomic groups in this country (Finkelhor, 1984; Rossi, 1974; Selin & Wolfgang, 1964), as well as in cross-cultural surveys (Newman, 1976). It may very well be that in the consciousness of the larger society, nothing is more repugnant than the sexual abuse of children (Finkelhor, 1984).

And that raises an important question. In the light of that strong consensus that adult sexual behavior with children is victimizing and that it is reprehensible, *how does NAMBLA justify and normalize its philosophy and practices?* In other words, how does NAMBLA account for its deviance? It is the purpose of this article to explore an answer to that question by reviewing the 1982 through 1985 newsletters, booklets, and brochures published for public dissemination by NAMBLA. This article does not provide a systematic analysis of the content of these publications; rather, it utilizes a data-reduction technique (Weber, 1985) by which textual material is classified into content categories generated by a larger theoretical framework. For the purposes of this article, that framework will be Scott and Lyman's (1968) theory of accounts.

ACCOUNTING FOR DEVIANCE

Sociologists have long noted that individuals and groups can and do commit acts and hold beliefs they realize are considered wrong by others, and that in doing so, they create a problematic situation that calls for resolution, or at the very least for explanation. The problematic nature of the situation arises because the behavior or the beliefs of these individuals deviate from the expected, the routine, or what the larger society may even consider the normal. In that problematic situation, then, the deviating individuals or groups are motivated to avoid or to reduce public censure and stigma by engaging in behavioral or verbal conduct that justifies and normalizes their deviance vis-à-vis the expectations of others and the norms of the larger society (Mills, 1940; Scott & Lyman, 1968).

Psychologists would refer to this verbal conduct as rationalization, but sociologists offer a broader framework for its interpretation. Such verbal behavior, or its correlate in written form, is considered an "aligning action" (Stokes & Hewitt, 1976). That metaphor of alignment is both descriptive and explanatory. By examining various techniques and strategies, it describes how deviating individuals and groups attempt to align their lines of conduct with others and with the norms of the larger social structure, and it explains *why* they do so. The techniques of alignment are varied, but the motivation for engaging in them is consistent: Successful alignment will justify and normalize the deviant behavior or belief, thus reducing, if not eliminating, social censure and stigma.

Scott and Lyman (1968) refer to these various aligning actions as "accounts," those "linguistic devices employed whenever an action is subject to a evaluative inquiry" (p. 46), and they propose two different types. The first, *excuses*, are those accounts in which the individuals or group admit the behavior or the belief in question is wrong, bad, or inappropriate, but deny full responsibility for it. Excuses generally take the form of "appeals." An "appeal to

accident" redefines the offending conduct or belief as the product of unforeseen or uncontrollable circumstances; an "appeal to defecability" insists that it occurred only because the individuals or the group were not fully informed or fully aware. An appeal to "biological drives" presents the deviant behavior or belief as the product of innate drives that cannot be predicted or controlled; and an "appeal to scapegoating" blames others for it.

The second type of accounts, *justifications*, are those in which the individuals or group accept responsibility for the deviant behavior or belief, but deny the pejorative or stigmatizing quality of it. This category of accounts has generated a great deal of research within the sociology of deviance. Based as it is upon the criminological concepts of "techniques of neutralization" (Sykes & Matza, 1957), it has been used as a theoretical framework for analyzing the verbal accounts of compulsive gamblers (Cressey, 1962), social dropouts (Polisky, 1967), moral offenders (Hong & Duff, 1977), and murderers (Levi, 1981). And in recent years, it also has been used to analyze the verbal and the written accounts of sexual deviants. In two interesting studies, Scully and Morolla (1984, 1985) used the concept of accounts to examine the justifications and excuses of convicted incarcerated rapists; a similar framework was used by McCaghy (1968) with child molesters. Writings by sexual deviants also have been scrutinized through this particular theoretical lens. Taylor (1976) reviewed the works of the so-called "Uranian poets," those pedophilic writers whose ranks included such notables as E. E. Murray, W. B. Nesbitt, and Ralph Chubb, and discovered examples of the "uses of artistry as a motive-formulation resource for the justification and possible enactment of guilt-free sex" (p. 100). In a content analysis of the publications of the three pedophile organizations in this country, de Young (1988) found persistent themes that could be categorized as justifications.

Justifications, then, as a category of accounts, have demonstrated considerable utility as a theoretical

framework for the analysis of the language and writings of deviant individuals and groups. It is this framework that will be used in this article's examination of the publications of the NAMBLA organization. Justifications generally involve six different strategies (Scott & Lyman, 1968), four of which will be used in this article: denial of injury, condemnation of the condemners, appeal to higher loyalties, and denial of the victim. The style and intended purpose of each of these will be explained and will be illustrated with selections from the publicly disseminated literature of NAMBLA.

Denial of Injury

Using denial of injury, the individuals or the group acknowledge responsibility for the deviant act or belief but insist that it is permissible because no one is injured or harmed by it. For NAMBLA, this justification involves the admission that the organization advocates adult-child sex, and that its members engage in that behavior, and the claim that neither the behavior nor the philosophy is in any way injurious to children.

This assertion is contrary, of course, to the strong consensus that adult sexual behavior with children is, indeed, harmful. The child sexual abuse literature is rife with empirical research and case studies that bolster that consensus (de Young, 1985, 1987). Even the language that is part of the lexicon of both the lay public and professionals in the field—words like "abuse," "victimization," "exploitation," and "trauma"—attest to what most people believe are the deleterious effects on children of adult sexual behavior.

In the face of that strong consensus, then, NAMBLA must redefine the impact of both its philosophy and its members' behavior to stress the positive, rather than the injurious, effects of adult-child sex. Its publications, therefore, are filled with anecdotal accounts, letters, poetry, and articles that proclaim the benefits and advantages to children of having a sexual relationship with an

adult male. Some of those advantages are very specifically detailed. Accounts of children having been rescued from lives on the streets, of children finding a loving alternative to an abusive home, or of discovering in the pedophile someone to talk to or to help them during periods of distress are prominently featured in every NAMBLA publication. Yet, when examples of the benefits to individual boys are set aside, the more general advantages of "man-boy love" are much less clear. The rather esoteric tenor of these explanations is illustrated by the following examples from NAMBLA (1985):

Man love is also something which has helped thousands of boys discover their own sexuality and get in touch with what they really feel (Loiringer, 1980: 1). If sex is an expression of shared love (as man/boy love is), then it is beneficial to both partners, regardless of age. . . . Nothing is more beneficial than to feel a sense of security in the love of another. It creates a euphoria. The [pedophile] takes the young boys from the streets, give them a good home and material needs, and loves them. (p. 6)

NAMBLA, however, does acknowledge that harm may follow the adult-child sexual encounter; in the face of such overwhelming clinical and case study evidence, it can do little but acknowledge that. The organization, however, is quick to place the culpability for that harm on others who, it insists, respond inappropriately or prejudicially to adult-child sex. By displacing that blame, NAMBLA implies that there is nothing deviant about the sexual behavior, per se, but only about the public's reactions to it.

Why can't we here in America do as those in the Netherlands have done? That is, EDUCATE the public to see that, in proper context, a man/boy relationship can be of benefit to the boy and the trauma that the police so quickly point out as connected to such relationships are caused not by the relationship, but by what the police themselves suspect the boy to? (1984b, p. 4)

In no study known to us is there any suggestion that pedophile contacts are harmful in themselves. But in

our culture we usually cannot consider just the actual contacts. If they lead to other things there might well be a lot of damage that can be done by the parents of a child who had contact with a pedophile. On discovery they often react in panic. They become furious or outraged. Such a reaction . . . is very harmful to the child. . . . Then there is the damage caused by contact with the police and the courts. . . . The reactions of society can cause great damage to the child. (deGroot, 1982, p. 6)

Another tactic for denying injury is the publication of [alleged] youngsters' accounts of the benefits they have experienced from sexual relationships with adult males. Here are the very persons the larger society views as victims adamantly disavowing that label and, at least by inference, rejecting the care and protection that would be afforded them because of that status. The NAMBLA *Bulletin*, for example, for some period of time featured a column by "The Unicorn," allegedly an 11-year-old self-described "taggot" whose column was a testimony to the erotic superiority of sex with adult males as he described his various lovers and the positive effects each has had on his physical, emotional, and even spiritual development (1983c, p. 10). The organization also published a pamphlet, "Boys Speak Out on Man/Boy Love" (NAMBLA, 1981), which features short anecdotal accounts by boys of the positive effects of their sexual experiences with adult males. A perusal of the titles of the selections in this pamphlet suggest the tone of the testimonials: "Thank God for Boy Lovers," "If It Weren't for the Mark, I'd Probably Be Dead Today," "I Need My Lovers," and "The Best Thing That Ever Happened to Me."

The NAMBLA *Bulletin* also publishes letters [purported to be] from youngsters that describe the benefits they receive from sexual relationships with men.

I am a boy of 13 and I hope you will read this letter. The spelling and stuff isn't too good. . . . I wish I was one of the kids [in the stories featured in the *Bulletin*] with someone to love me like that. . . . And

I think it's wrong for people to bother men and boys who just want to love each other. (1983b, p. 3)

There are enough of us young people in the country to stand up and put our foot down. To tell our feelings in the way we want to be understood and the way we want to be loved. . . . What we need is communication, peace, love, joy in our hearts, and happiness for people we are in love with. [Signed] Lower Boy Joe, age 13. (1984a, p. 5)

The denial of injury, then, is a justification that redefines adult sexual behavior with children in positive terms. As a rhetorical strategy, it is used to convince those of the larger society who will read its literature that contrary to popular belief, no injury or harm is incurred by children from engaging in sex with adult males; that the harm that has been stressed by other sources is really due to the inappropriate and prejudicial reactions of ignorant people and systems; and that even the children who have experienced this behavior will eschew the label of victim and proclaim the beneficial effects of sexual behavior with adults, if only they are asked. The insistence of this justification is that there is nothing really deviant in adult-child sex; therefore, any censure of the NAMBLA organization and its membership is undeserved.

Condemnation of the Condemners

The second justification is the condemnation of the condemners, a rejection of those who would reject. The utility of this strategy is that in rectifying the condemnation and censure it has received from the larger society back on the society itself, NAMBLA can normalize its philosophy and the behavior of its members by demonstrating that they do not differ noticeably from the larger society. The condemners, real and potential, are thus characterized as hypocritical and as deserving condemnation themselves.

Since the censure of adult sexual behavior with children is so strong, the condemnation of the condemners found in the publications of NAMBLA is

equally strong. Much printed space is taken up with what are often sustained polemics against professionals in the field of child sexual abuse and against the criminal justice and the mental health systems. Individuals are listed by name, cases are dissected and analyzed, and flaws in decision making and errors in judgment are highlighted, all in a tone that is more often mockingly derisive than not. The following illustration demonstrates the breadth and the depth of that condemnation:

Con men who once made their living selling snake oil are now surfacing as "experts on child sexual abuse." They have deliberately confused expressions of love and affection with violent physical abuse. . . . Police departments suffering from a bad public image due to internal corruption, excessive use of force, and for poor management have turned to boy-lovers as easy prey. . . . District Attorneys needing a dramatic case for the voters to remember and psychiatrists needing public funds to build a private practice have turned to boy-lovers as the answer to their prayers. Demagogues in state and federal legislatures have also found the anti-boy-love hysteria tailor made for raising campaign funds and increasing name recognition through the sponsorship of laws pandering to the public's misconceptions. (NAMBLA, 1983c, p. 4)

[The children] continue to seduce adults and call those who reproach them for it "silly fools." The children had learned a bit about psychoanalysis. They said, "For every objection they were forced to abandon, these funny ladies and gentlemen immediately produce another. Could it be that they are really only unconsciously hiding the secrets of their own inner souls? Isn't it just that they are a little bit afraid of sex itself?" But nobody bothered to listen to what they said, for how could the truth ever be heard from the mouths of children? (NAMBLA, 1983a, p. 9)

The intent of this justification strategy is both straightforward and clear: If the condemners can be reconceptualized as engaging in the same or even more victimizing or exploitative acts as those for which NAMBLA members are accused, then their

censure of the members is irrelevant at best, and hypocritical at worst. The sting of any subsequent criticism from them, then, is effectively precluded.

Appeal to Higher Loyalties

The third justification that can be found in the publications of NAMBLA is the appeal to higher loyalties, a strategy by which the organization and its members normalize their behavior and philosophy by insisting the interests of a higher principle to which allegiance is owed is being served. That higher principle, for NAMBLA, is the liberation of children from what it characterizes as the repressive bonds of society; the sexual liberation of children, then, is presented as a necessary step for achieving the larger goal. The following excerpt illustrates that point:

Members of NAMBLA are committed to the protection and development of the young. Our beliefs and activities have their foundation in values which say that all people are important and should have the inherent right to conduct themselves as they wish as long as the rights of others are not abused. Children are our special concern. We seek their freedom from the restrictive bonds of society which denies them the right to live, including to love, as they choose. (NAMBLA, 1984b, pp. 6-7)

We recognize that children need more than sexual freedom and self-determination; they need economic self-sufficiency and the right and power to control all aspects of their lives, with help from but without interference by adults. NAMBLA favors the empowerment of young people in our society. Children should be treated as full human beings, not as the private property of their parents and the state. (NAMBLA, n.d., p. 1)

This espoused higher loyalty has the character of what Hewitt and Hall (1973) refer to as a quasi-theory and "ad hoc explanation brought to problematic situations to give them order and hope" (p. 367). Because it has structure and consequence,

a quasi-theory permits otherwise deviant situations and philosophies to be perceived by others as meaningful and even normal in light of common sense notions of human behavior and social arrangements.

That children need to be treated "as full human beings," that their protection and development are preeminent concerns, falls well within the rubric of common sense and common interest. It is both meaningful and normal to hold such an ideal, and on these issues alone, NAMBLA would not expect disagreement from the larger society. That larger society also may agree on some of the fundamental objectives that must be accomplished in order to achieve that goal, such as the empowerment of children, but when NAMBLA adds what would be considered a deviant objective, the "sexual freedom" of children, to that logic, the appeal to higher loyalty takes on the character of a quasi-theory. It espouses a hopeful goal, the development of children into "full human beings," and develops a structure, that is, a set of objectives for achieving that goal, and includes within that set an objective that the larger society would not, under other circumstances, accept.

Another facet of this appeal to higher loyalties involves the affinity NAMBLA has with the goals of other, nonstigmatized organizations and with social welfare concerns. The organization, for example, has expressed a great deal of sympathy and support for the women's movement as well as loyalty to the gay rights movement and views its own struggle for credibility and acceptance as analogous to their struggles. NAMBLA has also taken on such social welfare concerns as sexism, ageism, racism, nuclear warfare, abortion, unemployment, and the military draft, as well as esoteric concerns such as circumcision and clitoridectomy (NAMBLA, 1983f, p. 3). This partnership with other legitimate organizations and with social issues that are concerns of the larger society as well is a strategy for aligning the organization of NAMBLA and its membership with that larger society.

These appeals to higher loyalties, and the affinity with the goals of other legitimate organizations and with pressing social welfare concerns, allow NAMBLA to assume a mantle of legitimacy. That mantle, if successfully worn, further protects the organization and its members from the censure of the larger society.

Denial of the Victim

The final justification found in the publications of NAMBLA is denial of the victim. Here, the victim, the child in this case, is reconceptualized as having deserved or brought on the deviant behavior, due to the victim's culpability; therefore, the responsibility of offending individuals for the behavior and its consequences is diminished.

This justification involves the conceptual transformation of children from victims of adult sexual behavior into willing partners. This transformation can only occur if NAMBLA is able to convince the disbelieving larger society that children are able to give full and informed consent to sexual acts with adults. But this issue of consent is a thorny one. Long after the debate about the morality of adult-child sex has been aired, and long after the uncertainties about the effects of such behavior on children have been satisfactorily addressed, the issue of consent will remain the most basic and fundamental problem that larger society has with adult sexual behavior with children (Finkelhor, 1984).

And it is a persistent and difficult problem for the NAMBLA organization as well; NAMBLA has made such general statements on the consent issue as these: "If a child and adult want to have sex, they should be free to do so. Consent is the critical point . . . force and coercion are abhorrent to NAMBLA" (1984b, p. 3); and "NAMBLA is strongly opposed to age of consent laws and other restrictions which deny adults and youth the full enjoyment of their bodies and control over their lives" (1984a, p. 7).

The problem, however, is not really with the definition of consent—the law spells that out quite

clearly—but with the age at which it can be given in a free, knowledgeable, and informed manner. NAMBLA asserts that the current age of consent laws in this country, which pro forma make its members' sexual behavior with youngsters illegal, are anachronistic and repressive. It strongly advocates for their repeal, as the following excerpt illustrates:

NAMBLA does not simply wish to repeal age of consent laws; rather, we have never accepted the validity of the frame of reference on which such laws are based. Under the circumstances, we cannot name an age of consent. . . . NAMBLA will not participate in abstract, narrowly defined and ultimately pointless games of "pick an age." . . . Sex does not require highly developed "cognitive tools"; it ought to come naturally. (1984b, p. 1)

Does sex require highly developed "cognitive tools"? If the act itself does not, the consent to engage in the act certainly does, so despite the organization's resistance to engage in a game of "pick an age," the age at which a child can give full and informed consent to sexual acts must be determined if this justification is going to be successful in normalizing the behavior of NAMBLA members and avoiding public censure.

And the very debate over that age is still waged within the ranks of NAMBLA. In a position paper created by the steering committee of the organization, consent was defined as both informed (understood and accepted in advance) and with the intent and spirit of love. Because understanding and acceptance at least imply some "cognitive tools," the committee backed off from its original insistence that it would not pick an age and selected nine as the age of consent. Some members argued that it should be lower. One insisted that "a five-year-old aware of sexual feelings can act upon them at any time of his choosing. There are many five-year-olds who understand the meaning of sex more than many 35-year-olds" (1983d, p. 4). Other members, perhaps predicting how the larger

society would respond to these proposed ages, advocated that the age be raised to 13 or 14. Even while the NAMBLA organization vehemently argued this issue, one of its founding members went on record to defend all consensual sexual relations, "regardless of the age of the partners" (Lotringer, 1980, p. 21).

Obviously, the issue of consent and the age at which children can freely and intelligently render it continues to be a problem for the NAMBLA organization. It is for the larger society as well, as evidenced by the fact that the age of consent established by law tends to vary from one state to another. While the larger society may find some value in debating whether that age should be uniform across the country, and may find some interest in deciding what that age should be, the same attitude studies that demonstrate such a strong consensus that adult sexual behavior with children is harmful and exploitative also show an increase in that consensus where very young children are concerned. In other words, the debate about whether the age of consent should be 13, 14, or 15 may be lively, but there is little demonstrated acceptance of lowering that age, and virtually none for removing it.

Denial of the victim, predicated as it is upon this issue of consent, is unlikely to be a successful justification; indeed, it may be this single issue of consent and the failure of this justification that will always keep the deviant label on this organization and its members, therefore keeping them out of alignment with the larger society.

CONCLUSION

In the face of a strong consensus that adult sexual behavior with children is abusive and exploitative, and that its effects are negative at best and traumatic at worst, the North American Man-Boy Love Association has a vested interest in justifying, and thereby normalizing, its philosophy and its members' practices. This article has utilized the

sociological framework of accounts, with a special reference to justifications, to examine how that process is accomplished in the publications of NAMBLA.

The use of accounts by deviant individuals and groups is an area of research that has the potential to generate insights into deviancy. And in the area of sexual deviancy, where myth and misunderstanding abound, the study of these aligning actions may increase knowledge of how individuals and groups labeled deviant attempt to negotiate and reconceptualize their beliefs and their behavior in the face of society's censure.

If the imputation of deviance is indeed a product of interactive process between the individuals or group so labeled and the labelers (Schur, 1979), then the study of accounts may also lead to an understanding of that process. How accounts are given, in terms of their manner and their style, and how accounts are accepted and the consequences of their acceptance are researchable hypotheses, and studies designed to address these issues and others will make rich contributions to the sociology of deviance.

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criminals. I was not allowed to have a pet or even an aquarium because "some pedophiles use them to attract children into their homes." Nuns helped me to find second-hand furniture and learn how to use public transportation and ATMs.

By now, I was so sick from Hepatitis C and liver damage that I was unable to work and had to rely on a government disability pension. Although I am only in my forties, I find it difficult to breathe and walk, and I'm told that I don't have long to live.

I was placed on the sex offender's register and a uniformed police officer was assigned to me. I learned that these officers were untrained for this work and their hatred of child sex offenders was immediately apparent. The officer walked into my apartment when an elderly neighbor was present. He announced that he had come to search my home for child pornography and that he was authorized to walk in at any time of the night or day. He searched through my cupboards and drawers, and I realized that this was just another form of bullying because he neither examined my computer nor my video collection.

I have no intention of ever hurting another child or human being for the rest of my life. I just wish to enjoy what life I have left. I am fortunate to

have a good psychiatrist whom I see regularly, and I'm prescribed what is commonly called "chemical castration" but is really a drug to keep my sex drive under control, which, along with the understanding and knowledge that I gained from the therapy program, should enable me to live a crime-free life.

Does treatment work? In my case, I think I can say that it did. I know of others who made the decision not to re-offend. However, I tend to think that it is only effective if you want it to be, if you are sick of the guilt, fear, and shame. Some abusers went through the process and said all the right things, but intended to re-offend within the first week of their parole.

At times, my home seems like a jail without the company of others. I have no friends. Life is very lonely. After all, what decent person would want to befriend me if he or she knew my history? The parole board eventually agreed that I could have an aquarium. I spend hours watching the fish. I gave them all names.

I don't feel sorry for myself, but sometimes I think it might be better if I were dead, or better still, if I'd never been born. If only it could be unraveled and we could start again. I would tell the truth and say, "No, I can't wash dishes." How different everything would have been!

The Boylove Manifesto

"*gay_h*"

WHO ARE WE?

Boylove is a worldwide phenomenon that does not recognize the boundaries of gender, race, nationality, age, religious beliefs, or philosophy. Boylove describes a special kind of relationship between human males. Boylove has always been with us, exists among us today, and will always continue to exist.

A boylover is commonly referred to as a "pedophile." Since boylovers can only speak for themselves, the feminists' viewpoint cannot be expressed as part of this document. For the same reason, you will not find a treatment about the love of women to boys, nor the love of men to girls as part of this discussion. The aim of this document is to explain the love between human males.

As boylovers, we distance ourselves from the current discussion about "child sexual abuse." We are not willing to participate in a confrontational discussion that does not even take into account the variety of sexual relationships between various age groups.

This document represents the views of the author. The stereotyped boylover does not exist. There are as many different opinions among boylovers as there are men who love and admire boys.

WHO SHOULD READ THIS DOCUMENT?

This document was written for all boylovers, their friends, their boyfriends, and their girlfriends. Further, it was conceived for those children who have been, or may someday be, confronted with this subject. It is aimed at parents, counselors, teachers, and everyone whose life is touched, privately or professionally, by children. Hopefully, it will be read by some who deal with children, youths, and boylovers as part of a therapy program. Finally, this document is a resource for those who may have kept an open mind and are genuinely interested in learning more about the difficult subject of "boylove."

This document hopes to assist the reader in shaping his or her own opinion. While we are not hoping to gain any supporters for our opinions, we would like to be afforded the opportunity to submit our point of view to the current debate.

WHY WAS THIS DOCUMENT PUBLISHED?

The discourse about sexual contacts between different age groups, particularly those that take place between children and adults, has reached a dead end. The parties on either side of the argument are no longer on speaking terms. Those who have taken it upon themselves to protect every boy from

every boylover place the blame squarely on the boylover. To further their cause, these people do not bother to separate fiction and hearsay from the alleged facts. Their doctrine still nourishes from several centuries filled with repressive sexual standards. When child sexuality became taboo, the thought spread through our collective consciousness that a child is simply not a sexual being. Sigmund Freud ventured past this taboo. Since that time, the attempt has been made to restrict the newly discovered sexuality of children by means of legislation. The imbalance of power that governs the relationship between adults and children was swiftly expanded to include the subject of sexuality. The adult members of our society mandate how a child is to cope with his or her own sexuality. The attempt to employ restrictions and punishment as a means of child rearing often causes the child to experience serious conflicts. While it may traumatize the child, it will certainly do nothing to further his or her natural development in the future. The discrepancy between the desire a child may experience and the restrictions placed upon these desires by society harms the natural and healthy development of his or her own sexuality. As a result, these children will suffer from some psychological damage even as adults.

This document presents the opposing point of view. At the same time, it attempts to liberate children and adults from many false premises which govern our relationships and our sexuality. In view of the social and cultural position of a boylover, an attempt will be made to present his fundamental ethics—particularly the rights of the boy and the boylover's responsibilities.

WHAT IS BOYLOVE?

It is not possible to reduce or limit boylove by focusing only on the sexual aspects of an intergenerational relationship. Human sexuality plays the same part in a boylove relationship as it undoubtedly

does in any relationship between human beings. Therefore, it may not be present, only slightly present, or explicitly present in any given relationship. A relationship that is based on sexual contact alone is not really part of boylove because this term includes far more than that.

A boylover desires a friendly and close relationship with a boy. This relationship will not necessarily include any sexual intimacy, nor will it necessarily exclude it. A boylover's fascination focuses primarily on the "boyish" and "childish" traits that are particular to any boy. The physical traits of the boy and the boylover's sexual desires, which may or may not be present, are quite secondary to that fascination. A boylover will go to great lengths to protect a boy from negative influences or any physical and emotional harm. Further, a boylover will not resort to threats, nor will he show any signs of aggressive or even violent behavior as part of a relationship.

THE BOYLOVE RELATIONSHIP

In most cases, the attraction between the boylover and the boy is mutual. The boy is drawn to an adult who takes him seriously and treats him respectfully. The boylove relationship is void of the demeaning power struggles and restrictions that are customarily a part of any child/adult relationship. In a boylove relationship, the boy is afforded the chance to experience himself as a person. A person who may have and express his own opinion, without running the risk of having it cast aside as unqualified or even "childish." His spirit, as well as his body, are seen as a whole. Not as something that is still in the process—a developmental stage on the way to adulthood.

A child is commonly viewed as someone who needs to grow up in order to become a person. Society applies adult standards in order to shape and mold the child. Personality traits that may be considered undesirable or inconvenient are often removed in the process of child rearing and education.

As part of a boylove relationship, the older partner accepts and nourishes the spirit of the child. The boylover doesn't try to apply adult standards of behavior in order to force the boy's spirit to fit the mold. The boy experiences this acceptance of his own unique character as something very special and pleasant. He feels free to develop and grow because his partner treasures his personality and takes it seriously.

Although the adult partner is always in a position to exercise power over the child, the boylover tries to avoid any power struggles within the relationship. However, the boylover must be aware of the fact that an imbalance of power is present in any adult/child relationship. Therefore, a situation may arise where he may need to raise this topic with his partner.

WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS OF THE BOY?

First and foremost, it is the right of the boy to develop his personality and his sexuality freely. This rule must govern every boylove relationship, and it does. Any physical or psychological pressure inherently infringes upon this precious right. Further, any restrictions that may interfere with the development of his personality, or those that may prohibit him from experiencing his sexuality without restraints, may also be considered an infringement of his rights. It is the boylover's responsibility to shape the relationship in order to comply with the wishes and needs of the boy. It is also his responsibility to ask questions and listen carefully. Most importantly, the boylover must not interfere with the autonomous development of the boy.

The boy has the right to be protected against physical or psychological abuse. It should also be considered a form of abuse when a boy is prohibited from exercising his rights to experience a loving relationship, or if he is not allowed to experience and develop his own sexuality. The rights of the boy should be respected in this regard, too.

WHAT ARE OUR DEMANDS?

We demand the freedom of individual sexuality for boys and for boylovers.

We demand that current standards of sexuality are reconsidered. These standards infringe upon basic human rights because they prohibit children and those who love them from even thinking about engaging in any sexual intimacy.

We demand that any medical, psychological, or religious notions that are preconceived against child sexuality be exempted from a discussion about new sexual standards.

We demand that children as well as boylovers be included in the current debate concerning sexuality between children and adults. At this point, the "experts" are people who have gained their knowledge about intergenerational relationships from books and statistics. It sounds incredible: There are people who are defending the best interests of an age group and they haven't even bothered to ask members of this age group if this representation is desirable or in their best interests.

We demand our freedom of speech in the media. The Internet is being targeted as the forum for boylovers. We demand to be held to the same standards as every other participant in the Internet: If there is nothing illegal being published on a "boylove site," then this site may not be shut down or censored at will.

We demand a forum for open communication between boylovers. A forum that is entirely free from repression. This discourse, support, and a sense of community is important. It is a place to discuss sexual ethics and a forum that will be reached by boylovers from around the globe.

We demand that society reconsider the status of the child. This is our most important demand. Since children are not granted their own personality, and since they are not being taken seriously, there are "experts" who may represent their "best interests." And as long as we allow this representation to take place, children will be denied their right to develop their own personality, as well as their own sexuality.

Discussion Questions

1. How are the pedophile and the child molester different? Why is this distinction sociologically relevant?
2. In *Outsiders*, a book on deviance, Howard S. Becker emphasized that *moral enterprise* is central to labeling behavior as deviant. Why is this principle especially crucial in defining sex between an adult and a minor?
3. How does NAMBLA (the North American Man-Boy Love Association) "justify and normalize its philosophy and practices"?
4. How are the sociological and the psychiatric perspectives toward adult-child sexual contact different?