

HJR

36

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 Sponsor: Rep Fred Dyson
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Dept. Affected _____
 BRU _____
 Component _____
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Expenditures/Revenues

(Thousands of Dollars)

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 00	FY 01	FY 02	FY 03	FY 04	FY 05
Personal Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE

(Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
1091 Designated Program Receipts						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY98) cost: _____

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by

Rep. Fred Dyson
Co-Chair
House HESS



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A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples

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Many lay persons and professionals believe that child sexual abuse (CSA) causes intense harm, regardless of gender, pervasively in the general population. The authors examined this belief by reviewing 59 studies based on college samples. Meta-analyses revealed that students with CSA were, on average, slightly less well adjusted than controls. However, this poorer adjustment could not be attributed to CSA because family environment (FE) was consistently confounded with CSA, FE explained considerably more adjustment variance than CSA, and CSA-adjustment relations generally became nonsignificant when studies controlled for FE. Self-reported reactions to and effects from CSA indicated that negative effects were neither pervasive nor typically intense, and that men reacted much less negatively than women. The college data were completely consistent with data from national samples. Basic beliefs about CSA in the general population were not supported.

Child sexual abuse (CSA) has received considerable attention since the late 1970s from mental health care professionals, legislative, judicial, and law enforcement personnel, the media, and the lay public (Rind & Tromovitch, 1997). Much of this attention has focused on possible effects of CSA on psychological adjustment, as is shown in the professional literature and popular press (Pope & Hudson, 1995) and in the information and entertainment media (Esman, 1994; Kutchinsky, 1992; West & Woodhouse, 1993). The media have frequently presented lurid CSA cases combined with high prevalence estimates, creating the image that CSA produces intensely negative effects for all of its victims (Esman, 1994; Kutchinsky, 1992; West & Woodhouse, 1993). Many publications in the popular press and the professional literature have similarly portrayed CSA as a "special destroyer of adult mental health" (Seligman, 1994, p. 232), and some have attempted to explain much or all of adult psychopathology as a consequence of CSA (Esman, 1994; Nash, Hulseley, Sexton, Harralson, & Lambert, 1993). Examples in the professional literature include McMillen, Zuravin, and Rideout (1995, p. 1037), who commented that "child sexual abuse is a traumatic event for which there may be few peers," and Rodriguez, Ryan, Rowen, and Foy (1996), who combined estimates of national prevalence rates of CSA with selected examples of empirical research to argue that posttraumatic stress disorder is

a common sequel of CSA in the general population. Opinions expressed in the media and by many popular press and professional writers imply that CSA has certain basic properties or qualities irrespective of the population of interest. These implied properties are (a) CSA causes harm, (b) this harm is pervasive in the population of persons with a history of CSA, (c) this harm is likely to be intense, and (d) CSA is an equivalent experience for boys and girls in terms of its widespread and intensely negative effects. The purpose of the current review was to examine these implied basic properties. Our goal was to address the question: In the population of persons with a history of CSA, does this experience cause intense psychological harm on a widespread basis for both genders?

An important first step is to discuss terminology. The term *child sexual abuse* has been used in the psychological literature to describe virtually all sexual interactions between children or adolescents and significantly older persons, as well as between same-age children or adolescents when coercion is involved. The indiscriminate use of this term and related terms such as *victim* and *perpetrator* has been criticized because of concerns about scientific validity (e.g., Kilpatrick, 1987; Nelson, 1989; Okami, 1990; Rind & Bauserman, 1993). Kilpatrick argued that researchers have often failed to distinguish between "abuse" as harm done to a child or adolescent and "abuse" as a violation of social norms, which is problematic because it cannot be assumed that violations of social norms lead to harm. Similarly, Money (1979) observed that our society has tended to equate "wrongfulness" with harmfulness in sexual matters, but harmfulness cannot be inferred from wrongfulness. Nelson argued that the indiscriminate use of terms suggesting force, coercion, and harm reflects and maintains the belief that these interactions are always harmful, thereby threatening an objective appraisal of them. Rind and Bauserman demonstrated experimentally that appraisals of nonnegative sexual interactions between adults and

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cal studies, which often include high proportions of patients with incestuous CSA, causality is therefore more problematic. In the college samples, however, close family CSA was the exception, not the rule. Only 16% of SA students had close family CSA; the percentage of cases of paternal incest is even lower because the overall value includes sibling incest. These considerations do not prove causal direction in the college population but suggest that in most cases the direction is more likely to go from family environment to CSA. Finally, the college samples did not underrepresent abuse severity. Compared with the general population, as indicated by studies based on national samples, SA students experienced as much intercourse, close family CSA, and multiple episodes of CSA; moreover, college students were just as likely to have experienced CSA as persons in the general population. Briere's arguments seem most appropriate for clinical samples with large proportions of incest cases. In this situation, Briere's (1988, p. 84) argument that "abuse without family dysfunction may have little construct validity" may be applicable; in the general population and in the college population, however, this argument is less valid. These considerations support the validity of using statistical control in the studies under review.

Aside from validity issues, however, the statistical control analyses do not rule out causality for several reasons. First, in a minority of cases, CSA-symptom relations remained significant after statistical control. Second, when nonsignificance did result from statistical control, low power rather than a zero effect may have been responsible. Third, a small minority of students with a history of CSA did report self-perceived lasting harm, implying genuine negative effects of CSA for these persons. Fourth, for male participants, unwanted CSA was associated with greater symptomatology. If unwanted CSA had been contrasted with willing CSA only, instead of a combination of unwanted and willing CSA, then consent would likely have moderated CSA-symptom relations more strongly. These results suggest that unwanted CSA does have negative effects, although confounding variables must still be considered. Despite these caveats, the current results imply that the claim that CSA inevitably or usually produces harm is not justified.

The finding that family environment is more important than CSA in accounting for current adjustment in the college population is consistent with the results of several recent studies using participants from noncollege populations (e.g., Eckenrode et al., 1993; Ney et al., 1994). Eckenrode et al. categorized children and adolescents obtained from a large representative community sample in a small-sized city in New York state into six groups: not abused, CSA, physical abuse, neglect, CSA and neglect, and physical abuse and neglect. They found that SA children and adolescents performed as well in school as non-abused controls in all areas measured, including standardized test scores, school performance, and behavior. Neglect and physical abuse, on the other hand, were associated with poorer performance and more behavior problems. Ney et al. (1994) sepa-

rated their mostly clinical sample of children and adolescents into categories of CSA, physical abuse, physical neglect, verbal abuse, emotional neglect, and combinations of these. They found that the combination of abuse that correlated most strongly with adjustment problems was physical abuse, physical neglect, and verbal abuse. In the top 10 worst combinations, verbal abuse appeared seven times, physical neglect six times, physical abuse and emotional neglect five times each, whereas CSA appeared only once.

The greater importance of nonsexual negative childhood experiences in explaining later adjustment was clearly demonstrated in a study of a large, representative sample of female college students throughout the United States. Wisniewski (1990) used path analyses to assess the relative contributions of CSA and family environment to current adjustment. She concluded that the data did not support CSA "as a specific explanation of current emotional distress [but instead are] best interpreted as supportive of other factors such as family violence . . . as having the greatest impact" (p. 258). Other researchers who used college samples and used statistical control reached similar conclusions regarding the role of family violence, rather than CSA, in explaining current adjustment problems (e.g., Higgins & McCabe, 1994; Pallotta, 1992). One reason CSA may have been overshadowed by other childhood experiences such as verbal and physical abuse in explaining adjustment is that participants may have experienced the latter type of events more frequently than CSA. Nevertheless, the results from these studies highlight the relatively greater importance of family environment compared with CSA in accounting for adjustment problems—a point that has been ignored or underemphasized in much of the CSA literature to date.

Pervasiveness and Intensity of Negative Effects or Correlates

Self-reported effects from CSA revealed that lasting psychological harm was uncommon among the SA college students. Perceived temporary harm, although more common, was far from pervasive. In short, the self-reported effects data do not support the assumption of wide-scale psychological harm from CSA. This conclusion is further suggested by students' self-reported reactions. The finding that two thirds of SA men and more than one fourth of SA women reported neutral or positive reactions is inconsistent with the assumption of pervasive and intense harm. It is not parsimonious to argue that boys or girls who react neutrally or positively to CSA are likely to experience intense psychological impairment. To argue that positive or neutral reactions are consistent with intense harm, it seems logical to first demonstrate that negative reactions are consistent with intense harm. However, the magnitude of the CSA-adjustment relation was small for women, despite the reporting of negative reactions by a majority of SA women. This low intensity finding for generally negative CSA experiences is inconsistent with an expectation of intense harm from nonnegative CSA experiences.

Moderators

Multiple regression analyses showed that the intensity of the relationship between CSA and adjustment varied reliably as a function of gender, level of consent, and the interaction of these

ally, it should be noted, because of its salience, the revelation, or even fear of revelation, of CSA events may inflate a SA person's perception of negative aspects of family environment, particularly in retrospective measures.

two factors. It is noteworthy that neither the level of contact nor the interaction between gender and level of contact was related to intensity. These latter results failed to provide support for the common belief that contact sex is more harmful than noncontact sex or that contact sex for girls is especially harmful. These conclusions, however, should be viewed cautiously because of the overlapping nature of the two levels of the contact variable (i.e., contact only versus contact and noncontact sex). This same caveat applies to consent because its two levels (unwanted versus willing and unwanted) were overlapping as well. The finding that most women (72%) reacted negatively to their CSA at the time it occurred implies that most of this CSA was unwanted and that the overlap between the two levels of consent was high. Thus, even though consent did not moderate intensity for women, a true difference as a function of consent may have been obscured. The finding that level of consent did moderate intensity for men is consistent with less overlap between the two levels of consent for men, because the majority of men (67%) reacted nonnegatively at the time. Importantly, CSA was not related to adjustment for men in the willing and unwanted level of the consent variable.

In separate moderator analyses, we examined how aspects of the CSA experience moderated self-reported reactions and effects, as well as symptoms. Although these results should be viewed cautiously because they were usually based on a small number of samples, we found that only force and incest moderated outcomes. The largest relation occurred between force and self-reported reactions or effects, but force was unrelated to symptoms. Incest moderated both symptoms and self-reported reactions and effects. Penetration, duration, and frequency did not moderate outcomes. The near-zero correlation between penetration and outcome is consistent with the multiple regression analysis finding that contact sex did not moderate adjustment. This result provides empirical support for Finkelhor's (1979, p. 103) observation that our society's view of intercourse as the most damaging form of CSA is "a well-ingrained prejudice" unsupported by research. Composite measures consisting of various combinations of moderators (e.g., incest, force, penetration) showed no association with symptoms in four of five studies that constructed such measures. This finding is consistent with Laumann et al.'s (1994) failure to find an association between their composite variable (consisting of penetration, number of older partners-abusers, relatedness of partner-abuser, frequency of contacts, age when having contacts, duration of contacts) and adjustment for SA respondents in their study of a U.S. national sample. It is important to note, however, that these nonsignificant results may be attributable to the additive nature of the composite variables. Composites based on two-way or higher order interactions of moderators might have been more likely to yield significant results, particularly if the interactions included incest and force.

Child Sexual Abuse as a Construct Reconsidered

In light of the current findings, it is appropriate to reexamine the scientific validity of the construct of CSA as it has been generally conceptualized. In most studies examined in the current review, CSA was defined based on legal and moral, rather than empirical and phenomenological, criteria. This approach

may form a defensible rationale for legal restrictions of these behaviors, but is inadequate and may be invalid in the context of scientific inquiry (Okami, 1994). In science, *abuse* implies that particular actions or inactions of an intentional nature are likely to cause harm to an individual (cf. Kilpatrick, 1987; Money & Weinrich, 1983). Classifying a behavior as abuse simply because it is generally viewed as immoral or defined as illegal is problematic, because such a classification may obscure the true nature of the behavior and its actual causes and effects.

The history of attitudes toward sexuality provides numerous examples. Masturbation was formerly labeled "self-abuse" after the 18th century Swiss physician Tissot transformed it from a moral to a medical problem (Bullough & Bullough, 1977). From the mid-1700s until the early 1900s the medical profession was dominated by physicians who believed that masturbation caused a host of maladies ranging from acne to death (Hall, 1992; Money, 1985), and medical pronouncements of dangerousness were accompanied by moral tirades (e.g., Kellogg, 1891). This conflation of morality and science hindered a scientifically valid understanding of this behavior and created iatrogenic victims in the process (Bullough & Bullough, 1977; Hall, 1992; Money, 1985). Kinsey et al. (1948) argued that scientific classifications of sexual behavior were nearly identical with theological classifications and the moral pronouncements of English common law in the 15th century, which were in turn based on medieval ecclesiastic law, which was itself built on the tenets of certain ancient Greek and Roman cults and Talmudic law. Kinsey et al. noted that "[e]ither the ancient philosophers were remarkably well-trained psychologists, or modern psychologists have contributed little in defining abnormal sexual behavior" (p. 203). Behaviors such as masturbation, homosexuality, fellatio, cunnilingus, and sexual promiscuity were codified as pathological in the first edition of the American Psychiatric Association's (1952) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. The number and variety of sexual behaviors labeled pathological has decreased, but mental health professionals continue to designate sexual behaviors as disorders when they violate current sexual scripts for what is considered acceptable (Levine & Troiden, 1988). This history of conflating morality and law with science in the area of human sexuality by psychologists and others indicates a strong need for caution in scientific inquiries of sexual behaviors that remain taboo, with child sexual abuse being a prime example (Rind, 1995).

As discussed previously, abuse implies that harm is likely to result from a behavior. The results for SA male college students, using this scientific conceptualization of abuse, highlight the questionable validity of the construct CSA as defined and used in the studies examined in the current review. For these male college students, 37% viewed their CSA experiences as positive at the time they occurred; 42% viewed these experiences as positive when reflecting back on them; and in the two studies that inquired about positive self-perceived effects, 24% to 37% viewed their CSA experiences as having a positive influence on their current sex lives. Importantly, SA men across all levels of consent (i.e., both willing and unwanted experiences) did not differ from controls in current psychological adjustment, although SA men with unwanted experiences only did, implying that willingness was associated with no impairment to psychological adjustment. The positive reports of reactions and effects,

Along with normal adjustment for willing participants, are scientifically inconsistent with classifying these male students as having been abused. Their experiences were not associated with harm, and there appears to be no scientific reason to expect such an association (i.e., predicting psychologically harmful effects from events that produced positive reactions lacks face validity). On the other hand, a minority of SA men did report retrospectively recalled negative reactions, negative current reflections, and negative self-perceived effects; moreover, unwanted CSA was associated with adjustment problems. Assuming that negative reactions were associated with unwanted CSA, the term *abuse* may be scientifically valid for the latter students. Combining positive and negative responders into a single category of abuse may incorrectly suggest harm for the former and simultaneously dilute harm for the latter (Bauserman & Rind, 1997).

Some researchers have questioned their original definitions of sexual abuse after assessing their results. For example, Fishman (1991) borrowed from Finkelhor's (1979) definition to classify sexual abuse of boys mostly on the basis of age discrepancies (i.e., sex between a boy of 12 or less and someone at least 5 years older, or between a boy aged 13 to 16 with someone at least 10 years older), stating that age differences implied sufficient discrepancy in developmental maturity and knowledge to indicate victimization. He found that SA men in his study did not differ from controls on measures of adjustment and reported a wide range of reactions to and effects from their CSA experiences (mostly positive or neutral). In-depth interviews confirmed and elaborated the quantitative findings, leading Fishman to question his original assumptions. He noted that the men's stories altered his universal beliefs about the impact of inappropriate sexual experiences on children, and stated that "to impose a confining definition onto someone's experience does nothing to alter the realities of that experience for the person" (pp. 284-285). Fishman concluded by arguing for the use of language of a more neutral nature rather than labels such as abuse, victim, and molestation—in short, for use of empirical and phenomenological criteria in conceptualizing early sexual relations, rather than legal or moral criteria.

The foregoing discussion does not imply that the construct CSA should be abandoned, but only that it should be used less indiscriminately to achieve better scientific validity. Its use is more scientifically valid when early sexual episodes are unwanted and experienced negatively—a combination commonly reported, for example, in father-daughter incest.⁷ In general, findings from the current review suggest that sociolegal definitions of CSA have more scientific validity in the case of female children and adolescents than for male children and adolescents, given the higher rate of unwanted negative experiences for women. Nevertheless, as Long and Jackson (1993) argued, because some women perceive their early experiences as positive, do not label themselves as victims, and do not show evidence of psychological impairment, it is important for researchers to be cautious in defining abuse for both men and women in attempts to validly examine the antecedents and effects of these experiences.

Summary and Conclusion

Beliefs about CSA in American culture center on the viewpoint that CSA by nature is such a powerfully negative force

that (a) it is likely to cause harm, (b) most children or adolescents who experience it will be affected, (c) this harm will typically be severe or intense, and (d) CSA will have an equivalently negative impact on both boys and girls. Despite this widespread belief, the empirical evidence from college and national samples suggests a more cautious opinion. Results of the present review do not support these assumed properties; CSA does not cause intense harm on a pervasive basis regardless of gender in the college population. The finding that college samples closely parallel national samples with regard to prevalence of CSA, types of experiences, self-perceived effects, and CSA-symptom relations strengthens the conclusion that CSA is not a propertyed phenomenon and supports Constantine's (1981) conclusion that CSA has no inbuilt or inevitable outcome or set of emotional reactions.

An important reason why the assumed properties of CSA failed to withstand empirical scrutiny in the current review is that the construct of CSA, as commonly conceptualized by researchers, is of questionable scientific validity. Overinclusive definitions of abuse that encompass both willing sexual experiences accompanied by positive reactions and coerced sexual experiences with negative reactions produce poor predictive validity. To achieve better scientific validity, a more thoughtful approach is needed by researchers when labeling and categorizing events that have heretofore been defined sociolegally as CSA (Fishman, 1991; Kilpatrick, 1987; Okami, 1994; Rind & Bauserman, 1993).

One possible approach to a scientific definition, consistent with findings in the current review and with suggestions offered by Constantine (1981), is to focus on the young person's perception of his or her willingness to participate and his or her reactions to the experience. A willing encounter with positive reactions would be labeled simply *adult-child sex*, a value-neutral term. If a young person felt that he or she did not freely participate in the encounter and if he or she experienced negative reactions to it, then *child sexual abuse*, a term that implies harm to the individual, would be valid. Moreover, the term *child* should be restricted to nonadolescent children (Ames & Houston, 1990). Adolescents are different from children in that they are more likely to have sexual interests, to know whether they want a particular sexual encounter, and to resist an encounter that they do not want. Furthermore, unlike *adult-child sex*, *adult-adolescent sex* has been commonplace cross-culturally and historically, often in socially sanctioned forms, and may fall within the "normal" range of human sexual behaviors (Bullough, 1990; Greenberg, 1988; Okami, 1994). A willing encounter between an adolescent and an adult with positive reactions on the part of the adolescent would then be labeled scientifically as *adult-adolescent sex*, while an unwanted encounter with negative reactions would be labeled *adolescent sexual abuse*. By drawing these distinctions, researchers are likely to achieve

⁷ Two of the three outliers identified in the sample-level meta-analysis involved samples consisting largely of incest cases (Jackson et al., 1990; Roland et al., 1989). The CSA experiences of these women, associated with relatively large effect sizes, may capture more accurately the essence of abuse in a scientific sense—that is, more persuasive evidence of harm combined with the likely contextual factors of being unwanted and perceived negatively.

a more scientifically valid understanding of the nature, causes, and consequences of the heterogeneous collection of behaviors heretofore labeled CSA.

Finally, it is important to consider implications of the current review for moral and legal positions on CSA. If it is true that wrongfulness in sexual matters does not imply harmfulness (Money, 1979), then it is also true that lack of harmfulness does not imply lack of wrongfulness. Moral codes of a society with respect to sexual behavior need not be, and often have not been, based on considerations of psychological harmfulness or health (cf. Finkelhor, 1984). Similarly, legal codes may be, and have often been, unconnected to such considerations (Kinsey et al., 1948). In this sense, the findings of the current review do not imply that moral or legal definitions of or views on behaviors currently classified as CSA should be abandoned or even altered. The current findings are relevant to moral and legal positions only to the extent that these positions are based on the presumption of psychological harm.

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American Psychological Association[Site Map](#) [Search](#) [Home Page](#)**APA Public Communications****Statement on Childhood Sexual Abuse*****Childhood Sexual Abuse Causes Serious Harm to its Victims***

The American Psychological Association (APA), through its members, sponsored initiatives and publishing, has a long record in the area of the prevention and treatment of child abuse and neglect including sexual abuse. In the legislative arena, for example, APA has played an active role in advocating for programs expanding child abuse prevention, treatment and research. And, through its Coordinating Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect, APA has been a leader in helping the mental health profession document and treat the ill effects of childhood abuse.

In 1990, the APA Council of Representatives passed a resolution calling for a national strategy to prevent and treat child abuse and neglect and called such action a matter of the highest urgency. **APA's position is, therefore, very clear: The sexual abuse of children is wrong and harmful to its victims.** As a publisher of psychological research, APA publishes thousands of research reports every year. But, publication of the findings of a research project within an APA journal is in no way an endorsement of a finding by the Association.

The article which is the basis for this controversy, *A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples*, is one of hundreds of studies which appear in the psychological literature on the effects of childhood sexual abuse. Unfortunately, the findings of this meta-analysis (a meta-analysis studies the data of multiple previous research projects on the subject) are being misrepresented by some in the media. The actual findings are that for this segment of the population (college students) being the victim of childhood sexual abuse was found to be *less* damaging to them than generally believed. However, one overall statement of the results was that students who were the victims of child sexual abuse were, on average, *slightly less well-adjusted* than students who were not victimized as children. One important follow-up question raised by the study is what happens to these students as they enter adulthood and start families of their own. Do they further experience detrimental effects of their childhood experiences later in life?

Those who are reporting that the study says that childhood sexual contact with adults is not harmful to children are misreporting the findings. **The facts are that the majority of the psychological literature reveals that childhood sexual abuse has serious and long-term negative effects on its victims.**

No responsible mental health organization, including the American Psychological Association, endorses pedophilia or denies its negative effects on children. Any statement that suggests otherwise is a serious distortion of the truth. The American Psychiatric Association writes: "An adult who engages in sexual activity with a child is performing a criminal and immoral act which never can be considered normal or socially acceptable behavior." This statement is fully consistent with the policies of the American Psychological Association and with the views of mental health professionals throughout the nation.

For copies of the *APA Policy Statement on the Psychological Issues Related to Child Abuse and Neglect*, the *Report of the APA Coordinating Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect* or for citations from the psychological literature on childhood sexual abuse contact:

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March 23, 1999

The American Psychological Association (APA), in Washington, DC, is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and is the world's largest association of psychologists. APA's membership includes more than 155,000 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 50 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 58 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance psychology as a science, as a profession and as a means of promoting human welfare.

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March 23, 1999

Backpedaling on pedophilia

By Kathleen Parker

Special to the Sentinel

Published in The Orlando Sentinel on April 11, 1999.

The American Psychological Association has asked me to correct a misconception regarding a recent column I wrote about a new study that suggests maybe pedophilia ain't so bad. I don't usually write follow-up columns on request, but Lord knows where I would be without the psychological community; I don't want those guys mad at me. Thus, humbly, I submit the following adjustment, if not a correction.

The column in question was about a study produced last year -- and published in an APA "Psychological Bulletin" -- that urged new terminology in discussions of adult-child sex. Basically, the study's authors concluded that we've been too judgmental in such relationships, that sometimes children actually enjoy having sex with adults; our terms should be more "value-neutral." Although the study had been in circulation for several months, it didn't become a topic of public discussion until radio-host Dr. Laura Schlessinger raised it on her show. Dr. Laura said she feared that the psychological community was trying to normalize pedophilia. I picked up on the story around the same time when a reader e-mailed me a copy of the study. I quoted the authors' findings accurately but fumbled, apparently, when I described the study as having been "released by the APA."

To normal people like you and me, that means that the APA, uh, released a study -- as in made it public. To the APA, it means that I'm suggesting that the APA either conducted the study or is endorsing adult-child sex, or both. Let's get this straight once and for all so we can get back to what really matters, which is that certain psychologists seem to be trying to normalize pedophilia. The APA did not conduct the study, did not endorse its conclusions and is categorically, irrefutably and unequivocally against adult-child sex.

An APA press release to that effect reads as follows: "As a publisher of psychological research, APA publishes thousands of research reports every year. But, publication of the findings of a research project within an APA journal is in no way an endorsement of a finding by the Association." Noted. The release goes on to confirm the American Psychological Association's agreement with a position statement on adult-child sex issued by the American Psychiatric Association: "An adult who engages in sexual activities with a child is performing a criminal and immoral act which never can be considered normal or socially acceptable behavior." Agreed.

Now back to the study. In case you missed it, the University of Michigan researchers combined 59 studies in what's called a "meta-analysis" to determine how college students deal with child sexual abuse. The researchers found that being the victim of childhood sexual abuse was found to be less damaging to them than generally believed. Ergo (my words here), what's the big deal? Let's stop getting so hysterical about pedophilia and just have fun. In the researchers' own words: "Sex between adults and willing minors should be described in more positive terms. . . . A willing encounter . . . would be labeled simple 'adult-child sex,' a value-neutral term. . . . A willing encounter between an adolescent and an adult with positive reactions ... would be labeled scientifically as 'adult-adolescent sex.'" Still with me here? My pithy response to the study was, and I paraphrase, phooey! Children aren't ever in a position to decide whether they should have sex with an adult, even if they think they are. As the close relative of several college students, I wouldn't conclude anything about their future lives as adults, based on their current perceptions.

The APA -- which, let me repeat, did not endorse this study and does not condone adult-child sex -- pointed out an "interesting follow-up question" raised by the study, which is: "What happens to these students as they enter adulthood and start families of their own? Do they further experience detrimental effects of their childhood experiences later in life?" You can bank on it, and psychologists will be the ones making the deposits.

[Posted 04/09/1999 4:06 PM EST]



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REPRESENTATIVE FRED DYSON

HJR 36 Sponsor Statement

"Relating to rejecting the conclusions in a recent article published by the American Psychological Association that suggests that sexual relationships between adults and children might be positive for children; and urging the President of the United States and the United States Congress to similarly reject these conclusions."

In Western culture, child protection has become an increasing concern. State and Federal laws have been enacted to reflect the growing need to protect our children.

In 1998, the Alaska State Legislature continued and codified more protection for our children. These laws made a clear statement that adult sexual exploitation of child is criminal and damaging to children. Our laws now make it clear that parents who persist in molesting their children are unfit parents.

Recently, the American Psychological Association (APA) published a research paper entitled, "A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples," on the long-term impact of child sexual abuse (CSA). This paper, by Bruce Rind (Temple University), Philip Tromovitch (University of Pennsylvania), and Robert Bauserman (University of Michigan), appears to be a rigorous literature study. Peer review has identified several questionable assumptions and methodologies in this research paper.

The APA published paper suggests, in the conclusions, that many survivors of CSA have little or no long-term effects of the abuse. The paper further suggests that for some "willing" children, sexual abuse victims may actually benefit from the experience.

Since the article was published, the APA has vigorously tried to distance themselves from the paper's conclusions. They maintain that they have, in the past, published dozens of papers showing CSA is significantly or profoundly damaging to the victims.

Our own state research indicates that CSA is an enormous individual and societal problem. This resolution rejects some of the conclusions and suggestions in this paper. It is our desire that this paper be considered in the context of the wealth of research on this subject and that policy makers not give it more credence than deserved.

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(7)

Date Referred to Committee: April 7, 1999

FURTHER REFERRALS:

Date of Committee Action: _____

The HEALTH, EDUCATION AND SOCIAL SERVICES Committee considered:

HJR 36

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 36

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION REPORT

Relating to rejecting the conclusions in a recent article published by the American Psychological Association that suggests that sexual relationships between adults and children might be positive for children; and urging the President of the United States and the United States Congress to similarly reject these conclusions.

recommends it be replaced with the following committee substitute _____ [] the same title [] a new title

[] additional referral to _____ Committee
[] attached amendment(s)

ADOPTS: _____ Letter of Intent

ATTACHES NEW FISCAL NOTE(S): (Dept) _____

APPROVES PREVIOUS: (Dept/Date) _____

[] fiscal note(s) _____

[] fiscal note(s) _____

[] zero fiscal note(s) _____

[] zero fiscal note(s) _____

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