

Playing the Pedophilia Card

One of the most frustrating aspects of the struggle for equal rights for gay and lesbian Americans is the strength of enduring untruths, particularly those knowingly perpetuated by our opponents.

And perhaps the most maddening of these falsehoods suggests that gay men present a special danger to children.

Conservative Christian organizations shamelessly promote this deception. The Family Research Council's website offers the 31-page report "Homosexual Activists Work to Normalize Sex With Boys." [1] Until recently, the American Family Association's site presented "Homosexuality and Child Molestation: The Link, the Likelihood, the Lasting Effects." [2]

Still not quite sure that gay men molest kids? Contact Focus on the Family and purchase "Setting the Record Straight," which alleges that a child molester is 17 times more likely to be gay than straight. [3]

The moral lawlessness of repeating this untruth is all the more egregious because its falsity has been known for over 20 years.

In 1978 psychologist Nicholas Groth screened 175 men who had been convicted in Massachusetts of sexual molestation of children and referred by a court for psychological evaluation. He found not a single gay man in this sample. Every one of the perpetrators was either an exclusive heterosexual, a bisexual with a predominantly heterosexual orientation, or a fixated pedophile with no sexual interest in adults. [4]

His conclusion? That "the adult heterosexual male constitutes a greater risk to the underage child than does the adult homosexual male."

In the same year, researcher David Newton reviewed the scientific literature and found no reason to believe that anything other than a "random connection" existed between homosexual orientation and child molestation. [5]

Later research has confirmed these findings:

- In 1988, renowned sex researcher Kurt Freund at the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto studied two groups of paid volunteers and found that gay men responded no more to male child stimuli than heterosexual men responded to female child stimuli. [6] He later described as a "myth" the notion that gay men are more likely than straight men to be child molesters. [7]
- In 1992, alarmed over claims made during a campaign for an anti-gay state constitutional amendment in Colorado, two physicians reviewed every case of suspected child molestation evaluated at Children's Hospital in Denver over a

one-year period. Of the 269 cases determined to involve molestation by an adult, only two of the perpetrators could be identified as gay or lesbian. The researchers concluded that the risk of child sexual abuse by an identifiably gay or lesbian person was between zero and 3.1%, and that the risk of such abuse by the heterosexual partner of a relative was over 100 times greater.[8]

Child abuse, including sexual abuse, is a terrible reality in this country. According to the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System, established by the federal Department of Health and Human Services, nearly 90,000 children are sexually abused every year.[9] According to some researchers, the true number may be five times this.[10]

Approximately 80 percent of these sexually molested children are girls.[11] Persons focusing only on the remaining 20 percent of molestations--and, even then, only on the small fraction of these crimes committed by gay men--are not authentically concerned with combating sexual abuse of children. Their primary interest lies in perpetuating fear.

The source of the right's statistics linking gay men with child molestation is discredited psychologist Paul Cameron, who operates the Family Research Institute in Colorado Springs, Colorado.[12] Cameron is responsible for many of the right's most bizarre allegations about gays and lesbians, such as that gays constitute 44 percent of sexual mass murderers, that two-thirds of gay men "ingest biologically significant amounts of feces," and that being a gay male takes 30 years off one's life.[13]

But Cameron is hardly a credible source. He was dropped from the American Psychological Association back in 1983 for a violation of its Ethical Principles of Psychologists.[14] And he's been censured by four other professional associations and a federal court.[15]

The key to understanding research on this issue is to recognize three things. First, a person's sexual attraction to adults, whether homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual, is wholly distinct from an attraction to children. A person can be attracted only to adults, only to children, or occasionally to both, but these attractions are independent facets of a person's psychology.

Second, a significant proportion of child molestation is perpetrated by men who are not sexually attracted to children, but who "regress" to sexual interactions with children under the stress of life events.

Third, while pedophilia is sometimes denominated as "heterosexual" or "homosexual," this usage is simply descriptive, that is, it is intended only to characterize the relationship between the offender's and the victim's genders, and not to define the offender's sexual orientation, if any, toward adults.[16]

The child molestation myth parallels in many ways the blood libel against European Jews, who during the twelfth through nineteenth centuries were accused of

kidnapping Christian children and slowly bleeding them to death in ritual sacrifices.[17]

Americans have an obligation to reject pernicious myths--including this one--about its citizens.

NOTES

1. See [Family Research Council](#).
2. By January, 2002, that report had been removed from the AFA's website. A less extensive treatment of the issue can still be found in their publication "[Homosexuality in America: Exposing the Myths](#)". See Myth #7 ("More sexual crimes against children are committed by heterosexuals than homosexuals, therefore a heterosexual is more likely to be a pedophile than a homosexual is").
3. Larry Burtoft, "Setting the Record Straight," Focus on the Family, 1995. Available on the web at [Focus on the Family](#).
4. A. Nicholas Groth and H. Jean Birnbaum, "Adult Sexual Orientation and Attraction to Underage Persons," Archives of Sexual Behavior, 7(3), 1978, pp. 175-181.
5. David E. Newton, "Homosexual Behavior and Child Molestation: A Review of the Evidence," Adolescence, vol. 13, no. 49, Spring 1978, pp. 29-43.
6. Kurt Freund, Robin Watson, and Douglas Rienzo, "Heterosexuality, Homosexuality, and Erotic Age Preference," The Journal of Sex Research, 26(1), Feb. 1989, pp. 107-117.
7. Kurt Freund and Robin Watson, "The Proportion of Heterosexual and Homosexual Pedophiles Among Sex Offenders Against Children: An Exploratory Study," Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy, 18(1), Spring, 1992, pp. 34-43, at p. 41.
8. Carole Jenny, Tom Roesler, and Kimberly Poyer, "Are Children at Risk for Sexual Abuse by Homosexuals?," Pediatrics, 94(1), July 1994, pp. 41-44.
9. [The report for 1999](#) shows that 88,238 children were sexually abused in that year.
10. Cheryl Ann Macdonald, "Treatment Effects of Pedophilia," Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: the Sciences & Engineering, Vol. 59(6-B), Dec 1998, 3065.
11. See the [Report for 1999](#) (the most recent).
12. For general information on Cameron, see Ward Harkavy, "Slay It With a Smile,"

Westword (Denver alternative weekly), October 3, 1996; Mark Pietrzyk, "Queer Science: Paul Cameron, Professional Sham," *The New Republic*, October 3, 1994; Ann Giudici Fettner, "The Evil That Men Do," *New York Native*, Sept. 23-29, 1985, pp. 23-24; Dave Walter, "Paul Cameron," *The Advocate*, October 29, 1985, pp. 29-33.

13. Gays constitute 44 percent of sexual mass murderers, see "Homosexuality--Everybody's Problem," 1987 pamphlet from Cameron's Family Research Institute. Two-thirds of gay men "ingest biologically significant amounts of feces," see "What Homosexuals Do (It's More Than Merely Disgusting)," 1987 pamphlet from Cameron's Family Research Institute.

Being a gay male takes 30 years off one's life, see Paul Cameron, William Playfair, and Stephen Wellum, "The Longevity of Homosexuals: Before and After the AIDS Epidemic," *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, vol. 29, pp. 249-272, 1994.

14. Notice from the APA to its members. Copy in the possession of the author.

15. Professional associations:

In 1982, the Nebraska Psychological Association deplored the "misleading and untrue statements about psychological research on homosexuality" circulated by Cameron. (Minutes of the NPA's spring business meeting on April 17, 1982, at Nebraska Wesleyan University. Copy in the possession of the author.)

In 1985, both the Midwest Sociological Society (Minutes of the second meeting of the 1985-1986 board of directors for the MSS, held on Oct. 11-12, 1985 in Des Moines, Iowa. Copy in the possession of the author.) and the Society for the Study of Social Problems (Minutes of the 1985 SSSP annual meeting on Aug. 25, 1985 in Washington, D.C. Copy in the possession of the author.) declared that Cameron had "consistently misinterpreted and misrepresented" sociological research.

In 1986, the American Sociological Association condemned Cameron's "consistent misrepresentation of sociological research." (Memo from ASA Executive Officer Willaim D'Antonio to state and regional associations. Copy in the possession of the author.)

Federal court:

In *Baker v. Wade*, 106 F.R.D. 526 (1985), the judge stated that Cameron "made misrepresentations" before the court.

16. As to all three points, see generally [an analysis by Dr. Gregory Herek](#) and the Groth and Birnbaum article in note 5.

17. R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany*, Yale University Press, 1988; Alan Dundes (ed.), *The Blood libel Legend: A Casebook in Anti-Semitic Folklore*, Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991. For an early source, see Hermann Strack, *the Human and Human Sacrifice*, NY: Bloch Publishing, 1909.

