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The Emergence of the Paedophile in the Late Twentieth Century*

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This article explores the cultural and historical conditions structuring the emergence of the category of the 'paedophile' in Western discourse in the latter part of the twentieth century. It argues not only that the 'paedophile' was an outgrowth of social and political power struggles around questions of normative masculinity and male sexuality, but also that homophobia played a central role in its formation. In addition to regulating social and intimate relations between men, women and children, the category of the 'paedophile' was homosexualised in order to demarcate 'normal' from 'pathological' masculinities.

AS A DISCOURSE, paedophilia, like that of modern homosexuality, is a decidedly Western invention of the late nineteenth century. Yet unlike homosexuality, paedophilia was not at this time the object of particular concern. For Victorian sexologists, paedophilia was seldom discussed and was considered of such rare occurrence that it was scarcely construed, as was homosexuality, as a separate ontological category, sexual species or psychic identity. Instead, it was identified, and remained for a good deal longer than homosexuality, as a 'temporary aberration', to redeploy Michel Foucault's terms regarding homosexuality.¹ What this means is that paedophilia was more often than not a rather unnoteworthy form of sexual excess or deviation, as Havelock Ellis observed, less often associated with 'senility' or occurring as an 'occasional luxurious speciality of a few over-refined persons', and more often associated with a generalised form of sexual indiscriminability and weak-mindedness.² Freud, in somewhat similar fashion, described the exclusive sexual interest in children as a 'sporadic aberration' and he who exhibits paedophilia as someone 'who is cowardly or who has become impotent'.³ In stark contrast to the discourse of homosexuality, then, an individual practising intergenerational sex in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

* I would like to thank Barbara Baird for her critical commentary on a draft of this article, and Graham Willett for his assistance with the research I conducted for it at the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality. Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), 43.

² Havelock Ellis, *Psychology of Sex: A Manual for Students* (London: William Heinemann, 1933), 129.

³ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), The Pelican Freud Library, Vol. 7: *On Sexuality* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1977), 60. To quote him in full: 'cases in which sexually immature persons (children) are chosen as sexual objects are instantly judged as sporadic aberrations. It is only exceptionally that children are the exclusive sexual objects in such a case. They usually come to play that part when someone who is cowardly or has become impotent adopts them as a substitute, or when an urgent instinct (one which will not allow of postponement) cannot at the moment get possession of any more appropriate object'.

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centuries was infrequently labelled a 'paedophile'. Of principal concern to sexologists were sexual deviations with respect to the aim or gender of object choice, not the age of object choice.

By the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, however, this has changed dramatically. The discourses of paedophilia and sexuality have undergone profound transformations, and it is the axis of age, and the distinction between child and adult sexuality, that is of utmost social, community and parental interest and concern. Within the last two decades, in most Western societies there has been nothing short of an explosion of social panic surrounding paedophilia and purported paedophile networks.⁴ Just as the 'homosexual' was catapulted to centre stage at the turn of the nineteenth century, now it is the 'paedophile' that has emerged as a highly salient and potent figure almost a century later.

This article explores the cultural and historical conditions structuring the emergence of the category of the 'paedophile' in Western discourse in the latter part of the twentieth century. It details how the formation of the modern 'paedophile' as a distinct 'type' or 'species' of person is inextricably linked to the rise of gay activism, feminism, the child emancipation and paedophile liberation movements, and to the rise of anti-child pornography and child sexual abuse movements of the 1970s and 1980s. Together these social movements issued profound challenges to social, political and material relations of gender generally, just as they issued profound challenges to notions of normative, or hegemonic, masculinities and male sexualities specifically. The article begins with a brief historical overview of psycho-medical understandings of paedophilia. Then, by way of an Australian case study, I outline how in the late 1970s and 1980s the category of paedophile hardened into a culturally palpable and totalising identity category. I argue not only that the emergence of the 'paedophile' was chiefly an outgrowth of social and political power struggles around questions of normative masculinity and male sexuality, but also that homophobia played a central role in this process. In addition to regulating social and intimate relations between men, women, and children, the category of the 'paedophile' functioned as a way of demarcating so-called 'normal' from 'pathological' masculinities and male sexualities. Here the hetero/homosexual opposition is writ large.⁵

⁴ James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992); Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Steven Angelides, 'Historicizing Affect, Psychoanalyzing History: Paedophilia and the Discourse of Child Sexuality', *Journal of Homosexuality* 46, nos. 1/2 (2003): 79-109.

⁵ While I rely on an Australian case study to illustrate my argument, the emergence of the modern identity category of the paedophile is part of a broader, Western phenomenon. In fact, the Australian example not only mirrors but is also significantly influenced by both British and North American developments.

From perversity to perversion

The concept of paedophilia is usually credited to the pioneering sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who first referred to it around 1886. In a chapter of his opus magnum *Psychopathia Sexualis*, entitled 'Pathological Sexuality in Its Legal Aspects', Krafft-Ebing outlined the multiple possible causes of adult 'sexual abuses with children'.⁶ Within a spectrum of both constitutional and environmental factors, Krafft-Ebing distinguished between 'non-psychopathological' and 'psychopathological' cases. Non-psychopathological cases were predominantly examples of various forms of moral weakness and psychical impotence (such as fear of adult females or indifference about male virility), while psychopathological cases were examples largely of 'acquired mental weakness' brought on by such things as chronic alcoholism, head injuries, apoplexy, syphilis, epilepsy, degenerative predisposition and hereditary constitutional neurasthenia.⁷ Krafft-Ebing cited very few cases of paedophilia, as did his contemporaries, and the paucity of research and discussion on the matter goes some way to suggest that, again unlike homosexuality, such individuals were not exactly seen as a grave threat or social problem. Indeed, we get a sense of this from Krafft-Ebing's observation that 'a common feature of these crimes is ... that they are unmanly, knavish, and often silly'.⁸

However, Krafft-Ebing also appeared to instate a further distinction between congenital or acquired 'psychico-moral weakness' and 'sexual perversion'; that is, a distinction between 'disease (*perversion*) and vice (*perversity*)'. He pointed out that perversity, 'monstrous as it may be, is clinically not decisive', whereas perversion involves an investigation of 'the whole personality of the individual'.⁹ He thus coined the term 'erotic paedophilia' to refer to those individuals who exhibit a 'morbid disposition' that more accurately reflects a '*psycho-sexual perversion*'. Such individuals are characterised by the fact that they are 'tainted' in their whole 'personality' and their desire is of a 'primary nature'. As much as to highlight the rarity of the condition, however, Krafft-Ebing notes, 'In my experience I have only come across four cases'.¹⁰

⁶ Richard von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct. A Medico Forensic Study* (New York: Arcade, 1998), 369.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 369–74.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 369. Krafft-Ebing does provide a caution regarding paedophilia: 'At any rate these unfortunate beings should always be looked upon as a common danger to the welfare of the community' (374). However, in the context of his overall work and discussion, in his observation of paedophilia's relative rarity, and in his emphasis on the silliness and moral weakness associated with paedophilia, perhaps his use of the phrase 'should always' in the quote above might be read in some ways as a call for society to recognise the danger paedophilia poses precisely because it is not recognising it as such.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 371–2.

Krafft-Ebing's distinction between perversity and perversion signals an epistemic shift in the nineteenth century, where historical, political and discursive paradigms for understanding and regulating deviant behaviour were transforming. This was a time when religious and legal models had to contest with an emergent and powerful scientific or medical model, or as Arnold Davidson puts it, the nascent 'psychiatric style of reasoning'.¹¹ The distinction between perversity and perversion is part of this broader process of the medicalisation of sexual deviance, which began from the late nineteenth century to catalogue the various departures from procreative sexuality according to distinct 'types', 'species' or 'psychic identities' of sexuality. It was almost as though in this new paradigm the concept of perversity stood in for those older tropes of legal and religious meaning such as sin and immorality, whereas perversion represented the newer and supposedly impartial scientific and medical terminologies. As a result of the clash of contradictory paradigms, the new sexological discourse was driven by a tension about how to construe sexual deviation: sexual practice and crime or a psychic identity and disease? However, the distinction between perversity (practice) and perversion (identity) was anything but neat, and it operated less as a description of empirical or clinical reality than as a regulatory ideal serving to conceal and control the contradictions of this co-existence of competing paradigms. Importantly, this distinction has, in various incarnations, provided the epistemic framework not only for the modern psychiatric style of reasoning of which Krafft-Ebing was an early example, but also for all subsequent theorising about paedophilia. This distinction, and the contradictions that are both its cause and effect, has also, as we will see shortly, provided subsequent thinkers with a kind of irresolvable incoherence of definition that has enabled enduring possibilities for political and rhetorical manipulation.¹²

Unlike homosexuality, however, paedophilia's assimilation to the model of psychiatric reasoning did not immediately result in a hardened biological typology or psychical identity category. This is not to say that psychiatrists, psychologists and psychoanalysts did not essentialise the category of paedophilia or construe it as a totalising psychic identity in their theories; many most certainly did, and etiological theories were as diverse as those proffered to explain homosexuality. The difference between the examples of homosexuality and paedophilia is that, unlike homosexuality, no culturally palpable category of the 'paedophile' emerged at this time. As I noted at the outset, paedophilia was considered both rare and somewhat trivial. Another obvious reason is perhaps the fact that paedophilia was not that around which a 'reverse discourse' was being (or had been) fashioned, as in the case of homosexuality, at least not in any

¹¹ Arnold Davidson, 'Closing Up the Corpses: Diseases of Sexuality and the Emergence of the Psychiatric Style of Reasoning', in *Meaning and Method: Essays in Honor of Hilary Putnam*, ed. George Boalos (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹² I am indebted here to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's discussion of modern homo/heterosexual definition in *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 10–11.

culturally conspicuous sense until around the 1970s.¹³ Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, homosexuality had frequently been the basis for self-identification and the site of decriminalisation and equal rights campaigns. Homosexuality was thus a site, or subject position, upon which individual and collective identities and communities were erected. Paedophilia, on the other hand, was not that around which individual and collective identity and community building took place. There were no widespread campaigns (until the 1960s and 1970s) for decriminalising intergenerational sex or for abolishing the age of consent; or at least, there were no campaigns waged in the name of the 'paedophile'. And there were no *apparent* subcultural networks of individuals and groups who were united around the singularity of a paedophilic desire. Doctors came across very few cases of exclusive paedophilic desire and few individuals openly or willingly-identified themselves in these or any other similar terms.

That the invention of psycho-medical identity concepts usually requires the active participation of individuals (or, a reverse discourse)¹⁴ in order for them to become culturally salient and enduring categories is, in this instance, evidenced in the changing application of Western concepts of child molestation, in both mainstream and psycho-medical discourses, between 1890 and 1970. An adult who had sex with a minor might have been called any number of names, from sex fiend, predator, molester, abuser and paedophile in popular discourse and mass media, to pervert, degenerate, defective, psychopath and paedophile in scientific discourse. None of these terms have enjoyed enduring currency or consensus. Moreover, not until the 1980s did the signifier of paedophilia accrue the kind of abhorrence and horror that it connotes today. Also, not until this time was paedophilia significantly marked off as a separate psychic identity category. 'Perverts' and 'sex fiends' were terms often employed to describe sex criminals in the early decades of the twentieth century, when concerns were framed largely by issues of class, poverty, disease and social purity. In this context the deviate was construed more in terms of perversity than perversion. Perverts and sex

¹³ On the reverse discourse of homosexuality, see Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 101. I agree with historians who have challenged the primacy accorded to the medical model of homosexuality. That is, I agree with Frederick Silverstolpe and Randolph Trumbach that medical discourses were not in any straightforward way responsible for the invention of the category of the 'homosexual', but that these discourses were themselves shaped by the self-representations and behaviors of those engaged in homosexuality. Frederick Silverstolpe, 'Benken was not a Doctor: On the Non Medical Origins of the Homosexual Category in the Nineteenth Century', in *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?*, *International Conference on Gay and Lesbian Studies, Vol. 1* (Amsterdam: Free University, 1987); Randolph Trumbach, 'Gender and the Homosexual Role in Modern Western Culture: The 18th and 19th Centuries Compared', in *Which Homosexuality? Essays From the International Scientific Conference on Lesbian and Gay Studies*, ed. Dennis Altman et al. (London: GMP, 1989).

¹⁴ I am not suggesting that a reverse discourse either simply proceeds from or is preceded by psycho-medical terminology. Rather, I would conceive of the relationship often as a mutually constituting one, whereby psycho-medical categories and categories of self-identification are both causes and effects of each other. In other words, psycho-medical terminology both shapes and is simultaneously shaped by subjectivity. Having said that, however, one must in my view leave open the possibility that before the invention of 19th century sexology there might have been individuals who conceived of themselves as being wholly psychically different to others due to an exclusive homosexual desire.

fiends, moreover, were generic categories that referred to a wide range of sexual deviates. For example, even when the US sex crime panics of the 1940s and 1950s converged around the perceived national threat to children, offenders were subsumed by the generic psychiatric category of 'sex psychopath'.¹⁵

Nor were paedophilic sexual offenders thought to be the most abhorrent or violent or worrisome of the psychopaths. Although this category reflects the shift to a psychiatric style of reasoning and the imputation of totalising psychic identity categories, the sex psychopath was, as influential psychiatrist Benjamin Karpman noted, a 'loosely-conceived entity regarding which psychiatrists disagree'. It included a number of violent and aggressive sex offenders, only one of which was child sex offenders.¹⁶ Paedophilic offenders were not therefore singled out as a distinct category of psychical aberration, but were lumped into a broader psychiatric group. Of course, this does not mean that paedophilia was not seen to have its own constellation of dynamic factors and psychical typologies. However, in the context of the comparative paucity of paedophile case studies, it does perhaps indicate that identifying a discrete psychic identity of the paedophile was not a priority. To borrow Krafft-Ebing's phrase, nor, perhaps, was it clinically decisive.¹⁷

Philip Jenkins describes the period between the late 1950s to the mid-1970s as the 'liberal period', a time when dominant psychiatric discourses downplayed the severity of sex offences. Serious and violent sex offending against children was considered quite rare, and psychiatrists and criminologists identified earlier media and public panic as disproportionate to the actual threat posed. The category of 'molestation' often served to designate the more prevalent and minor forms of sexual wrongdoing, which included such things as fondling, exhibitionism, masturbation or oral copulation. 'The great majority of the offenders against children are not physically dangerous', declared one group of experts, 'since they did not use force and since they seldom attempted coitus'.¹⁸ Many others, including Revitch and Weiss, similarly highlighted the 'rarity of serious sexual aggressions against children'.¹⁹ Moreover, such offenders, as Jenkins observes, 'were to be pitied rather than punished', which suggested that while offenders may be deemed immature, confused, neurotic or psychopathological, they were for the most part thought to be quite harmless.²⁰ As Revitch and Weiss pointed out in

¹⁵ Jenkins.

¹⁶ Benjamin Karpman, *The Sexual Offender and His Offenses* (New York: Julian, 1954), 239.

¹⁷ Of course, it is certainly the case today that paedophilia, in clinical terms, is subsumed by the generic category of 'paraphilia', which includes such things as exhibitionism, fetishism, sadism, masochism, transvestism, frotteurism and voyeurism. See American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th ed. (Washington DC: Author, 1994). However, psycho-medical research has singled out paedophilia from these other paraphilias and the amount of material on the subject has burgeoned. Moreover, that clinicians view paedophilia as dangerous and the other paraphilias as innocuous represents a reversal of the scenario in the 1950s with the category of the sex psychopath.

¹⁸ Quoted in Jenkins, 102.

¹⁹ Eugene Revitch and Rosalce Weiss, 'The Pedophilic Offender', *Diseases of the Nervous System* (February 1962): 73.

²⁰ Jenkins, 102.

their work on paedophilic classifications, 'Pedophilia is essentially a regressive state and a retreat from adult challenges'.²¹ What this reveals is that, typically, adult paedophiles were at this time viewed as inadequate and innocuous figures 'who are in states of regression such as loss of potency, alcoholic inebriation, and early senility' and who are suffering feelings of inadequacy and isolation.²²

Despite the fluctuating terminology for child sex offenders between 1890 and 1970, one of the more significant themes linking the divergent social meanings attributed to intergenerational sex revolved around the question of child sexuality and agency. It has been long lamented by contemporary child sexual abuse feminists and advocates that, until the birth of the feminist child sexual abuse movement in the late 1970s, a tendency to blame the child victim of sexual assault was a typical feature of psychiatric discourse.²³ At the same time as adult child molesters were rendered pathetic and innocuous, children were routinely rendered sexually flirtatious, precocious and even seductive. 'The majority of pedophiles are harmless individuals', Revitch and Weiss declared, 'and their victims are usually known to be aggressive and seductive'.²⁴ So prominent was this view that even adult offenders were themselves sometimes portrayed as the victims. Although the implication was often that they were victims of their own sexual urges, nonetheless, men were at times characterised as victims of child seductiveness and aggressive childhood delinquency.²⁵ Quite often the child 'induces the adult offender to commit the offense', argued Revitch and Weiss, and the child is thus 'a victim in the legal sense only'.²⁶ Not only was the adult paedophile usually considered pathetic because he was beset by crippling anxiety and feelings of inferiority, but he was also usually marked by a child-like psychological organisation. It is perhaps this representational dynamic between the infantilised adult and the 'adultified' child that, in part, makes it easier to understand how the paedophilic child sex offender, subject to a striking *lack* of attention in comparison to contemporary concerns, was not singled out for the kind rigorous scrutiny we might expect today.

That adult men could be depicted as victims and children as sexually precocious and aggressive, speaks to a very different set of social, political and epistemological meanings and material relations of power both between generations and between the sexes. However, with the rise of the new social movements and the reorganisation of social and material power relations all of this would soon change.

²¹ Revitch and Weiss, 75.

²² *Ibid.*, 75, 78.

²³ Steven Angelides, 'Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse, and the Erasure of Child Sexuality', *GLQ*, 10, no.2 (2004): 141–77.

²⁴ Revitch and Weiss, 78.

²⁵ See Anna C. Salter, *Treating Child Sex Offenders and Victims: A Practical Guide* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1988); Linda Gordon, 'The Politics of Child Sexual Abuse: Notes from American History', *Feminist Review*, no.28 (January 1988): 56–64; Estelle B. Freedman, 'Uncontrolled Desires: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920–1960', *Journal of American History*, 74 (1987): 83–106.

²⁶ Revitch and Weiss, 74.

Manhood under fire

When the category of the homosexual emerged at the turn of the nineteenth century as a salient new social identity it reflected a time of profound social, political, epistemological and material transformation with regard to gender relations. Movements for racial and sexual equality, and the proliferation of categories of 'effeminate' men, 'masculine' women and the New Women reflected a challenge to patriarchal boundaries of race, gender and sexuality.²⁷ Elaine Showalter describes this as a time of 'sexual anarchy', a time when definitions of masculinity and femininity were put into serious question.²⁸ The balance of power between the genders was under attack, and bourgeois masculinity suffered a profound crisis of legitimation. I have outlined elsewhere how we can only understand the emergence of the psycho-medical category of the 'homosexual' as a distinct type of person (perversion) in the context of this 'crisis' of masculinity.²⁹ The scientific category of the homosexual can be viewed in large measure as a defensive projection of a heteronormative psycho-medical discourse, the authorial referent of which was/were a form or forms of masculinity or male identity under threat. We might also see the emergence of the category of the 'homosexual' as a distinct and pathological ontology as one part of a process of constructing, to use R. W. Connell's terms, 'subordinated' or 'feminised' masculinities or male roles, a process that is itself driven by the determination to secure and reinforce forms of hegemonic masculinity or male identity.³⁰

Similarly, almost a century later, we need to situate the emergence of the category of the 'paedophile' squarely in the social, political, epistemological and material context of gender relations. However, where, a century ago, responses to shifting material and symbolic relations of sex and sexuality were animated profoundly (although not solely) by relations *between* the sexes, I want to argue that responses to shifting material and symbolic relations at the last *fin de siècle* were animated as much by gender relations as they were by shifting relations *between the generations* and, more particularly, by shifting relations *within the sexes*, principally among men.³¹ Or to put this differently, where women (or the supposedly 'women-like' such as homosexuals) and femininity were put under the microscope at the turn of the nineteenth century, it was 'normative men' and hegemonic masculinity that were in many critical ways put under the microscope almost a century later. I am not suggesting that women and homosexuals were not under scrutiny at the turn of the twentieth century, or alternatively, that generational relations were not under scrutiny a century ago. I am suggesting merely that within the politics and epistemology of identity, we have witnessed a significant transformation with regard to subject-object relations in Western

²⁷ Steven Angelides, *A History of Bisexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 23–48.

²⁸ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (London: Virago, 1992).

²⁹ Angelides, *History of Bisexuality*, 23–48.

³⁰ Robert W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1995).

³¹ Of course, sexuality was also shaped profoundly by relations of class, race and Empire.

societies. Women, homosexuals and the 'lower' classes and races have each to a certain extent achieved a level of formal *subject* status. No longer are these groups used chiefly as *objects* to define by default the identity, power and privilege of white, middle class, heterosexual men, as was so often the case before the 1970s. Instead, there has been a reversal of fortunes, however limited in scope, and normative men and hegemonic masculinity have been exposed as positions of privilege in need of critical interrogation and transformation. This is nowhere more apparent than in the realm of sexuality, where everyday men have been placed under the critical spotlight like never before.

The decades of the 1970s and 1980s were a watershed in the transformation of gender and sexual relations in all Western societies. Although never static, such relations were rapidly, profoundly and irrevocably transformed by the accumulated efforts of, among other things, gay liberation, second wave feminism and the child sexual abuse movement. Even generational relations had been significantly contested and altered by the hippie and countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Adult authority had been challenged and the hippies, with their long hair and 'feminised' clothing represented, as Michael Kimmel argues, 'another revolt of the sons against the fathers'.³² Youth cultures also rejected prevailing adult and 'establishment' views on music, drugs and sex. All manner of authoritarian beliefs and relationships were critically scrutinised and youth movements actively forged a whole range of age-inflected subject-positions and subjectivities. Even the questions of child sexuality and adult-child sexual relations were to some extent up for grabs in the 1970s. A number of psychiatrists and sociologists spoke of the benefits of lifting social restrictions on expressions of child sexuality, and some even advocated intergenerational sex as a tonic for a child's healthy sexual development. However, at the vanguard of 'child sexual liberation' efforts was one vocal faction of the gay liberation movement, and it was here that we see the first signs of an emerging collective identity category of the 'paedophile'. Paedophile rights and support groups comprised of mainly gay male members sprung up in many Western countries in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with many of them employing the idiom of early gay liberation in calling for the abolition of the nuclear family, the sexual liberation of children and for the lowering if not complete elimination of age of consent laws.³³ By adopting the terms 'boy-lover' and 'paedophile' as self-affirming personal and political identity categories, these men strove to position themselves as an oppressed minority akin to that of homosexuals. A statement by David Thorstad, a member of the North American Man/Boy Love Association and spokesman for a coalition campaigning against the prohibition of adult-child sex, provides one such example:

³² Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 263. Obviously Kimmel is writing about manhood, but no doubt young hippie women were also challenging gendered norms of behaviour.

³³ Jenkins, 1998, 156-63; Florence Rush, *Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980), 187-90.

We are engaged in a war between the forces of sexual liberation on the one hand and the forces of sexual repression on the other. Man/Boy love and cross generational sex have become the cutting edge of that war.

Repeal all age of consent laws!!!
Freedom of sexual expression for all!!!³⁴

However, many gay, lesbian and feminist activists believed that the politicisation of the category of the 'paedophile' was at odds with feminism and many of gay liberation's *feminist* principles. Feminism was, after all, in ascendancy during this period. By the 1980s, in particular, forms of hegemonic white middle-class masculinity and male sexuality had been vigorously critiqued. The feminist campaigns against rape, sexual harassment and pornography served to highlight unequal and oppressive relations of power structuring society and organising the genders *and* the generations. Affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation was widely passed,³⁵ homosexuality was quickly being decriminalised,³⁶ and across the USA, Britain and Australia, child sexual abuse was exposed as a problem endemic to the patriarchal nuclear family and to hegemonic rather than marginal or deviant forms of masculinity and male sexuality.³⁷ The critical spotlight, in other words, was placed squarely on the roles, behaviours and beliefs of men in general rather than those of isolated groups of aberrant male deviates, as it was earlier in the century. The masculinist assumption of male sexual access to women and children was put under serious question. This shift of focus away from marginal to hegemonic masculinity was evidenced in the Australian National Conference on Child Abuse in Canberra in 1986, a conference that was dominated by the issue of child *sexual* abuse. In her introduction to the proceedings, Jan Carter inquired rhetorically, 'What did the experience of women present at this conference contribute to our understanding of child sexual abuse, or child rape?':

First, child rape was seen to stem from the distribution of power in our community which affects the status, behaviour and power of men and women ... second that the safety of women and children should be a vital consideration, paramount at all times, and third that men need to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to change themselves and their values.³⁸

Women and children were not only seen to be oppressed by men as a group, but were considered to be in far greater danger from men they knew than from

³⁴ David Thorstad, 'A Statement to the Gay Liberation Movement on the Issue of Man/Boy Love,' *Gay Community News* 6 (January 1979).

³⁵ Gail Mason and Anna Chapman, 'Defining Sexual Harassment: A History of the Commonwealth Legislation and its Critiques', Working Paper No.27, Centre for Employment and Labour Relations Law (March 2003): 1-25.

³⁶ Graham Willett, *Living Out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 2000).

³⁷ Angelides, 'Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse'.

³⁸ Quoted in Dorothy Scott and Shurlee Swain, *Confronting Cruelty: Historical Perspectives on Child Protection in Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 151.

strangers they did not know. If 1970s, anti-rape feminism hit at the heart of gender relations and normative masculinity with images of every man as a potential rapist,³⁹ 1980s child sexual abuse feminism delivered a second severe blow as it honed its 'doctrine of intimate danger'.⁴⁰ This was the idea that children were at greater risk of being sexually abused by fathers, male relatives and male family friends—in short, men they are intimate or acquainted with—than by 'mythical strangers'.⁴¹ As the Melbourne Alliance of Revolting Feminists bluntly put it in their Manifesto, 'Just as all men are potential rapists, so are all men potential paedophiles'.⁴² The social construction of hegemonic masculinity, as it informs male roles, identities, behaviours, as well as the material organisation of the sexes, was thus identified as a (if not the) key factor responsible for forms of gender and sexual oppression. This was a serious condemnation of forms of normative manhood. As Diana Russell declared in her acclaimed work on incest, violent sex crime 'points to a critical problem in the collective male psyche that is proving lethal to women and to men alike ... This culture's notion of masculinity—particularly as it is applied to male sexuality—predisposes men to violence, to rape, to sexually harass, and to sexually abuse children'.⁴³ Or as the Alliance of Revolting Feminists intoned, men are potential paedophiles precisely because they 'are in control of both women and children and thus have the social, political and physical power to impose their sexuality on them'.⁴⁴

According to one *Sydney Morning Herald* report detailing claims in Britain of an apparent epidemic of child sexual abuse, men were feeling the impact of this feminist challenge to norms of masculinity: 'Many fathers of the 1980s, who have just learned the importance of displays of affection to their children, are becoming afraid that they will be accused of sexual abuse'. A related report on the same page highlighted the unease with the advancing feminist child sexual abuse movement, suggesting that the claims of epidemic proportions of incest and child sexual abuse might be something of a 'feminist plot'.⁴⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist Richard Coleman made his views on feminism and child sexual

³⁹ Speaking at the Rape Conference of the New York Radical Feminists, Florence Rush's remarks were typical of anti-rape movement sentiment. She argued that rape 'is permitted because it is an unspoken but prominent factor in socializing and preparing the female to accept a subordinate role'. Quoted in Jenkins, 127. Another famous example is Susan Brownmiller's claim that, 'Rape is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear'. See Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Penguin, 1976), backcover.

⁴⁰ Jenkins, 135.

⁴¹ This term is taken from the work of Paul Gebhard and his colleagues in the 1960s, who prefigured the feminist child sexual abuse movement. See Paul Gebhard et al., *Sex Offenders: An Analysis of Types* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 71.

⁴² Alliance of Revolting Feminists Manifesto, *Melbourne Women's Liberation Newsletter* (Melbourne: June 1984): 12–13.

⁴³ Quoted in Jenkins, 137.

⁴⁴ Alliance of Revolting Feminists Manifesto, 12–13.

⁴⁵ Margaret Harris, 'Child sex cases divide British', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1987, 29; Richard West, 'Seeing child abuse as a feminist plot', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 July 1987, 29.

abuse abundantly clear. In a scathing critique of a Channel 9 documentary on child abuse and of 'sex abuse zealots', he declared in an overwhelmingly disparaging tone that 'child abuse, like its older sisters anti-discrimination and equal opportunity, shows every sign of becoming a growth industry'. Male discomfort with feminist claims of endemic child sexual abuse was indeed perceptible.⁴⁶

Coincident with the redefinition of normative manhood and the striking pathologisation of pivotal aspects of masculinity and male sexuality was a wholesale redefinition of childhood, particularly the idea of child sexuality and agency. With the (re)birth of the child sexual abuse movement in the late 1970s and 1980s there was a steady desexualisation and, indeed, extension of childhood. In stark contrast to Freudian notions of infantile and oedipal sexuality, and to earlier twentieth century ideas of child sexual precocity and seductiveness, children were increasingly being viewed in the 1980s as sexually innocent and vulnerable.⁴⁷ Freudian psychoanalytic orthodoxies had lost favour in the medical health professions and, in fact, were routinely being held responsible by feminists and child protection advocates for suppressing the reality of child sexual abuse in the decades leading up to the 1980s.⁴⁸ Not only the boundaries between childhood and adulthood but also the relations of power structuring adult-child relations were being drastically refigured. Utilising anti-rape arguments about women as 'victims' of male power, child sexual abuse advocates highlighted children's powerlessness at the hands of adult male sexual abusers. Every influential child sexual abuse theorist rejected outright the possibility that children could exert power, and thus consent, in any sexual encounter with an adult. Instead, children could only be in positions of 'utter helplessness' in the face of the inherent power imbalance between them and adults.⁴⁹ Roland Summit summed

⁴⁶ Richard Coleman, 'Child abuse documentary lurched into the tabloid telly trap', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 November 1987, 82. The same day the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried this piece of Coleman's, they also reported on the NSW State Government's blitz on paedophilia. The article began by detailing the Government's campaign against child sexual assault, only to dovetail into a discussion not of incest or 'intimate danger' but of homosexual paedophilia. This was followed three days later by another article, 'Pedophiles: we love children', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 November 1987, 3, which was specifically on a group of self-proclaimed homosexual paedophiles. Although I do not want to suggest that heterosexual men were consciously scapegoating homosexuals as perpetrators of child sexual abuse, the rhetorical association of homosexuality with child sexual abuse in the media seems to be inextricable from a form of male reaction to the feminist child sexual abuse movement.

⁴⁷ Angelides, 'Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse'.

⁴⁸ Gordon; Erna Olafson, 'When Paradigms Collide: Roland Summit and the Rediscovery of Child Sexual Abuse', in *Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse: Historical, Legal, and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. Jon R. Conte (London: Sage, 2002).

⁴⁹ Judith Lewis Herman and Lisa Hirschman, *Father-Daughter Incest* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); David Finkelhor, 'What's Wrong with Sex Between Adults and Children? Ethics and the Problem of Sexual Abuse', *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 49 (1979): 692–7; Florence Rush, *The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980); Ann Wolbert Burgess and Nicholas Groth, 'Sexual Victimization of Children', in *The Maltreatment of the School-Aged Child*, ed. Richard Volpe et al. (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1980).

up the dominant view in a landmark article 'The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome', 'No matter what the circumstances [of intergenerational sexual encounters], the child had no choice but to submit quietly'.⁵⁰

This shift in understanding the sexual and power dynamics of intergenerational sexual interactions and child molestation is also reflected in changing social categorisations. By the mid-1980s, the twentieth century tendency of victim blaming had been completely reversed. The ambiguous categories of 'carnal abuse', 'moral neglect' and 'moral danger'—categories that had often variously implicated both the children and the parents as culpable in acts of intergenerational sex—had been replaced by the terms 'sexual abuse', 'sexual exploitation' and 'sexual assault'.⁵¹ Following developments in the USA, where the issue had been nationally politicised a few years earlier, Australia witnessed an explosion of public and media concern regarding child sexual abuse in 1986. Media and government accounts reported 'astonishing' and 'staggering' rises in reported cases of abuse.⁵² This said nothing of unreported cases, which were assumed to be much higher. One *Sydney Morning Herald* article detailed these rises and estimates, claiming that in NSW alone, there was a rise from forty-five reported cases in 1980 to 2,519 in 1985. Estimating that 'only about 10 per cent of child sexual assaults are reported', the article went on to point out that 'there could be 25,000 cases in NSW at present'.⁵³ Reported overall prevalence figures, in both the media and in government publications, were sometimes as high as 40 per cent of girls and 30 per cent of boys estimated to have been sexually abused.⁵⁴ Readers were left in no doubt that this was a growing problem confined largely to a male offender population: 'Ninety per cent of child sexual abuse offenders are male'.⁵⁵ Even television ad campaigns, such as 'Child sexual assault—it's often closer to home than you think', were launched to highlight the threat of intimate male danger.⁵⁶ In short, men and dominant forms of male sexuality were held unreservedly responsible for the manipulation and molestation of children in almost all contexts of intergenerational sex.

⁵⁰ Roland C. Summitt, 'The Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome', *Child Abuse and Neglect* 7 (1983): 182.

⁵¹ Gordon, 58; Scott and Swain, 42, 69–71.

⁵² See, for example, 'Hospitals report an "astonishing" rise in sexual abuse of children', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 July 1986, 3.

⁵³ 'Scars of sexual abuse heal slowly', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 September 1986, 8.

⁵⁴ Scott and Swain, 162.

⁵⁵ 'Scars of sexual abuse heal slowly'.

⁵⁶ 'Campaign opens to counter sexual abuse of children', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 October 1986, 21. Another special run on ABC Television in 1984 was 'The Stranger's Not the Danger', where it was noted that for every child who is sexually abused by a stranger, four more are abused by close family or friends. It should be noted that the theme of 'stranger danger' still operated alongside that of 'intimate danger'. In fact, at the same time as such television campaigns were appearing, the 'Safety House Scheme' was also introduced. This was a scheme 'designed to alert children to the danger behind approaches from strangers and give them an easily recognisable refuge from a potential child molester'. See 'Stranger danger' before your eyes', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 June 1986, 15. That the discourse of 'stranger danger' continued to flourish does not undermine but bolster my overall argument that hegemonic forms of manhood and male sexuality were being profoundly challenged.

The paedophilia and homosexuality equation

Of course, not all men were actually guilty of sexism, sexual harassment or sexual assault. However, signs of male beleaguering with such prevalent images of male behaviour were evident. In the most well known survey of male responses to feminism during this period, Susan Faludi describes the 1980s as a backlash.⁵⁷ Examples of this 'backlash' from men are certainly not hard to find. Writing in the *New York Times*, Lloyd Cohen spoke of a 'fear of flirting' that had befallen many men due to the concern over sexual harassment and date rape in the 1980s.⁵⁸ Infamous *Playboy* columnist, Asa Barber, published a collection of his 'Men' columns as the book *Naked at Gender Gap*. Arguing that men are the true victims of the 'war of the sexes', Barber claims that feminism ushered in a 'sexual inquisition' that not only has men 'walking on eggshells' but has also made them 'vulnerable in the extreme to false charges of sexual harassment'. 'All it takes to lynch a man these days is the accusation of rape'.⁵⁹ In an encyclopaedic catalogue of cultural images, texts and artefacts, Michael Kimmel paints a picture of male disquiet with feminist critiques of masculinity during the 1980s, and one that is also evident in the Australian context.⁶⁰ He suggests that American men became confused due to a loss of positive male role models. With forms of normative manhood under attack, men, he argues, instead 'sought out negative models to attack'. Kimmel identifies the emergence of the 'wimp' as one such negative model that served to reinforce a besieged masculinity. The 'wimp' and negative representations of 'soft masculinity' also made their appearance in Australia.⁶¹ Whether or not the phenomenon of 'male confusion' was widespread is debatable in my view; however, Kimmel does identify an important dimension of the profound challenge feminism posed to norms of masculinity across the entire Western world.

In building on the work of Kimmel, I suggest that the category of the 'paedophile' emerged alongside the 'wimp' in the USA, Britain and Australia as another, even more sinister, negative model of masculinity. Moreover, this was an

⁵⁷ Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown, 1991).

⁵⁸ Kimmel, 299.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Kimmel, 302–3.

⁶⁰ Anxieties about normative masculinity and the impact of feminism are palpable in the Australian media during the 1980s. For typical examples, see 'The sensitive new man now wants to like himself more', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 1985, 39; 'The trials of the sensitive new man', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 October 1986, 13; 'Malefactors in the issue of equality', *The Australian*, 16 December 1986, 9; 'There's more to feminism than a nice, new man', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 January 1987, 7; 'The men: quantity without quality', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 January 1987, 12; 'What women don't tell men at work', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 November 1987, 21; 'Are these the blokes that women blame?' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 November 1987, 19.

⁶¹ Kimmel, 292. For Australian media examples of the figure of the wimp, of 'soft masculinity' and the negative framing of the 'sensitive new age guy', see the review of the James Bond film *The Living Daylights* in 'Too sensitive for seduction?' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 November 1987, 18; 'Differences remain, but thanks for calling', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 November 1987, 19.

identity category that functioned in large measure as a means of deflecting attention away from the fact that child sexual abuse had been exposed by feminism as a problem congruous with dominant and not marginal forms of male sexuality. In this way, the 'paedophile' might be seen, in part, as a convenient scapegoat for the restaging and projection of anxieties of manhood.⁶² Additionally, as I have argued elsewhere,⁶³ the category of the 'paedophile' might also partially represent the displaced cultural expression of the very incestuous and paedophilic desires that are prohibited, as well as the displaced articulation of the erotics of childhood sexuality that were being quickly erased by the feminist child sexual abuse discourse.⁶⁴ To return to my earlier analogy then, where the category of the homosexual emerged in large measure as a way of regulating the distinction between sexes, in the late twentieth century the category of the 'paedophile' emerged as a way of regulating and policing forms of masculinity among men.

Homophobia played a pivotal role in this dynamic of competing masculinities and in the formation of the category of the 'paedophile'. Negative images of homosexuality and the rhetorical association of homosexuality and paedophilia were frequently deployed in public discourses, especially in the mainstream media. Such images were especially prone to rhetorical manipulation in a 1980s context where AIDS had been identified as the 'gay plague' and where the USA, Britain and Australia were witnessing escalating homophobic sentiment, discrimination and violence.⁶⁵ More than anything, however, it seems to be gay activists' campaigns for the decriminalisation of male homosexuality and equalisation of the homosexual age of consent laws that provided the most fertile ground for such discursive manipulation. By the mid-1980s in the USA and Australia, many states had decriminalised consensual male homosexuality and gay groups were agitating to challenge laws that discriminated against homosexuals by setting the age of consent higher for homosexual sex. The visibility of gay male paedophile rights and support groups only lent weight to the rhetorical and, indeed, historical association of homosexuality with the seduction of children, and thus to the conflation of homosexuality and paedophilia.

In Australia, parliamentary and public debates, as well as media scare campaigns during this time, illustrate how a homophobic fear of homosexual equality was transformed into the homosexual=paedophile equation. Debates of homosexual decriminalisation and antidiscrimination bills put before state parliaments in the 1980s frequently revolved around the effects homosexual equality would have on children. One of the standard arguments against decriminalisation and antidiscrimination was that each implies an implicit if not explicit

⁶² For a psycho-historical reading of scapegoating, see Lloyd de Mause, 'The Psychogenic Theory of History', *The Journal of Psychohistory* 25 (1997): 154.

⁶³ Angelides, 'Historicizing Affect'.

⁶⁴ On the erasure of child sexuality, see Angelides, 'Feminism, Child Sexual Abuse'.

⁶⁵ See, for example, the comments by the Deputy Chair of the Human Rights Commission in 'Gays are "Scapegoats of '85"', *Outrage*, no. 25 (June 1985): 5. All of the main Australian gay newspapers and magazines were awash in the mid-1980s with articles detailing rising discrimination, homophobic violence and police harassment.

endorsement or promotion of homosexuality as an equal and valid lifestyle, and that this was damaging to society in general and children in particular, especially insofar as children could be manipulated and seduced into the homosexual lifestyle. One petition to the NSW Parliament made the connection plain and simple: 'Legalization or decriminalization ... would imply community approval and acceptance of these unnatural acts, and would encourage public solicitation of adults and particularly children in leisure and recreational areas as well as schools and other educational institutions'.⁶⁶ Infamous social and political activist Reverend Fred Nile proffered a similar argument. The 'youth of society', he argued, 'are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and undue influence' and measures 'of public protection afforded by the present law should be reinforced by amendments to the law to prevent all forms of promotion of and recruitment into the homosexual lifestyle'.⁶⁷ The idea of recruitment implied not just a notion of unnatural, homosexual seduction but, more specifically, one of *homosexual paedophilic seduction*. Even many of those in support of decriminalisation found it difficult to accept equality in terms of the age of consent. The underlying logic of their argument reinforced the equation of homosexuality with paedophilic seduction or recruitment. For example, even though NSW Member of Parliament Deirdre Grusovin stated categorically that 'I strongly support the [Unsworth decriminalisation] bill', she nonetheless argued for unequal ages of consent for heterosexual and homosexual sex. 'In setting 18 as the minimum age of consent', rather than sixteen as it was for heterosexual sex, 'the bill provides protection for our young people in their impressionable years'.⁶⁸

Of the four Australian states and one territory that decriminalised male homosexuality between 1980 and 1990, all but Victoria included higher age of consent provisions for homosexual sex.⁶⁹ However, even the Victorian legislation, which was much more progressive than campaigners had expected, incorporated the new crime of lesbian penetration by an older woman of a younger woman, and prohibited anyone involved in the supervision or care of children under eighteen from soliciting or encouraging them from engaging in any form of sex. And in the preamble to the Act, it was observed that, 'the Parliament does not intend by this Act to condone immorality'.⁷⁰ The Queensland Act also included a preamble modelled on the Victorian Act; however, it was the Western Australian legislation that blatantly revealed the underlying homosexuality and paedophilia equation that structured almost all of the Australian debates. Although Western Australia decriminalised homosexual sex in 1990, the age of homosexual consent was set at twenty-one, and the Act included a preamble

⁶⁶ Quoted in New South Wales Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), 9 March 1982, 2231.

⁶⁷ Crimes (Homosexual Behaviour) Amendment Bill, Second Reading, New South Wales Parliamentary Debates (Hansard), New South Wales, 18 February 1982, 2109.

⁶⁸ Crimes (Homosexual Behaviour) Amendment Bill, 2127.

⁶⁹ The Queensland legislation set the age of consent for homosexual sex other than anal sex at sixteen, but made anal sex for men and women under the age of eighteen illegal. See Willett, *Living Out Loud*, 224.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 155-6.

expressing Parliament's disapproval of relationships between persons of the same sex, of institutions encouraging same-sex relationships and of the involvement of homosexuals in the care of children where homosexuality is portrayed in a positive light. The Western Australian legislation also contains a 'proselytising' clause, based on Britain's notorious 'Section 28', which attempts to ban public actions and teaching in primary and secondary schools that portray homosexuality in a positive light.⁷¹

If parliamentary debates, discriminatory age of consent laws and legislative preambles are not indication enough of the underlying rhetorical association of homosexuality and paedophilia (or, childhood seduction), public and media debate and controversy surrounding the issues of homosexuality and sex education leave little doubt of this homophobic conflation. The gay newspaper *Gay Community News* reported that, in relation to the amendment to the Victorian *Crimes (Sexual Offences) Act*, which added the new crime of soliciting or encouraging sexual penetration by an adult in the care of someone under eighteen, the Attorney General's office had confirmed that the bill was intended to hit at sex educators.⁷² This was reflected in a general wave of public and governmental concern raised that same year around the question of sex education in general and of homosexuality being taught in sex education courses in secondary schools in particular. The previous year, the Melbourne newspaper, *The Age*, ran an article 'Sex-out of the shelter shed, into the classroom', which outlined the need for sex education in schools.⁷³ The article discussed the 1975 report of the Royal Commission into Human Relationships, which had raised concerns about rising rates of sexually active children in a context of unsatisfactory secondary school sex education. The education department had promised to establish a committee to oversee human relations education in schools.

This promise was doubtless given a sense of urgency with the passing of the Act to decriminalise homosexuality in December 1980. Many feared a slippery slope from gay rights to the seduction of children. In July 1980, the Concerned Parents Association (CPA) had formed, dedicating itself 'primarily to halting the existing sex education programmes in schools and preventing the State Government from pressing ahead with its plans to introduce them in all schools'.⁷⁴ The group also distributed an inflammatory pamphlet to its members entitled 'They've Got Your Kids'. At an early public meeting the first speaker, Paul MacLeod, attempted to incite fear in parents by exploiting the rhetorical association of homosexuality and paedophilia (among other 'depravities'). He was reported to have claimed that teachers 'were introducing ideas and materials on homosexuality, incest, bestiality, pedophilia'.⁷⁵ Adding weight to the claim, and

⁷¹ *Law Reform (Decriminalisation of Sodomy) Act*, Western Australia, 1989. The new law was not proclaimed until April 1990. On the UK Section 28 of the Local Government Act, see Joe Moran, 'Childhood Sexuality and Education: The Case of Section 28', *Sexualities* 4, no.1 (2001): 73-89.

⁷² *Gay Community News*, February 1981, 5. The publication *Gay Community News* (hereafter GGN).

⁷³ 'Sex-out of the shelter shed, into the classroom', 22 February 1980, 15.

⁷⁴ GGN, June 1982.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

thus impetus to their cause, was the fact that the Melbourne Gay Teachers Group had been an influential and controversial force in the Victorian Teachers Union in the late 1970s,⁷⁶ and, after renaming themselves The Gay Teachers and Students Group, had published a sex education booklet in 1978 entitled *Young, Gay, and Proud*. The booklet had invited a good deal of public furore, as it aimed to convey the message that homosexuality is 'an equally valid form of expression to heterosexuality'.⁷⁷ *The Geelong News* ran a headline 'Homosexual education—No says [Premier] Hamer'. Many newspapers ran articles attacking the booklet. Quoted in a suburban newspaper, MP Jeff Kennett (later Premier of Victoria) sounded a common community refrain. 'I am not opposed to homosexuality between consenting adults in private ... I am certainly opposed to such people trying to convert others to their own lifestyles'.⁷⁸ By others, Kennett was obviously referring to children. While the booklet was not officially banned, the Education Minister Lindsay Thompson and the Director-General of Education Dr Shears issued a joint edict to secondary school principals 'to ensure that copies of books seeking to foster homosexual behaviour are not available to children with[in] the school library'.⁷⁹

Only two days after the Victorian decriminalisation of homosexuality bill was passed in parliament the Assistant Minister of Education, Mr Norm Lacy, introduced new sex education guidelines for Victorian schools. Clearly, Lacy had been influenced by the climate of fear around the decriminalisation of homosexuality and promotion of homosexuality in schools. The new guidelines did more than shift responsibility for administrative and educational decision making for human relations programs away from teachers to school councils—a move aiming to give parents the ultimate veto power over programs or particular teachers who are to teach sex education programs.⁸⁰ The guidelines also included an edict aimed principally at the teaching of homosexual equality: 'They (teachers) shall not seek to propagate ideas or beliefs or to condone or induce behaviour which offends generally accepted standards or values'.⁸¹

When public debate about the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Victoria and NSW dovetailed into concerns about the teaching and promotion of homosexuality as a valid lifestyle, it was not long before the rhetorical association of homosexuality and paedophilia was transformed into the emergence into public discourse of an overtly homophobic category of the 'paedophile'. The subject of paedophilia had been widely discussed and hotly debated in gay newspapers, magazines and conferences in the USA, Britain and Australia in the late 1970s

⁷⁶ See Graham Willett, "'Proud and Employed": The Gay and Lesbian Movement and the Victorian Teachers' Unions in the 1970s', *Labour History: A Journal of Labour and Social History*, no. 76 (May 1999): 78-94.

⁷⁷ Gary Jaynes, 'Young Gay and Proud—20 Years On', unpublished and undated manuscript, held in the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, 2. Given the title of the article it seems that it was written some time around 1998.

⁷⁸ Quoted in Jaynes, 4.

⁷⁹ Jaynes, 5.

⁸⁰ GGN, February 1981, 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

and early 1980s.⁸² *Gay Left* socialist journal in Britain ran a forum on paedophilia in 1978, which had been taken up and summarised the following year in the *Australian Newsletter of the 5th National Homosexual Conference*.⁸³ The *Gay Left* Collective lamented, 'how conservative moral anxiety throughout the advanced capitalist countries has switched from homosexuality in general to sexual relationships between adults and young people'.⁸⁴ Gary Dowsett declared that with the publication of sociologist Paul Wilson's book on the Australian paedophile Clarence Osborne, the official Australian debate on paedophilia had been launched.⁸⁵ Some in gay circles attempted to advance the earlier gay liberationist push for a revolution in Western structures and concepts of sexuality, including the utopian goals of the dissolution of the nuclear family and the abolition of the age of consent. Gay male paedophile information and support groups such as The North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) in the USA, the Paedophile Information Exchange and Paedophile Action for Liberation in Britain, and the Australian Paedophile Support Group also sprung up in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The very existence of these groups, who were marked clearly as homosexual, only intensified community concerns about the supposed link between gay rights advances and the seduction of children.

In Australian public discourse, this conflation of homosexuality and paedophilia provided gay rights critics with a powerful piece of homophobic political rhetoric. A right wing group, the Committee to Raise Education Standards, exploited this fully. In November 1982, they distributed a pamphlet called 'The Continuing Homosexual Offensive. Next Target: Anti-discrimination'.⁸⁶ The pamphlet exploited a range of homophobic rhetorical associations in order to warn the public about the potential slippery slope from decriminalisation to antidiscrimination to equality of lifestyle to adoption. It also revealed the global exchange of information and the influence of US ideas on Australian public debate in these areas. The pamphlet appealed to the authority of American campaigners such as Judianne Densen-Gerber in order to justify its claims, as well as invoking the threat NAMBLA was thought to pose by way of its 'satellites in Australia'.⁸⁷ In order to amplify the apparent threat to children, the group claimed that it is largely gay teachers in the Victorian Teachers Union who are

⁸² For examples of discussions in the Australian gay press, see the *Australian Newsletter of the 5th Homosexual Conference*, 3 June 1979; the *GCN* forum on paedophilia, September 1981; Gary Dowsett, 'Old Traps for New Players', *Gay Information*, no. 8 (1981): 26-8; Gary Dowsett, 'Boiled Lollies and Band-aids: Gay Men and Kids', *Gay Information*, no. 11 (1982): 34-8; interview with self-identified paedophile Roger Moody in *GCN*, June 1982. In 1981, a workshop was devoted to paedophilia at the Brisbane National Homosexual Conference and Paul Wilson published his book *The Man They Called a Monster: Sexual Experiences Between Men and Boys*. There was even an article on 'Women and Paedophilia', which argued against the conflation of incest and paedophilia in *GCN*, November 1982.

⁸³ *Newsletter of the 5th National Homosexual Conference*, 5 August 1979.

⁸⁴ *Gay Left*, no. 7 (Winter 1978/79).

⁸⁵ Dowsett, 'Old Traps for New Players', 26.

⁸⁶ Committee to Raise Education Standards, 'The Continuing Homosexual Offensive. Next Target: Anti-discrimination', 1-7. The pamphlet is held in the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

driving the agenda. This is dangerous to children precisely because 'it brings to mind Dr Richard Hauser's warning of the danger during adolescence when a person passes through a stage of ambivalence'. Quoting Hauser himself, the pamphlet continues: 'It seems imperative that all socialising agents ... must reinforce, particularly to adolescents, the normal and natural sexual attractions and practice'.⁸⁸ Under the subtitle 'Exposing Children to Risk', the pamphlet put forth the claim that:

Clearly, the intent of the recommendation for homosexual books in school libraries, and the introduction of non-judgmental material on homosexuality into courses on sex education, is to introduce children with homosexual ideology during the period of sexual ambivalence. Primary school children would be indoctrinated and taught homosexual practices before reaching puberty.⁸⁹

In case the underlying conflation of homosexuality and paedophilia was not already apparent, the pamphlet saw fit to highlight this 'subtext': 'The homosexual front claims it is not interested in sexual relations with children. However, this myth is exploded by the increasingly number of articles on paedophilia in the homosexual press and the advertisements for teenage partners'.⁹⁰

A joint police and media campaign targeting the Australian Paedophile Support Group the following year, only cemented the already inextricably fused terms of paedophilia and homosexuality. On 5 November 1983, less than a year after the infamous raids and public furor surrounding NAMBLA in the USA,⁹¹ thirty police from the 'Delta Squad' raided a house in Melbourne and arrested seven men, one man at his place of work and a ninth man at his home in Sydney. All nine men were gay, and police alleged that they were all members of the Australian Paedophile Support Group. The men were charged with 'conspiracy to corrupt public morals'.⁹² This incident, and the media campaign to follow, irrevocably cemented the rhetorical conflation of paedophilia and homosexuality. Accused of being an international child pornography and child exploitation ring, the group issued a press release in an attempt not only to affirm their innocence but also to clarify the distinction between paedophilia and child abuse:

These accusations have been based on a total non-understanding of what a paedophile is and the function of the support group. The press has assumed there can be no consensual sexual activity between children and adults. Gays have once again been used as scapegoats to misdirect attention away from the real exploiters of children who are commonly fathers and family members. As with women and other oppressed people, consciousness-raising groups have been important for pedophiles. Their support has been instrumental in establishing a gay identity for pedophiles.⁹³

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁹¹ John Cozjin, 'Is Boy Love a Gay Issue?' *Campaign* (June 1983): 12-13.

⁹² Adam Carr, 'Delta Squad's "Child Sex Ring"', *Outrage*, (Dec/Jan 1983/84): 6.

⁹³ Quoted in Carr, 6.

The more gay groups attempted to instate a distinction between paedophilia and child sexual abuse, the more interchangeable the terms paedophilia and homosexuality seemed to become. The week following the Delta raid, Alison Thorne, a secondary school teacher and spokesperson for the Gay Legal Rights Coalition, weighed in on the debate in an interview with Melbourne's 3AW radio. Defending the Paedophile Support Group and attempting also to distinguish between paedophilia and child sexual abuse, Thorne gave the following response to a question about the community abhorrence of paedophiles:

I can understand people's feelings from the point of view that they have a lot of misconceptions and I don't think that a lot of the things that the media are doing really helps terribly much. Because paedophiles really care for children. Paedophiles would absolutely abhor child ... abuse of children. are really concerned about consent.⁹⁴

The polemical Melbourne *Sun* newspaper ran a front-page article on 10 November 1983, "'Sex-at-10' Teacher Outrage". Thorne was reported to have called for a lowering of the age of consent to 10, and the article detailed the outrage of parents and members of parliament.⁹⁵ A trial by media ensued, and a series of prominent newspaper articles and radio programs pounced on the comments made by Thorne. So inflammatory was the issue that Thorne was removed from her teaching position and transferred to an administrative position. The Minister for Education, Mr Fordham, said of the transfer:

This step is necessary because of the importance of maintaining the trust and confidence that are such vital elements of the parent-teacher-student relationship. Ms Thorne's reported public statements and the subsequent strong reaction from parents at the school have all placed her in an extremely difficult position.⁹⁶

Underlying this seemingly measured statement was the fact that parents, community members and members of parliament were opposed to the idea of intergenerational sex in general and *homosexual paedophilia* in particular. Despite the fact that the Delta case was thrown out of court and, some three years later, the Victorian Equal Opportunity Board (EOB) ruled that Thorne be reinstated to a teaching position, the furore over homosexuality, sex education and paedophilia did not stop there. The Victorian Government considered challenging the EOB decision by introducing special legislation to stop Thorne, and others (read 'homosexuals') like her, from teaching. The legislation would be designed to 'empower the Director-General of Education to transfer a teacher because of publicly expressed views on sexual matters relating to children'.⁹⁷ However, at

⁹⁴ These comments were reported in *The Age*, 11 November 1983, 3. For a more comprehensive treatment of the Thorne and the Australian Paedophile Support Group case, see Steven Angelides, 'The Homosexualization of the Pedophile: The Case of Alison Thorne and the Australian Paedophile Support Group', in *Homophobia: List and Loathing Across Time and Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming).

⁹⁵ Thorne claims that her comments were quoted out of context.

⁹⁶ 'Sex talk teacher taken from class', *The Age*, 12 November 1983, 3.

⁹⁷ 'Govt settles job dispute with teacher', *Courier-Mail*, 5 December 1986.

the eleventh hour a deal was struck, and the Victorian Government would withdraw the bill if Thorne agreed to take up a teaching position in a Technical and Further Education institution instead of a secondary school. Despite Thorne's belief that the agreement meant 'the government has conceded they discriminated against me',⁹⁸ it did little to counter the rhetorical association of paedophilia and homosexuality.

Conclusion

The issue of paedophilia continued to plague the gay community to such an extent that by the end of the decade, and at the height of the child sexual abuse movement, fewer and fewer people seemed willing to debate let alone endorse a pro-paedophilia position. Discussions of paedophilia in the gay press therefore waned. It scarcely mattered that many gay and paedophile support groups earlier in the decade had been articulating clear distinctions between paedophilia, incest, homosexuality and child sexual abuse. Nor did it seem to matter that many gay and feminist groups had been exposing the fact that the majority of sexual abuses of children are of a heterosexual not homosexual nature, and are committed largely by fathers, male relatives and family friends. Finally, neither did it seem to matter that, strictly speaking, paedophilia referred to sex with prepubescent children and not adolescents, yet all of the high profile cases of supposed homosexual 'paedophilia' involved gay men and adolescents. In the public imagination and dominant media representations, and as a result of the decriminalisation of homosexuality and the discussion of homosexuality in sex education debates, it was frequently homosexual paedophiles that continued to be identified as the greatest threat to all children. This assumption was sustained, in spite also of the fact that research revealed a much smaller proportion of homosexual men engaged in sex with prepubescent children than did heterosexual men. In one authoritative study, Groth et al. concluded that 'the heterosexual adult constitutes a higher risk of sexual victimization to the underage child than does the homosexual adult'.⁹⁹ The reason for this, they claimed, was that homosexual men tend to be sexually attracted to pubertal and post-pubertal masculine qualities, which the prepubescent child is said generally not to exhibit. So hegemonic was the feminist child sexual abuse movement's view of all children up to the age of 16 (and sometimes even 17 or 18) as sexually innocent and unable to give meaningful consent becoming, that any space for subtle distinctions both between children and adolescents and between the concepts of paedophilia and child sexual abuse was almost completely eroded.

Even dominant theories of paedophilia in the late 1970s and 1980s, which on the surface seemed to 'exonerate ... gays' from the category of paedophile, as

⁹⁸ 'Teaching Deal Ends Three-year Thorne Saga', *Outrage*, no. 44 (1987): 8.

⁹⁹ Quoted in 'Vic Child Sex Report Exonerates Gays, slams Pedophiles', *Outrage* (June 1986), 7.

one community publication reported,¹⁰⁰ nonetheless contained an insidious and homophobic equation of homosexuality with 'true' paedophilia. What many researchers tended to do was to lump paedophilic offenders into two broad groupings: 'regressed' versus 'fixated' types.¹⁰¹ Fixated offenders were thought to be those who exhibit an exclusive sexual preference for young boys, while regressed offenders are thought to exhibit 'normal' sexual preference but be 'situationally induced' to have sex with children. Neil McConaghy, known in the late 1960s and 1970s as an expert in aversion therapy as a cure for homosexuality,¹⁰² summed up the general rule of thumb: 'men who have a history of offending against girl children could all be considered as regressed, and homosexual pedophiles and hebephiles are fixated'.¹⁰³ So despite the fact that research indicated heterosexual men commit the vast majority of sexual offences against children, the 'fixated' offender was all too often associated with the pathological homosexual predator (or 'true' paedophile) and the 'regressed' offender rendered the more harmless, somewhat normative, heterosexual male suffering from stressful life circumstances such as unemployment or marriage breakdown.¹⁰⁴ This distinction also reflects the heteronormative and homophobic reworking of the earlier distinction between perversity and perversion introduced by Krafft-Ebing. A focus on the least prevalent of these forms of sex crime—'true' paedophilia—is also reflected in media articles. Especially in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the mainstream media representations continued to ignore research and crimes that highlighted the prevalence of intimate danger and, instead, frequently exploited images of stranger danger and rendered them synonymous with predatory homosexual paedophiles, even when they were more accurately instances of homosexual hebephilia or 'consensual' sex between adults and teenagers.

What I have endeavoured to show in this article is that the category of the paedophile emerged in the 1980s as a response to the sweeping challenges to

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁰¹ A. N. Groth and H. J. Birnbaum, 'Adult Sexual Orientation and Attraction to Underage Persons', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 7 (1978): 175–81; K. Howells, 'Adult Sexual Interest in Children: Considerations Relevant to Theories of Etiology', in *Adult Sexual Interest in Children*, ed. M. Cook and K. Howells (New York: Academic Press, 1981); David Finkelhor, *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 49; Neil McConaghy, *Sexual Behaviour: Problems and Management* (New York: Plenum Press, 1993), 312.

¹⁰² Neil McConaghy, 'Penile Response Conditioning and its Relationship to Aversion Therapy in Homosexuals', *Behaviour Therapy* 1 (1970). It is probably worth noting that McConaghy received a grant from the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia.

¹⁰³ McConaghy, *Sexual Behaviour*, 312; see also Howells, 78. A 'hebephile' usually refers to someone with an erotic preference for adolescents between the ages of 13 and 16. I should also point, if it is not apparent already, that psycho-medical discourses of paedophilia have almost always taken the male subject as their implicit referent. For a critique of the psycho-medical construction of the category of the paedophile, see Steven Angelides, 'Paedophilia and the Misrecognition of Desire', *Transformations* 8 (July 2004): 1–20 <http://transformations.equ.edu.au/journal/issue_08/article_01.shtml>

¹⁰⁴ Summarising Groth's account of the causal factors involved in regressed offender behaviour, Howells, 78, notes 'the precipitating events as physical, social, sexual, marital, financial and vocational crises to which the offender fails to adapt'. See also Kurt Freund et al., 'The Female Child as a Surrogate Object', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 2, no. 2 (1972): 119–33.

forms of normative masculinity posed by feminism, gay liberation and gay rights and the child sexual abuse movement. The image of the predatory paedophile was homosexualised and enlisted in the process of constructing subordinated or negated masculinities. Such a dynamic of competing masculinities served to recuperate the once normative and hegemonic but now somewhat beleaguered masculinities. This was a defensive projection of a homophobic and heteronormative discourse that served, on the one hand, to deflect attention away from the fact that child sexual abuse had been exposed as a problem inherent to dominant and not marginal forms of masculinity and male sexuality and, on the other, to halt the advancing campaigns for homosexual equality.¹⁰⁵

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¹⁰⁵ At the time many gay groups, including the Australian Paedophile Support Group, argued that 'Gays have once again been used as scapegoats to misdirect attention away from the real exploiters of children who are commonly fathers and family members'. See Carr, 6.