

Myth: "Pedophilia is an unnatural mental disorder."

Fact: Many psychologists and other academics have challenged the notion that pedophilia is a disorder.²¹

Perhaps the best argument is provided by psychologist Richard Green.²² Green observes that pedophiles have not been demonstrated to possess psychological abnormalities and that attraction to young people is relatively common.²² Green also notes that intimate relationships between adults and young people have existed throughout history, and that pedophilia is frequently observed within the animal kingdom, including among primates that are closely genetically related to humans.²²

Political scientist Harris Mirkin concludes that the consideration of pedophilia as a disorder has more to do with society's historical reactions to sexual minorities than it does with valid scientific evidence.²³

Myth: "Pedophiles' interactions with young people only involve the eventual pursuit of sexual activity, or "grooming," and can never be beneficial."

Fact: Pedophilia, as a romantic preference, involves many feelings separate from physical attraction. One researcher notes that pedophiles' feelings about young people "include an intense interest in what children think and do and the ways in which they experience the world around them."²⁴ Others similarly conclude that pedophiles "often interact with children in ways that include many non-sexual aspects, including affection, which children experience positively."¹⁷

Pedophiles, having an emotional appreciation for young people, are often well-suited to mentorship roles. There are undoubtedly many pedophiles whose feelings lead them to choose careers and hobbies where they can make a difference in the lives of young people. As one psychologist notes, "there are lots of pedophiles who never in their life get into a conflict with the law." He maintains that pedophiles can become involved in "a variety of useful activities. They can become writers of children's literature or even popular leaders of children's interest clubs."²⁵

There are many pedophiles, however, who suffer intense guilt from society's reaction to their feelings. The authors of this pamphlet hope that a better understanding of pedophilia by the public and a more open and rational discussion about this attraction will allow more pedophiles to achieve their potential and become positive influences in the lives of young people.

Resources:

B4U-ACT - www.b4uact.org

Sponsored by mental health professionals dedicated to understanding and assisting minor attracted people.

Male Homosexual Attraction to Minors Information Center - www.mhamic.org

A collection of scientific studies related to minor attraction.

Age Taboo - www.agetaboo.org

Resources for minor-attracted teenagers and young adults.

Girllove Garden - www.glgarden.org

Forums and other resources for girllovers.

Free Spirits - www.freespirits.org

Forums and other resources for boylovers.

About:

The pamphlet you are holding is created and distributed throughout the world by boylovers, girllovers, and their allies, in the hope that the public might come to have a better, more realistic understanding of this misunderstood orientation. We are a diverse group of people, including men, women, and teenagers from all walks of life, and we believe that *all* people are deserving of dignity and respect, regardless of their sexual attraction. We hope you read this pamphlet with an open mind and that we have caused you to perhaps reconsider some of your beliefs about people with this attraction.

You may leave feedback in response to this pamphlet on our website at:

www.newgon.com/pamphlets

You can also find printable copies of this pamphlet, as well as a full bibliography and links to online resources.

References:

- 1 <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=pedophilia>
- 2 <http://anu.nfshost.com/2007/quotes-on-the-occurrence-of-paedophilia-in-csos>
- 3 <http://books.google.com/books?id=9SYKAAAIAAJ>
- 4 <http://www.mhamic.org/sources/howells.htm>
- 5 <http://www.shfri.net/trans/lautmann/lautmann.htm>
- 6 <http://www.altpr.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=Sections&file=index&req=viewarticle&artid=361>
- 7 <http://www.ageofconsent.com/ageofconsent.htm>
- 8 <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/pedophilia.htm#1>
- 9 <http://listva.lib.va.us/cgi-bin/wa.exe?A2=ind0703&L=VA-HIST&P=47352>
- 10 <http://www.mhamic.org/sources/halletal.htm>
- 11 <http://anu.nfshost.com/2007/occurrence-of-paedophilia-in-the-general-population>
- 12 <http://mhamic.org/sources/feierman1.htm>
- 13 <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/pedophilia.htm#3>
- 14 <http://mhamic.org/sources/freund&kuban.htm>
- 15 <http://mhamic.org/myths/violent.htm>
- 16 <http://mhamic.org/sources/wilson&cox.htm>
- 17 <http://mhamic.org/sources/okami&goldberg.htm>
- 18 <http://mhamic.org/sources/langevin.htm>
- 19 <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/pedophilia.htm#2>
- 20 <http://mhamic.org/myths/abused.htm>
- 21 <http://www.narth.com/docs/symposium.html>
- 22 <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/BIB/pedophilia.htm>
- 23 http://www.ipce.info/ipceweb/Library/mirkin_frame.htm
- 24 <http://mhamic.org/sources/sandfort.htm>
- 25 <http://bohemia.com/czechupdate/2007/feb/386>

For full citations of academic sources, see our website.

Front:

Depicted are two symbols created and used by some minor attracted individuals to represent a positive view of their affinity for young people. The boylove logo, or "blogo," consists of a triangle within a triangle, and represents a boy embraced by a caring older person. The girllove logo, or "glogo," consists of a small heart within a larger heart, and similarly represents the bond between a loving adult and a young girl. Both of the symbols include shapes that are not closed, indicating that the young person is neither possessed nor controlled by the adult friend, but remains free to make his or her own decisions.

These symbols may be used by those who share a similar appreciation of young people, or by any ally who wishes to promote a positive view of boylove and girllove and the rights of young people to enjoy the relationships of their choosing.

Pedophilia

Myths & Facts

An informational pamphlet

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Myth: "The word pedophile means child molester or sex offender."

Fact: The word *pedophile* is commonly misused by many people. Initially used by the ancient Greeks, the word *pedophile* is derived from the Greek words for *child* and *love* or *friendship* (*pediatrician* is another commonly used word derived from the Greek prefix for child, while the Greek word for love is seen in the word *Philadelphia*, the "city of brotherly love"). **Literally, the word pedophile means "lover of children."** *Pederasty* was a similar term used by the Greeks.

Many people are surprised to discover the linguistic origins of the word *pedophile*. After all, how could a word whose literal meaning has historically implied love and affection be used to describe something that is supposedly so horrible? However, a pedophile is simply someone who has an emotional and physical attraction to children. **The word does not imply any particular action, nor does it mean child abuser or sex offender.** In fact, pedophiles and child abusers are often very different people (see below).

The misuse of the word *pedophile* is frequently promoted by the media, who often use erroneous terms like "serial pedophile" or "convicted pedophile." Such terms are clearly inaccurate and unfairly equate an unchosen attraction with criminal activity.

Misuse of this word does a disservice to the many pedophiles who obey the law. Because this word has come to be understood by the public as something very different from its original meaning, many people with this attraction have chosen to refer to themselves as *boylovers* or *girllovers*.

Myth: "Most sexual offenders against children are pedophiles."

Fact: There is actually much scientific data to indicate that most sexual offenders against children are people who generally prefer and have adult partners, rather than people who are preferentially attracted to young people. **Thus, most child abuse is not committed by actual pedophiles.**²

This distinction was first acknowledged by psychologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who originally studied pedophilia in a psychological context in 1886. Krafft-Ebing separated true pedophiles—those who have preferential romantic feelings for young people—from sadists and those who opportunistically offend, such as incestual offenders.³ Just as adult rape is a crime that generally has nothing to do with true feelings of love and attraction, sexual offences against children are usually not motivated by a romantic preference.

Many researchers have confirmed that most sexual offenders against children are not true pedophiles, but situational offenders. Psychologist Kevin Howells describes situational offenders as those who offend due to factors such as "marital problems, loss of wife, abuse of alcohol, or stress," noting that these people are "really not pedophiles." Howells observes "most clinical and criminal studies find [situational offenders] to be the majority of those who offend."⁴ Researcher Rüdiger Lautmann concludes that only 5% of people who interact sexually with children are pedophiles.⁵

A similar myth is that pedophiles are often responsible for kidnapping children. Citing police statistics, author Judith Levine writes that 95% of allegedly abducted children are runaways or are taken by a parent in a custody dispute.⁶

Myth: "Anyone attracted to people under the age of consent is a pedophile."

Fact: The age of consent is an arbitrary number that differs from place to place and is influenced by cultural standards. Ages of consent vary greatly throughout the world, from 21 in some countries to 13 in Spain and 12 in Mexico.⁷ Throughout much of the modern history of the U.S. and England, ages of consent varied from 7 to 12 until the end of the 19th century.^{8,9} One obviously cannot define a sexual preference based upon an arbitrary legal statute. **That is why pedophilia is defined as an attraction to pre-pubescent minors.**

Studies, as well as anecdotal evidence, indicate that most adults are somewhat attracted to teenagers. However, some people consider themselves to be preferentially attracted to adolescent boys or girls. These people are known as *hebephiles* or *ephebophiles*. Many hebephiles/ephebophiles consider themselves to be subjected to the same kind of stigma and ostracism as pedophiles, and they may choose to similarly self-identify as *boylovers* or *girllovers*.

Myth: "Pedophilia is rare."

Fact: Determining the proportion of the population that is pedophilic is made difficult by the stigma currently surrounding the attraction. **However, there is scientific evidence to indicate that people occasionally attracted to minors, and even those who are preferentially attracted to them, are likely far more common than is often assumed.**

One study found that 20% of male subjects from the general population self-reported pedophilic interest. 33% of the subjects experienced measured arousal to sensual material involving pre-pubescent girls that was equal to or greater than the arousal they experienced when shown similar material featuring adults.¹⁰ Other studies have shown similar results.¹¹ Simply the fact that occasional attraction to children is apparently so common should be reason enough for more open and rational discussion about pedophilic attraction.

Some researchers conclude that there is also a sizeable portion of the population that is *preferentially* attracted to children, and are thus true pedophiles. One researcher places the percentage in the mid-to-high single digits, speculating that the number of pedophiles in the U.S. alone is "well into the millions."¹² Most of these pedophiles have evidently learned to manage their attraction in a socially-acceptable way, and many are undoubtedly respected within their homes, workplaces, and communities.

Myth: "All pedophiles are adult men."

Fact: Although it is commonly assumed that all pedophiles are men, evidence shows that this attraction is experienced by a number of women, as well. In one study, 3% of female participants reported a sexual attraction to pre-pubescent minors.¹³

Additionally, not all pedophiles are adults; rather, many teens self-identify as boylovers and girllovers. Research indicates that a pedophilic attraction, like other sexual attractions, is determined (perhaps biologically) before puberty.¹² One study finds evidence that "in a substantial proportion of pedophiles (possibly all of them), pedophilia is predetermined at least from early childhood."¹⁴

Myth: "Pedophiles are violent, have an uncontrollable sex drive, and wish to have power and control over others."

Fact: These commonly-held beliefs about pedophilia are completely unsupported by scientific evidence. Research involving unbiased samples of pedophiles is difficult, however, even clinical/forensic studies indicate that sexual violence and aggression against young people are rare.¹⁵

One study based specifically on a group of pedophiles drawn from the general population concluded that "the majority of pedophiles... seem to be gentle and rational."¹⁶ The study also noted that pedophiles tend to desire "affectionate and gentle" relationships rather than dominance, and showed no evidence that pedophiles are abnormally fixated on sex.¹⁶

Myth: "Pedophiles exhibit an immature psychological level of sexual development, are socially inadequate, or possess other psychological abnormalities."

Fact: The myth that pedophiles are violent seems to inexplicably coexist with a similarly popular myth that pedophiles are passive or lack social skills, explaining their preference for children. **However, this myth fails to explain many aspects of pedophilic attraction and is likewise unsupported by scientific evidence.**

Two researchers conclude "the scientific support for the belief that pedophiles are passive, dependent, unassertive, isolated, and socially awkward is weak. Almost all studies are based on offenders against minors rather than pedophiles."¹⁷

Another researcher writes "the data also do not support the theories that pedophilia is due to fixation at an immature stage of development, to an inability to relate to women, to mental retardation, or to senility," and noted that "one non-clinical study suggests that studies of clinical samples may be biased toward finding pathology which is not an inherent part of the sexual anomaly.... Even when characteristic traits are found, they may be due to society's reactions rather than be causes or correlates of pedophilia."¹⁸

One study conducted using a sample of pedophiles from the general population concluded that pedophiles possess no specific psychological abnormalities when compared with the general population.¹⁶ "The most striking thing about these results," the researchers write, "is how normal the paedophiles appear to be according to their scores on these major personality dimensions."¹⁹ They speculated that some may experience depression due to societal reaction.¹⁶

Myth: "Pedophilia is caused by childhood sexual abuse."

Fact: Scientific evidence shows no credible link between sexual abuse in childhood and development of a pedophilic attraction. The vast majority of people who have had sexual experiences with adults as children never sexually offend or discover a pedophilic preference.²⁰

Additionally, there is no evidence to indicate that most people who have a pedophilic preference were abused as young people. One study calls this "abused/abuser hypothesis" "inadequate and incorrect."²⁰ One reason for the popularity of this myth might be the fact that many convicted offenders falsely report childhood abuse in an attempt to excuse their behavior.²⁰