

NORMAL POLITICS:
NEGOTIATING SEXUALITY AND CHILD ENDANGERMENT IN 1977 AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

DAVID PALMER: Normal Politics: Negotiating Sexuality and Child Endangerment in 1977
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This thesis shows how opposition to gay rights first emerged into a national political issue within the United States. It argues that links made between homosexuality and child endangerment in early 1977 were critical to the formation of anti-gay rights discourse. Opponents of gay rights labeled homosexuals “deviant” and thereby dangerous to children represented the basis of opposition to gay rights. Gay rights activists and gay media responded by emphasizing their normalcy over their difference to heterosexuals.

Although discussion of normativity centered on the relationship between homosexuality and child endangerment, the issue, more generally, was a vehicle for both heterosexuals and homosexuals to negotiate sexual identities and boundaries. Reflection on the meaning of “normal” within the gay rights, child endangerment debate affected issues concerning access to public space, notions of child sexual abuse, and which groups were entitled to political rights.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On January 18, 1977 the Dade County Commission of Miami, Florida, voted five to three to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, public accommodations, and employment. It was then the most significant gay rights victory in terms of number of citizens affected. The victory, however, was short-lived. Attending the meeting was local resident Anita Bryant, a former beauty pageant winner, successful pop singer, and spokesperson for Singer sewing machines and Florida orange juice. Bryant found the anti-discrimination measure outrageous. “The ordinance condones immorality,” she stated, “and discriminates against my children’s rights to grow up in a healthy, decent, environment.” Over the next five months, Bryant used her name recognition to build a tireless campaign to overturn the Dade County ordinance, orchestrating the Save Our Children Campaign, with the motto, “Homosexuals cannot reproduce, so they must recruit” and appearing on Christian television broadcasts, talk shows, and staging mass anti-gay rallies. On June 7, 1977, Miami residents voted by an over two-to-one margin in a referendum to repeal the anti-discrimination ordinance.¹ Bryant’s campaign successfully overturned the ordinance by linking homosexuality with child endangerment.

¹ “Bias Against Homosexuals is Outlawed in Miami,” *New York Times*, January 19, 1977, A18; Patrick McCreery, “Beyond Gay: Deviant Sex and the Politics of the ENDA Workplace,” *Social Text* 61 (Winter 1999): 43-4; B. Drummond Ayers Jr. “Miami Votes 2 to 1 to Repeal Law Barring Bias Against Homosexuals,” *New York Times*, June 8, 1977, 1.

Meanwhile, major newspapers and magazines, such as *The New York Times*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Washington Post*, *Miami Herald*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, began routinely to report on child sex-related problems.² By May 1977, media coverage on pedophilia as well as child pornography, prostitution, sex rings, and sex abuse was commonplace. Most of the reports linked child sexual abuse with homosexuality. That link relegated vice to homosexuals, while granting virtue to heterosexuals.

These widespread concerns over homosexual predation of children emerged during a period of recent changes on American popular understandings of homosexuality. Since the Stonewall Riots of 1969, gay men and women witnessed marked improvements in their social and political standings. In 1973 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of incurable diseases.³ In the next few years, national magazines and newspapers increasingly portrayed homosexuality in a sympathetic light rather than as a psychological malady.⁴ In 1974, Representative Bella Abzug of New York introduced a gay civil rights bill before Congress. Congress never debated the bill, but it did help make gay civil rights a political issue. In the 1976 Presidential Election, the Democratic nominee Jimmy Carter declared his support to amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include legal

² According to the historian Philip Jenkins, "In 1977, child molestation made headlines in a way that it had not since the 1940s." Philip Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares: The End of the Sixties and the Making of Eighties America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 114. A similar claim is made by Gayle Rubin in her essay, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in Carole S. Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (New York: Pandora Press, 1984). The year 1977 as a watershed in American sexual politics also has by Pat Califia in her article, "The Great Kiddy Porn Scare of '77 and Its Aftermath," *The Advocate*, October 16, 1980, 19-23, 45.

³ During the Progressive Era reformers first used the "disease" metaphor when discussing certain social problems. See Michael McGerr, *A Fierce Discontent: The Rise and Fall of the Progressive Movement in America, 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴ Edward Alwood, *Straight News* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); David Eisensbach, *Gay Power: An American Revolution* (New York: Carroll and Graf Publishers, 2006).

protection for lesbians and gay men. He also was the first presidential candidate actively to seek gay votes.

By 1977 homosexuality was no longer the taboo subject it was just ten years earlier.⁵ Indeed, discussion of homosexuality and media depictions of homosexuals were commonplace and generally positive. So commonplace and positive in fact that one *Washington Post* columnist in 1976 wondered “if network television [was] about to kill off the bitchy, old time, outrageous gay and replace him with a new homosexual,” who was “squeaky clean and wholesome.”⁶ However, that was television. When homosexuality became a political matter, glowing depictions of homosexuals were muted. Specifically, once child endangerment became an issue, attitudes towards homosexuality hardened as tolerance often gave way to calls to “save our children from homosexuality.” Homosexuality was tolerated more than it had been, but only within prescribed boundaries.

Concerns expressed over homosexuals allegedly endangering children were not new. From the early 1870 thru 1930, state and local governments increasingly passed or enforced anti-sodomy laws. These laws relied on generic definitions of sodomy which applied to both homosexual and heterosexual consensual acts. Although they affected both groups, courts convicted homosexuals more often and sentenced them to harsher penalties than

⁵ In 1967 the mainstream press rarely discussed homosexuality. When it did, it framed homosexuality in an overtly negative cast. For example, on March 7, 1967, *CBS Reports* aired the first network documentary on homosexuality. The hour long program pledged to provide a candid portrayal of homosexuality in American life. However, as several writers later noted, the documentary affirmed popular depictions of gays as disturbed, shameful, promiscuous, and unhealthy. Host Mike Wallace concluded the broadcast remarking that “the average homosexual ... is not interested in, nor capable of a long lasting relationship like that of a heterosexual marriage. His sex life – his ‘love life’ – consists of chance encounters at the clubs and bars he inhabits, and even on the street.” Wallace later apologized, calling his comments “insensitive” and “lacking journalistic integrity.” “The Homosexuals,” Transcript, *CBS Reports*, March 7, 1967. Criticisms of the documentary could be found in Vito Russo, *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1981), 153; Richard Levine, “How the Gay Lobby Changed Television,” *TV Guide*, May 30, 1981; David Rothenberg, “Media Watch,” *New York Native* June 15-28, 1981, 8; Alwood, *Straight News*, 73.

⁶ Nicholas Von Hoffman, “And Now, the Year of the Gay,” *Washington Post*, October 15, 1976.

heterosexuals. Homosexual stigmatization intensified when children were involved. The historian Philip Jenkins noted that male homosexuals commonly became identified as “boy fiends” after sixteen year old Jesse Pomeroy reportedly raped and killed two boys in Boston in 1874. The Pomeroy case ignited media speculation of other instances where “adult” male homosexuals⁷ sexually abused children. Over the next few decades, Americans increasingly associated male homosexuality with sexual deviance, criminal behavior, and especially child sexual abuse.⁸

In the late 1930s thru the early 1950s these links were strengthened when medical experts, psychiatrists, legal officials, and the media created and defined the “sexual psychopath” as a male homosexual. The historian Estelle Freeman said that popular depictions of the sexual psychopath during the thirties, forties, and fifties focused on male sexuality and “the fear that without the guardsmanship of women, either men’s most beastlike, violent sexual urges would run amok, or men might turn their sexual energies away from women entirely.” Freedman added that the discourse on the sexual psychopath made adult women “suitable objects for ‘normal’ male desire, even normal male aggression,” while it “mapped out two forbidden boundaries for men: sex with children or sex with other men.” These sexual boundaries, Freedman argued, “promoted a new, more open public discourse on nonmarital, nonprocreative sexuality” and helped “break down older taboos by simply discussing sexual deviance.” By relegating homosexuality to the sexual fringe alongside

⁷ In 1874, most states defined “adults” as younger than eighteen years old with regard to age of consent laws. In New York, for example, the age of consent was set at ten years old until 1887 until it was changed to sixteen years old. In 1895 it was adjusted to eighteen years old. *Report and Analysis of Sex Crimes in the City of New York for the Ten Year Period 1930-1939* (New York: Mayor’s Committee for the Study of Sex Offenses, 1940), 22; quoted in Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 24.

⁸ Jenkins, *Moral Panic*, 20-48.

child sexual abuse, psychiatrists, politicians, and the media helped expand boundaries of “normal” sex to include nonprocreative heterosexual acts. Previously, only heterosexual procreative sex was deemed normal.⁹

To some extent, the anti-homosexual, child endangerment discourse of 1977 resembled that of previous periods. Around the turn of the twentieth century, white middle class Progressives expressed anxiety over immigration, urbanization, and changing social roles for children. Panic during the late 1930s resulted from a “disruption of traditional family life during the depression, when record numbers of men lost their status as breadwinners, trigger[ing] concerns about masculinity.” The “sexual psychopath” returned in the early 1950s when Cold War tensions were at their height. “Sexual psychopaths,” like Communists, were widely seen as infections to familial and social order. The historian Barbara Ehrenreich claimed that the “sexual psychopath’s” association with homosexuality instilled fear among heterosexual men, a fear that kept them in line as husbands and breadwinners. Links drawn in 1977 between child endangerment and homosexuality also stemmed from concerns over fundamental moral values and social order. The historians Philip Jenkins and Bruce J. Schulman argued that American domestic politics during the mid 1970s was a reaction to the social, cultural, and political transformations during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The women’s, gay, and sexual liberation movements challenged traditional assumptions of gender and sexual normality. Some welcomed these developments, but others found these pushes for cultural pluralism and the blurring of sexual and gender roles as signs of moral decline. There also was a marked sense of national decline. The recent memories of the Vietnam War and Watergate, stagflation, and America’s

⁹ Estelle B. Freedman, “‘Uncontrolled Desires’: The Response to the Sexual Psychopath, 1920-1960,” *The Journal of American History* 74 (June 1987): 83-106, quoted from 94, 95.

demise from its position as the world's sole superpower added to a widespread feeling that the country needed to be rescued.¹⁰ In 1977 – as during the turn of the twentieth century, the late 1930s, and early 1950s – the crumbling of traditional social boundaries and a belief that the country was falling apart influenced fears of homosexual predation upon children.

However, links drawn between homosexuality and child endangerment in 1977 emerged from unique historical conditions, too. Homosexuals remained a stigmatized social group, but they were not marginalized in the way they once were. They assumed a middle position, somewhere between social acceptance and condemnation.

This essay explores the social construction of homosexuality in relation to child endangerment claims in 1977 America. It analyzes Bryant's anti-homosexual, child endangerment message during her Dade County Save Our Children Campaign (SOCC), a May 1977 national newspaper series on child pornography and pedophilia, and a leading gay magazine's response to Bryant's campaign and allegations that homosexuals posed a threat to children. This story is not the first of its kind. Numerous scholars already have discussed the rise of Bryant's Save Our Children Campaign, its links to increased media coverage on pedophilia and child sexual exploitation, and responses from gay rights leaders and gay press to Bryant's crusade. Yet, despite some variations, the narrative basically is the same. It goes as follows: Bryant's campaign represented the birth of anti-gay activism, activism that precipitated a "fundamentalist awakening" or "the rise of the new right" within the United States. Although the Dade County defeat was a setback in the so-called "gay liberation"

¹⁰ Jenkins, *Moral Panic*, 20-48; Freedman, "Uncontrolled Desires"; John D'Emilio, "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America," in Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, eds., *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 226-40; Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight From Commitment* (Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1983), 26; Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*; Bruce J. Schulman, *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics* (New York: Free Press, 2001).

movement, it also helped to mobilize lesbians and gay men to fight against oppression and discrimination. At the height of Bryant's campaign, national newspapers and magazines suddenly produced stories labeling homosexuals as "child molesters," thereby revealing deep-seated homophobia within the mainstream press. Gay rights activists and gay media responded with an aggressive (albeit somewhat flawed) counterattack which, despite its best efforts, could not match the money or organizational strength of the opposition.¹¹ This standardized account fits nicely within the broader master narrative of gay American history. That story – like the story of gay politics in early 1977 – is one of perseverance and progress amid adversity.¹²

This essay seeks to amend this narrative. Rather than frame this discussion as one of pro-gay versus anti-gay forces, I wish to show how both sides spoke a common language when

¹¹ Some of the more prominent gay American history "master narratives" that discuss Bryant's Save Our Children Campaign include Barry D. Adam, *The Rise of a Gay and Lesbian Movement*, 2d ed. (New York: Twayne, 1995); Dudley Clendenin and Adam Nagourney, *Out for Good: The Struggle to Build a Gay Rights Movement in America* (New York: Touchstone, 1999); John D'Emilio, "Cycles of Change, Questions of Strategy: The Gay and Lesbian Movement After Fifty Years," in Craig A. Rimmerman, Kenneth D. Wald, and Clyde Wilcox, eds., *Politics of Gay Rights*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 31-53; Eisenbach, *Gay Power*; John Loughery, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998); Eric Marcus, *Making Gay History: The Half Century Fight for Lesbian and Gay Equal Rights* (New York: Harper & Row, 2002); James T. Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones: Queering Space in the Stonewall South* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001). None of the above works discussed the effects of the mass media coverage on pedophilia and child sexual abuse on the social construction of homosexuality in 1977. The most detailed analysis of this relationship has been written by Philip Jenkins in *Moral Panic* and *Decade of Nightmares*. Jenkins, however, did not explore the social construction of homosexuality within the broader question of normativity. Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia also have written about this subject respectively in "Thinking Sex" and "The Great Kiddy Porn Scare of '77 and Its Aftermath," *The Advocate*, October 16, 1980, 19-23, 45, though not in great detail.

¹² The triumphant narrative is also commonplace in historiography on the women's and black civil rights movements. Jacquelyn Dowd Hall argued that the dominant narrative of the civil rights movement – distilled from history and memory, twisted by ideology and political contestation, and embedded in heritage tours, public rituals, textbooks, and various artifacts of mass culture – distorts and suppresses as much as it reveals." Hall recommended that historians make "civil rights harder ... harder to simplify, appropriate, and contain." Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* (March 2005): 1233-63, quotations are from 1233, 1235.

child endangerment became an issue. That language was the language of normativity.¹³

Normativity, I argue, was the criterion by which heterosexuals and homosexuals negotiated sexual identities and boundaries. Normativity was never a given. It needed to be performed and defined in relation to other sexual identities. In 1977 Americans debated the appropriate boundaries of sexual normativity. Homosexuality stood at the center of this debate.

Negotiation over the meaning of homosexuality in relation to child endangerment directly affected issues concerning access to public space, notions of child sexual abuse, and which groups were entitled to political rights. Within these debates, the question was not whether “gay is good.” It was whether “gay is normal enough” to be tolerated within the bounds of a society where the virtues of reproductive heterosexuality were presumed axiomatic. It was a debate that Anita Bryant and her supporters, mainstream and gay media, politicians, medical experts, psychiatrists, police officials, and professed man-boy lovers participated in.

¹³ I use the word “normativity” rather than “heteronormativity” because the gay press and gay rights leaders also tried to “draw a line” between “good” and “bad” sex. While heterosexuality provided the template for making such distinctions, the gay press and gay rights leaders used their own criteria for defining normativity. Much of my discussion on normativity is informed by scholarship on heteronormativity. See Eve Kofowsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles.: University of California Press, 1990); Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

CHAPTER II

SAVING OUR CHILDREN, SECURING OUR SPACE



FIGURE 1: Anita Bryant and Bob Green. Anita Bryant and her husband Bob Green are shown at a news conference in Miami Beach, Florida, June 7, 1977, shortly after learning that the Miami anti-discrimination ordinance was overturned in a referendum by a sixty-nine to thirty-one percent margin. (AP Photo)

According to Anita Bryant, homosexuals had no place in “normal” society because they invariably threatened its most valuable resource – children. Bryant’s fame helped her

circulate that message. Her ascendance as a celebrity began in 1959 when she was Miss Oklahoma and Miss America second runner-up. Shortly thereafter, Bryant established herself as a pop singer and frequent performer at political conventions. By the 1970s, she was best known for her regular television appearances. She was a perennial host of the national television Orange Bowl as well as a spokeswoman for the Singer Sewing Machine Company and Florida Citrus Company, a spot that made her a fixture on American televisions since 1969.¹⁴

Her fame seemed to play a key role in enabling her to organize a strong support base. When the Dade County Commission delivered its decision prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, public accommodations, and employment, opponents outnumbered supporters within the courtroom by eight to one. The following day, Bryant and Coral Gables Councilman Robert Brake filed paperwork officially forming Save Our Children Incorporated.¹⁵ The initial object of the organization was to gather the 10,000 required signatures to force a referendum over whether to overturn the ordinance. That goal was met easily in less than three weeks.¹⁶ Bryant and her supporters then staged an aggressive media and door-to-door campaign to sell their message to the public. Although there are no exact figures on the size of SOCC, its membership was diverse with numerous influential figures. Officers and directors included rabbis, black protestant ministers,

¹⁴ “ABC Biography of Anita Bryant,” *ABC Radio Network* (1959); Clendenin and Nagoruney, *Out for Good*, 292-93; Richard Steele and Tony Fuller, “God’s Crusader,” *Newsweek*, June 6, 1977, 19-21. From 1959-1960 Bryant had three major pop hits: “Till There Was You” (1959) (which was originally written by Meredith Wilson for the 1957 musical play *The Music Man*); “Paper Roses” (1960) (covered thirteen years later by Marie Osmond); and “In My Little Corner of the World” (1960).

¹⁵ Unless specifically noted, I will refer to Save Our Children Incorporated as the Save Our Children Campaign (SOCC).

¹⁶ In fact, the drive collected more than 66,000 signatures on petitions to force a referendum on the issue. Tom Matthews, Tony Fuller, and Holly Camp, “Battle Over Gay Rights,” *Newsweek*, June 6, 1977, 18.

presidents of women's organizations, a manager of a major league baseball team, and a director of the Catholic League for Civil and Religious Rights. By Bryant's account, SOCC had over 5000 members. These members were important to the organization's success, but Bryant was the figurehead of SOCC.¹⁷

The foundation of SOCC's anti-homosexual, child endangerment message was its notion of "recruitment." SOCC defined "recruitment" for the public in a March 20, 1977 *Miami Herald* full page advertisement. The following excerpt represented one component of the campaign's notion of homosexual recruitment. It read:

Unless repealed, the ordinance will allow homosexuals, as one leader promised, to provide "role models" for the impressionable – that is, the right to tell all society, especially our youth, that homosexuality isn't wrong, just "different" ... and, of course, "gay." This recruitment of our children is absolutely necessary for the survival and growth of homosexuality – for since homosexuals cannot reproduce they *must* recruit, they *must* freshen their ranks. And who qualifies as a likely recruit ... a 35 year-old father or mother of two ... or a teenage boy or girl who is surging with sexual awareness?¹⁸

According to the logic presented here, the Dade County ordinance had to be repealed because it sanctioned homosexuality, a lifestyle deemed sinful, immoral, and contrary to nature. Bryant and members of her organization feared that if the ordinance was not overturned, it would send children a false message not just about homosexuality, but also about basic distinctions between "right" and "wrong."

Bryant drew those distinctions in a religious cast. Throughout her campaign and in her autobiography, Bryant referenced biblical passages and religious leaders to support her

¹⁷ Anita Bryant, *The Anita Bryant Story: The Survival of Our Nation's Families and the Threat of Militant Homosexuality* (Old Tappan, NJ: Flaming H. Revell Company, 1977), 151-56.

¹⁸ Save Our Children Inc., "To the Civil Rights of Parents: To Save Their Children From the Homosexual Influence," advertisement, *Miami Herald*, March 20, 1977; reprinted in Bryant, *The Anita Bryant Story*, 144.

argument that God condemned homosexuality. She laid out her religious objections in a letter written to the head of the Dade County Commission, shortly after it delivered its decision. “Now I ask you,” she wrote, “will the next ordinance be to protect the rights of prostitutes... Where will the so-called *discrimination* end, when you are trying to legislate morality? Bryant cited Corinthians 6:8-10¹⁹ followed by Leviticus 20:13²⁰ to show that God denounced homosexuality, just as He denounced fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, the effeminate, self-abusers, thieves, drunkards, or extortionists. “Surely only God can judge mankind, certainly not I,” she stated. “But God is a holy God and hates those kinds of sins.”²¹ Bryant suggested that her campaign was morally just because it fulfilled God’s will.²²

Yet Bryant’s crusade was about more than fulfilling God’s will. She maintained that because homosexuality was a sin, she had a right to ensure that homosexuality did not affect her children. “If the ordinance is passed,” she said, “you will ... be infringing upon my rights and discriminating against me as a citizen and a mother to teach my children and set examples and to point to others as examples of God’s moral codes as stated in the Holy Scriptures.” Much of Bryant’s disapproval of the Dade County ordinance stemmed from its

¹⁹ “Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud.... Know ye not the unrighteous, shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves within mankind. Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, not extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.”

²⁰ If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.”

²¹ Reprinted in Bryant, *The Anita Bryant Story*, 17.

²² Bryant’s religious-based critique has been frequently repeated by many opponents of homosexuality. However, according to John Boswell, only one biblical verse (Leviticus 20:13) explicitly condemns homosexuality. Moreover, religious-based critiques of homosexuality are a relatively modern phenomenon, beginning in the late Middle Ages. John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980).

symbolic meaning. She believed that if the ordinance passed it would send children the false notion that homosexuality was acceptable. However, she also saw the ordinance as bad for parents since it prevented them the ability to teach their children fundamental distinctions between right and wrong, virtue and sin. Bryant believed that she held the authority to assert what was best for all children since God supported her beliefs.²³

Equally important to Bryant's case against homosexuality was her contention that it threatened the natural sexual order. In making this argument, Bryant drew extensively from George Gilder's *Sexual Suicide*. In the opening of his book, Gilder described differences between the sexes as "our most precious heritage, even though they make women superior in ways that matter most." He emphasized that men needed women for their psychological well-being. Women are "the life force in our society and our lives," Gilder wrote. They determine "the level of happiness, energy, creativity, and solidarity in nature." He claimed that heterosexual marriage was essential for proper male socialization. Men devolved into "uncivilized males," he said, without the love from a woman and the stabilizing influence of marriage. Sex was meaningless when removed from the context of marriage. "No longer governed by the normative syntax of procreative love," he wrote, "erotic activity becomes a shapeless, destructive pursuit of ever more elusive pleasures by ever more drastic techniques." Homosexuality was considered one of those "drastic techniques." It was "a flight from identity and love." The notion of gay liberation was an "escape from sexual responsibility and its display a threat to millions of young men who have precarious masculine identities." Put differently, homosexuality epitomized sex without purpose. Even if it did not alter a heterosexual man's sexual orientation, homosexuality initiated the idea

²³ Bryant, *The Anita Bryant Story*, 34.

that a man could have sex with a woman for reasons other than procreation. Gilder found this dangerous since procreative love supposedly was necessary for a man's proper socialization.²⁴

Bryant's use of *Sexual Suicide* suggested that even when homosexuals failed to "freshen their ranks" with new recruits, they still posed a veritable social threat to American ideals of masculinity (which, by Gilder's account, was already in crisis due to the sexual liberation and women's movement). Bruce J. Schulman found this concern over the demise of masculinity somewhat reasonable. He argued that the gay rights movement of the late 1960s and 1970s played a key role in transforming popular understandings of heterosexuality as well as homosexuality. Because of the increased exposure and tolerance of homosexuals, he wrote, "straight men could 'soften' themselves without fearing they might be labeled effeminate or latent homosexuals."²⁵ Although these changing ideals allowed men to express themselves in new ways, Bryant saw them as sources of moral crisis. She believed that as heterosexual men relinquished their roles as "real men," the traditional gender roles that defined familial and social order would soon unravel. Bryant presumably feared that the homosexual-inspired blurring of male sexual identities most affected children who had yet to differentiate clearly "right" from "wrong."²⁶

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 54-55; George Gilder, *Sexual Suicide* (New York: Quadrangle, 1973); quotation from p. x.

²⁵ Schulman, *Seventies*, 179, 180-81.

²⁶ When Bryant made specific gender references about homosexuality, it was always in reference to male homosexuality, never lesbianism. As we will see, Bryant was not the only one fixated with male homosexuality – and not lesbianism – when the issue of homosexuality and child endangerment surfaced in 1977. The reason for why this was the case is not entirely clear. Freedman's article on the genealogy of the "sexual psychopath" from 1930-1960 showed that concerns about homosexuals molesting children were rooted in general anxiety over male sexuality. Female sexuality simply did not matter when medical experts, sexual psychiatrists, and legal officials (almost all of whom were men) addressed sex-related issues. Additionally, adult men were considered to be more physically and sexually powerful than adult women, making them a greater sexual threat to children. Since there is no scholarship on concerns about American preoccupation with male homosexuality – as opposed to lesbianism – in the 1970s, it is difficult to surmise how much Freedman's

Bryant feared that the children's alleged inability to draw such distinctions made them vulnerable to becoming homosexuals. Unlike adults, who supposedly knew "right" from "wrong" and had an assured sense of their sexual identities, children were uncertain of their sexual identities and place within the world. Consequently, Bryant sought to remove homosexuals from public space. She insisted that this was not a matter of discrimination. Homosexuals, she wrote, "can hold any job, transact any business, join any organization – so long as they do not flaunt their homosexuality and try to establish role models for the impressionable young people – our children." Although Bryant wanted homosexuality eliminated entirely, she conceded this was unfeasible. Instead, she aimed to put homosexuals back into the closet by making gay sex seem shameful and therefore undesirable. She believed that keeping homosexuals closeted would preclude them from recruiting children.²⁷

Much of Bryant's case against "recruitment" focused on protecting children from the presumption that homosexuality was a viable alternative to heterosexuality. However, "recruitment" had another meaning as well. It also implied child sexual abuse. This connotation is exhibited in the same *Miami Herald* advertisement mentioned earlier. In parenthesis, it read, "The Los Angeles Police Department recently reported that 25,000 boys

argument is relevant to the situation in 1977. The women's movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s likely had some effect in helping put more women in positions of power, enabling them to draw greater attention to issues concerning female sexuality and lesbianism, but how and to what extent is uncertain. Although careful historical analysis on the preoccupation with male homosexuality needs to be done in order to better appreciate how and why sexual boundaries are negotiated, I adopt Freedman's argument in analyzing 1977 America. As in the 1930s and 1950s, concerns about the dissolution of male sexuality simply seemed to overshadow concerns about the breakdown of female sexuality. See Freedman, "Uncontrolled Desires."

²⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued that the common implicit belief that children should be raised within a heteronormative environment might be damaging to children who are gay. She noted that suicide among gay children tends to be disproportionately higher than straight children partly due to the implicit parental expectations for their children to be heterosexual. Sedgwick recommended that parents and communities assume the possibility that children may be gay and establish an environment that makes that possibility seem acceptable. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "How to Bring Your Kids Up Gay," in Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 69-81.

17 years of younger in that city alone have been *recruited* into a homosexual ring to provide sex for adult male customers. One boy, just 12 years old, was described as a \$1,000-a-day prostitute.” Thus homosexual recruitment also entailed luring children into prostitution rings against their wishes. It implied sexual coercion and typecast the homosexual as a sexual predator. He no longer simply tried to tell children that homosexuality was condonable; rather he forced his sexuality upon children against their wills.²⁸

Bryant made no clear distinction between adult homosexual role models and homosexuals who sexually abused children. Bryant defined the activities of both as “recruitment.” In both cases, homosexuals allegedly exploited children, exposing them to a lifestyle that was inherently sinful and unnatural.

Pamphlets distributed by SOCC repeated Bryant’s expansive notion of “recruitment.” The front page of one pamphlet entitled “Save Our Children from Homosexuality!” listed the general moral dangers of homosexual recruitment: “It endangers our children.... It threatens your home.... It attacks free enterprise.... It debases religion.... It is a peril to the nation.... But the overwhelming reason is that [Dade County] Metro [Commission’s] pro-homosexual ordinance is an open invitation to recruit our children!” The inside of that pamphlet explained what recruitment entailed by referring to local and national newspaper headlines that linked child sex abuse with homosexuality. The pamphlet concluded on the back page with the statement, in all capital letters, “THERE IS NO ‘HUMAN RIGHT’ TO CORRUPT OUR CHILDREN!”²⁹

Bryant contended that leading gay rights activists, whom she referred to as “militant homosexuals,” had misled Americans into assuming that homosexuals were being denied

²⁸ Save Our Children Inc., advertisement is reprinted in Bryant, *Anita Bryant Story*, 146; emphasis added.

²⁹ “Save Our Children from Homosexuality!” pamphlet is reprinted in Bryant, *Anita Bryant Story*, 89-90.

“human rights.” By her account, Americans had become so concerned about any accusations of discrimination that they failed to realize that homosexuality was immoral and sinful. Human rights, civil rights, and even gay rights did not apply to homosexuals. Bryant believed that “gay human rights” were nothing more than “special rights” and militant homosexuals had made “a mockery” of rights. Militant homosexuals, she wrote, “tried to confuse the black community by persuading the black community that all forms of discrimination are equated with that struggle.” She found the gay rights battle in Miami incomparable to the black civil rights struggle of the 1960s. She considered use of the analogy “a political weapon” on the part of homosexual adults to attain “a license for perversion and the flaunting of their deviant ways ... in the name of ‘human rights.’” Bryant maintained that homosexuals already possessed all the same rights as heterosexuals. “They could hold any job, transcend any business, [and] join any business,” she wrote. As long as homosexuals “kept their perversions at home” they would never suffer discrimination.³⁰

Bryant repeated this argument throughout her press statements, her autobiography, and literature produced by SOCC. She emphasized sexual minorities were fundamentally different from racial and ethnic minorities. “It is not a birthright to be a homosexual,” she insisted. “[Unlike] blacks, Spanish-speaking people, and others of many nationalities and religious backgrounds ... homosexuals were not a race.” Because homosexuals were not a race, their sexual identities were not necessarily patent. The homosexual could be anyone – your child’s doctor, teacher, or next door neighbor. He was the person you least expected. Therein laid the problem – since homosexuals could not be easily spotted, it was nearly impossible to “save children” from homosexual recruitment. The best society could do, she

³⁰ Bryant, *Anita Bryant Story*, 34, 38, 62.

argued, was condemn homosexuality, making it so unappealing that children would never consider it an option. For Bryant, this included barring them from acquiring “special rights,” which homosexuals would have received with the passage of the Dade County ordinance.³¹

Bryant’s Save Our Children Campaign seemed to influence the Dade County referendum outcome. Although the vote was expected to be close,³² Bryant and her supporters achieved a landslide victory. On July 7, 1977, Dade County residents repealed the anti-discrimination ordinance by a measure of 69 to 31 percent. The outcome was attributed to a considerably higher than expected voter turnout. Roughly 45 percent of Dade County residents cast their vote – three times higher than the number expected. *The Miami Herald* reported that turnout was greater in precincts that opposed the ordinance, suggesting that most of the unexpected voters were Bryant supporters.³³

Bryant’s victory was a crushing defeat for homosexuals and sexual minorities throughout the United States. It helped trigger an aggressive anti-gay rights backlash, a backlash that has not entirely subsided thirty years later. The cultural anthropologist Gayle Rubin wrote that Bryant’s campaign also “inaugurated a new wave of violence, state persecution, and legal initiatives directed against minority sexual populations and the commercial sex industry.” Finally, Bryant drew a link more forcefully and more repeatedly than anyone previously as to how homosexuality and homosexuals endangered children. Because of Bryant’s efforts,

³¹ Bryant, *Anita Bryant Story*, 48, 52, 73.

³² Polls conducted about in early May indicated that the vote was expected to be nearly even. Adam Nagourney and Dudley Clendenin attributed the discrepancy between poll numbers and the final vote count to an aggressive and expensive media blitz from the Save Our Children Campaign in the final weeks prior to the referendum. For more on this see Clendenin and Nagourney, *Out for Good*, 301-03.

³³ Jack Greene, “Inside Look at the Gay Vote,” *The Miami Herald* (June 10, 1977); Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 245, 375.

child endangerment increasingly became linked to the gay rights debate, a debate that was then only in its infancy.³⁴

³⁴ Rubin, "Thinking Sex," 271.

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Although Bryant may have led the charge to “save our children from homosexuality,” major newspapers and magazines also played a crucial role in defining the relationship between homosexuality and child endangerment and, in so doing, negotiating sexual normativity. The most direct way they did this was through editorials. Conservative *New York Times* columnist and former Nixon speechwriter William Safire claimed that, “Many of us think that gays should be permitted to teach, provided they do not avow their homosexuality.” In other words, Safire found homosexuality tolerable provided that homosexuals remained closeted in the presence of children.³⁵

The *New York Times* reporter Gene I. Maeroff let politicians and psychiatrists frame debate on the relationship between homosexuality and child endangerment. U.S. Senator S. I. Hayakawa, a California Republican and former college president said, “One must not discriminate on grounds of race or sex in so far as these things are relevant,” in a statement regarding whether or not homosexuals should be allowed to teach in schools. “But certainly,” he stated, “I would be very hesitant about homosexuals in the teaching profession, particularly dealing with the young.” Dr. Reginald S. Lourie, a senior consultant to the Psychiatric Institute in Washington D.C., was quoted about his concern over the “detrimental

³⁵ William Safire, “Now Ease Up, Anita,” *The New York Times*, June 9, 1977, 21.

effects” exposure to homosexuality might have on adolescents.” Adolescents, he said, “are trying to establish an identity and some are confused about the value systems. They are vulnerable.... The sexual orientation of the teacher ... shouldn’t intrude into the school.... Advertised homosexuality is inappropriate as a teacher.”³⁶

A *Newsweek* cover story on gay rights released a few days before the Miami vote attempted to define the parameters of gay rights debate in relation to child endangerment by posing rhetorical questions. The piece asked, “Are homosexuals a threat to children and should they be restricted from teaching or other child-care jobs?” Although most experts find instances of recruitment rare and of minor importance, it added, “the issue of [gay] role models is more complicated. If a child becomes aware of the teacher’s homosexual orientation, even if it involves no advances on the child, will that attract the child to homosexuality?”³⁷

Aside from posing such rhetorical questions and telling readers what they and experts thought about the relationship between homosexuality and child endangerment, journalists also helped shape public discourse on the subject through alleged “fact-based” reporting on child sexual abuse. These news reports tended not to be explicitly about homosexuality, but they often indirectly identified child sexual abuse as a man-boy affair. These depictions encouraged readers to assume that child sex abuse and homosexuality were closely related to one another. This representation of the child sex abuser helped reinforce popular beliefs of

³⁶ Gene I. Maeroff, “Issue and Debate: Should Professed Homosexuals Be Permitted to Teach in Schools?” *New York Times*, June 24, 1977, 23.

³⁷ Matthews, “Battle Over Gay Rights,” 22.

the moral degeneracy of homosexuality, thereby indirectly privileging heterosexuality as virtuous and normal.

On May 15, 1977 *The Chicago Tribune* declared itself the unofficial leader in reporting about the horrors of smut peddling when it began a special four-day series on “child predators.” Other newspapers reported about child sex abuse, but the *Tribune* series offered a particularly lurid and detailed account of the alleged problem, covering issues including child rape, prostitution, pornography, molestation, sex rings, and pedophilia.

Tribune editors packaged its series as an exposé: revealing how “child pornography has become a nationwide multimillion-dollar racket that is luring thousands of juveniles into lives of prostitution.” Although the series did not explicitly target a specific social group, it presented child sexual abuse as a criminal act inflicted by male homosexuals. One article reported that “a nationwide homosexual ring with headquarters in Chicago has been trafficking young boys, sending them across the nation to serve clients willing to pay hundreds of dollars for their services.” Another piece explained one particular Chicago block as the prime spot for teen-age boy prostitution. “Police call it Clark and Perversity,” wrote the reporter George Bliss, “because of the homosexuality activity that goes on in the area.” The reporter Michael Sneed described the street lingo of child prostitution: “In the parlance of the street they are called ‘chickens,’ boys who sell their bodies for prostitution and pornography.” The men who coveted these boys were “chicken hawks.” *The Chicago Tribune* series also included several pieces about indicted child pornographers. These exposés highlighted the ease with which child pornographers recruited child models and the remorselessness of their actions. One piece described a convicted school teacher and father who invested most of his paycheck purchasing better photo equipment to film children.

Recruitment of children was not difficult, he said, “It’s the easiest thing in the world to get a kid.” The piece concluded with the teacher summarizing the devastating impact of his porno business career: “My wife is now divorcing me, my son is now deprived of a father, my father’s public career is ruined, and my assistant probably will be a homosexual.” Another one described a fifty-seven year old pornographer “who had cornered the market on the production of ‘kiddie porn’” whose only regret was that he got caught, suggesting that the child pornographer was shameless. The reporter made it clear that most of the pornography produced featured boys, not girls.³⁸

The *Tribune*’s focus on male homosexual “child predators” was not representative of the actual incidence of child sexual abuse. Although statistics on child sex abuse are questionable,³⁹ one 1994 study estimated that the rate of men molesting boys generally has ranged from ten to fifteen percent annually, whereas the occurrence of men molesting girls was usually about seventy-five to eighty percent.⁴⁰ Even if these statistics are speculative, child sexual abuse seems to implicate heterosexuals as much as it implicates homosexuals.

³⁸ Ray Moseley, “Chicago is the Center of National Child Pornography Ring,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1977, 1, 8; George Bliss, “Child Sex: Square Block in New Town Tells It All,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1977, 8; Michael Sneed, “Chicken Makes \$500 a Week, But at 17 He’s Getting Too Old,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1977, 8; Michael Sneed, “Father, Teacher: Tangled Life of Child Pornographer,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1977, 20; Michael Sneed, “His Only Regret: I Got Caught,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1977, 8. During the *Tribune* only one explicit reference to a man-girl affair is mentioned. See Ray Moseley, Ray Moseley, “Child Pornography: Sickness for Sale,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1977, 20.

³⁹ The legal scholar Amy Adler argued that there are no “true” statistics on child sexual abuse because the issue is so ideologically embattled and difficult to document. In fact, figures on child sexual abuse are so uncertain that a 1993 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services survey of studies on child sexual abuse reported that “rates for victimization for girls range from 6 to 62 percent” of the population, for boys “from 3 to 24 percent.” Amy Adler, “The Perverse Law of Child Pornography,” *The Columbia Law Review* 101 (March 2001): 209; Kathleen Coulborn Faller, Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, *Child Sexual Abuse: Intervention and Treatment Issues* 16 (1993).

⁴⁰ David Finkelhor, “Current Nature on the Scope and Nature of Child Sexual Abuse,” *The Future of Children*, 4:2 (Summer/Autumn, 1994): 31-53. Finkelhor reported that the at least 20% of American women and 5% to 10% of American men experienced some form of sexual abuse as children, a rate that is more or less consistent generation to generation. He stated that the percentage of women sexually abusing boys or girls is usually less than ten percent annually. Feminist literature on child sexual abuse tended to focus on “father rape” and

In each of the above cases and throughout the *Tribune* series, depictions of pedophilia as a man-boy affair were taken as a given. The reporter Ray Moseley quoted Dr. Nahman Greenberg, an associate professor of psychiatry from the University of Illinois School of Medicine as saying “the pedophile is a well-known type.” He added:

His kind of interest in children is probably extremely narcissistic. He seeks sexual gratification out of a projection of himself. He doesn’t look for a dirty scruffy kid. He is usually looking for a very fine elegant boy.... The pedophile believes he is adoring, indulging, gratifying the boy.... [but] he also hates this boy. He envies him, has contempt for him. It’s purely jealousy; the boy represents what he would have liked to have been.⁴¹

Unlike Maeroff’s piece, Moseley did not cite experts to initiate a debate. Rather, he portrayed Greenberg – with his credentials as an associate professor of psychiatry – as *the* authority on the psychological profile of pedophiles. Greenberg’s opinion was presented as fact.

That opinion defined pedophilia but, in so doing, it also defined homosexuality. According to Greenberg, the pedophile was not simply a psychologically disturbed individual; he was a disturbed homosexual. His expressed interest in boys – not girls – resulted from the pedophile’s inability to come to terms with his own sexual and gender identity. Although Greenberg’s comments pertained to pedophiles, and not all homosexuals, his remarks suggested that homosexuals were prone to sexually desiring children in a way that heterosexuals were not.

molestation of girls through incest. Although they generally agreed on the remarkable statistics of child sexual exploitation, feminists and male child safety advocates disagreed on the identity of the perpetrators: the former emphasized man-girl sexual predation in more intimate settings whereas the latter focused on man-boy sexual abuse. In a period when the foundations of child sexual abuse were being defined, child safety advocates seemed to want to take care of their respective genders. For more, see Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975); E. Weber, “Incest: Sexual Abuse Begins at Home,” *Ms.*, April 1977, 64-67.

⁴¹ Moseley, “Child Pornography,” 20.

Greenberg and Moseley described pedophiles as chronically unhappy because they never experienced true love. Similarly, Bryant and Gilder labeled homosexuality an “agonizing ... flight from identity and love” and “sexual responsibility.” They defined homosexual sex as sex without purpose other than arousal; it was nothing more than self-gratification. Both accounts described the individual in terms of psychological abnormality and specifically improper male socialization.

Greenberg and Moseley defined the pedophile as simultaneously insufficiently masculine (a “homosexual”) and hypermasculine (a “sexual psychopath”). This depiction closely resembled popular understandings of pedophilia during the 1930s. Both saw the pedophile as not only a sexual threat to children but also a symbol of misdirected masculinity, whereby sexual impulses, Greenberg stated, became “twisted into areas of perversion.”⁴²

Alongside the licentious pedophile, there was his victim – the child. “Psychiatrists and sociologists agree,” Moseley wrote, “that the social cost from the wholesale exploitation of one of America’s most precious resources – its children – may be staggering.” Moseley selected child sex abuse experts to explain the psychological damage child pornography placed on its models. One of them, Dr. Judianne Densen-Gerber, a leading child safety advocate, described how children used in pornography and prostitution were “spiritually and emotionally murdered.” Another of Moseley’s sources, Sergeant Lloyd Martin, went one step further. “Child pornography as a crime is worse than murder,” said the Los Angeles policeman who headed a special unit on child abuse. “A homicide, once committed, is over. But a crime against a child is never over. It has ruined a life.” Moseley reported that children did not have the recourse to fight the problem on their own. He quoted Robin M.

⁴² Greenberg is quoted in Moseley, “Child Pornography,” 20.

Lloyd, author of *For Money or Love*, a study considered “the authority” on juvenile male prostitution, to support this claim. “America’s children comprise one of America’s most disadvantaged minorities,” Lloyd stated. “They are too young to vote; too young to have consumer power; too young to have lobbyists speak for them.” The implication here – as it was throughout *The Chicago Tribune* series – was that adults needed to speak for children by being vigilant about child pornography and child sex abuse.⁴³

Tribune writers insisted that pedophilia, child sex rings, and child pornography were not isolated affairs. They used startling figures to suggest the enormity of the problem. In the lead article of the series, Moseley reported that there were over 260 pornographic magazine sold in America with “children engaged in almost every known sexual position” and had “authoritative estimates” of children involved in pornography “range upward from 100,000” at any given time. The child pornography industry was so immense that “it seem[ed] like spider webs strung all over the nation.” However, pornographers were difficult to locate: “operating out of private residences, [they] have used a maze of post office box office addresses, clandestine printing operations and elaborate shipping routes to make detection extremely difficult.” By Moseley’s account, child pornography took place virtually everywhere, and few parents realized it because the industry was so underground.⁴⁴ Bryant made a similar argument about homosexuals – they virtually were everywhere and indistinguishable from the rest of society, making them all the more difficult to contain.

Yet Moseley based his conclusions about the enormity of pedophilia and child pornography on statistics that were unsubstantiated at best, and, at worst, entirely arbitrary.

⁴³ Moseley, “Child Pornography,” 1, 20.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Philip Jenkins said that none of the figures had any known basis. In fact, many were later contradicted by child advocates. Only one week after *The Chicago Tribune* released its series on child predators, child advocate Judianne Densen-Gerber testified before Congress that the child pornography industry was a multi-billion dollar industry, correcting the *Tribune's* more muted assessment of it being a multi-million dollar industry. Even if Moseley's statistics had a definite source, child sexual abuse figures are inherently imprecise. The legal scholar Amy Adler noted that child abuse statistics might fluctuate due to changes in incidence of abuse, or they might be attributable to other factors, "such as an increase in awareness, better reporting, expanding definitions of what constitutes child sexual abuse, or as some skeptics contend, a rise in cultural hysteria."⁴⁵

There also was a problem of terminology. Throughout its coverage, the *Tribune* referred to homosexual pedophiles convicted of having sex with underage boys without specifying the children's ages. Were those boys sixteen or seventeen years old, or were they eleven or twelve? *Tribune* writers assumed that men convicted for having sex with boys was necessarily non-consensual, and, by extension, "child sexual abuse." The reporters focused squarely on the adult, emphasizing the sexual act his shame and moral depravity. Little was said about the child.

There also was a problem of representation. The pedophile for the *Tribune*, like the homosexual for Bryant, was a conspirer and an opportunist. Though he coveted boys to fulfill his own sexual desires, he was part of a broader national sex ring.⁴⁶ The image of the

⁴⁵ Jenkins, *Moral Panic*, 123; Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 115; Adler, "The Perverse Law," 209

⁴⁶ Ray Moseley described "association with other boy lovers" as a component central to "predators of boys." Compare this with Anita Bryant's description of "the militant homosexual community" who congregated in "sadistic sexual rituals and abominable practices." Moseley, "Child Pornography," 20; Bryant, *Anita Bryant Story*, 87.

national child sex ring suggested that pedophiles and child pornographers were highly organized and shrewd in their abuse of children. The fact they were so ominous, yet seldom seen in public, underscored the magnitude of their threat. The national child sex ring at once was everywhere but seemingly nowhere.

Despite these apparent flaws, letters to the editor suggested that readers accepted the *Tribune's* findings. Most applauded the series for performing an important public service. "It is good to see and hear the uproar over the use of children in the production of pornography," wrote Joseph T. Gill. Don Crestle thought that the *Tribune* "should be commended" for its coverage, but should have "illuminate[d] one last facet: the customers of child porn." "Enough about the pornographers and their victims," he stated. "What of the growing percentage of the public that patronizes child pornography?... What should be done about them?" Elaine Selaris said that she "got physically sick" when reading the articles. "Any nation that lets her children be destroyed ... will severely be punished," she wrote. "Let's unite to fight this terrible evil."⁴⁷

On the final day of the *Tribune* series, Moseley discussed the need for tougher laws regulating child pornography. He wrote that although child pornography is one of America's most despised professions, it "has flourished ... because the law, or at any rate the use of the law, has not been up to the challenge.... [M]any legislators are as full of hazards to getting the problem solved as taking candy from a child is to a child." Those so-called "hazards" were the guarantee of free expression under the First Amendment. For Moseley and the legal experts he cited, First Amendment rights did not legitimate the selling, distribution, or mere

⁴⁷ Joseph T. Gill, "Letters to the Editor," *The Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1977; Don Crestle, "Letters to the Editor," *The Chicago Tribune*, June 1, 1977; Elaine Selaris, "Letters to the Editor," *The Chicago Tribune*, May 21, 1977.

possession of child pornography in any regard. Rather, Moseley said, “the central question is which type of legislation would be most effective and also withstand constitutional tests in courts.” Moseley concluded his piece quoting Elmer Gertz, “a nationally known legal authority, who had made a career of defending unpopular causes.” Gertz urged more cooperation among the country’s prosecutors as a way to overcome the First Amendment hazard, declaring that “if there were a concerted effort by state’s attorney’s everywhere, working together, there would be no problem in putting these pornographers out of business.”⁴⁸

Gertz got his wish. The very afternoon *The Chicago Tribune* began its series on “child predators,” Representative Peter Rodino Jr. (D-NJ), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, ordered hearings on sexual exploitation of children. Rodino claimed that he reported his decision shortly after reading *Tribune’s* coverage of that problem.⁴⁹

The House hearings, just like *The Chicago Tribune* series, featured a list of some of the leading child protection advocates, many of whom were featured in the *Tribune* series. It also included its own set of unsubstantiated data and floating statistics. Nevertheless, said Philip Jenkins, moral conservatives, liberals, and feminists shared a common political position. They all feared that sexually abused children were susceptible to falling into prostitution, pornography, narcotics, or other criminal activity. When the sessions concluded in September 1977, the House passed the Kildee-Murphy Bill, a bill prohibiting the manufacture, distribution, and possession of child pornography. In each case, a conviction meant a penalty of up to \$50,000, up to twenty years in prison, or both. The bill also

⁴⁸ Ray Moseley, “Child Pornographers Thrive on Legal Confusion,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 1977, 1, 16.

⁴⁹ Michael Sneed and George Bliss, “U.S. Orders Hearings on Child Pornography,” *The Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1977, 1.

stretched the legal meaning of “obscene” to include any depiction of minors who were nude or engaged in sexual contact. This meant that photographs of naked children in anthropology textbooks and many of the ethnographic movies shown in colleges and high schools could be deemed illegal. Further, the bill made instructors liable to an additional felony charge for showing such images to each student under the age of eighteen. Despite objections from a representative of the American Civil Liberties Union who disagreed with the legislation’s sweeping language, the Kildee-Murphy Bill passed the House by a vote of 401 to 0.⁵⁰

Similar to *The Chicago Tribune* series, most of the testimonies delivered during the congressional hearings on the Kildee-Murphy Bill defined child sex abuse as a man-boy affair.⁵¹ Robert Leonard, president-elect of the National District Attorney’s Association, discussed several cases where groups of men were arrested for luring boys into prostitution to serve wealthy homosexuals. Lloyd Martin testified about the dangers of “chicken hawks,” adult men who sexually preyed upon young boys. Chicken hawks lurked, he said, “in any location where juveniles congregate ... parks, amusement centers, arcades, the beach, et. cetera.” Kenneth Wooden, head of the National Coalition of Children’s Justice, noted that

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*; Jenkins, *Moral Panic*, 123-24; Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” 272. The Senate never voted on the Kildee-Murphy Bill over concern that it might be stricken down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional. In 1978 Congress passed the Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act, its first child pornography legislation. This legislation excluded mention of possessing child pornography because the act’s framers assumed they were constrained by obscenity law standards. According to the legal scholar Amy Adler, the act “outlawed the use of children in the production of obscene materials. It also enhanced the penalties for transmission or receipt of obscene materials that contained depictions of children. Congress, however, rejected any measures that would have exceeded the scope of existing obscenity laws.” The 1982 Supreme Court case *New York v. Ferber* removed that barrier.” Adler, “The Perverse Law,” 237; *New York v. Ferber*, 458 U.S. 747, 758 (1982).

⁵¹ Philip Jenkins has noted briefly that members of Congress and many of those testifying during the Congressional Hearings on Child Sexual Exploitation routinely referred to child sexual abuse as a male homosexual problem. Also see Jenkins, *Moral Panic*, 125.

child sexual exploitation affected girls, but “most agree that child sex and pornography is basically a boy-man phenomenon.”⁵²

By linking pedophilia and child pornography with homosexuality, the congressional hearings and the *Tribune* series implicitly placed homosexuals on the sexual fringe alongside pedophiles. These May 1977 developments benefited Bryant’s crusade. It enabled her to confidently tell Dade County residents that the problem of homosexual recruitment was much worse than originally imagined. She had her “proof.” She had the *Tribune* series, which, under the veil of objectivity and journalistic integrity, told stories about the horrors of child sexual exploitation while presenting them as facts. They were difficult to refute. For gay activists and the gay press, mounting a defense against explicit and implicit allegations of homosexuals as pedophiles proved both complicated and costly to broader efforts to achieve gay liberation, whatever that may have entailed.

⁵² Testimonies from Robert Leonard, Lloyd Martin, and Kenneth Wooden in House Committee on the Judiciary, *Sexual Exploitation of Children: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Crime of the Committee on the Judiciary* (Washington: GPO, 1977), 75, 60, 205. Many of the testimonies discussed child sexual exploitation in gender neutral terms. Dr. Judianne Densen Gerber (pp. 39-52) was the only witness specifically to discuss sexual exploitation of girls during congressional testimonies. With the exception of sociologist Frank Osanka (pp. 4-23), who discussed the issue in passing, none of the male witnesses explained how girls were affected by sexual abuse.

CHAPTER IV

WE'RE HERE BUT NOT TOO QUEER

The events of early 1977 put the question of how to achieve “gay liberation” in sharp relief. The modern roots of that notion typically are traced back to the Stonewall Riots of June 1969.⁵³ Although not the first gay riot, Stonewall managed to mobilize lesbian and gay activists to seek radical solutions rather than accommodation.⁵⁴ Within months after Stonewall, two national gay liberation groups formed: the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) shortly followed by Gay Activist Alliance (GAA). Despite the different tactics they used,⁵⁵ the GLF and GAA both emphasized that gay liberation could be achieved only by celebrating

⁵³ Gay activism did not begin suddenly during Stonewall. See John D’Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1983) for a history of gay activism before Stonewall. According to D’Emilio, the homophile movement (as it was referred) of the 1950s and 1960s adopted an accommodationist approach in response to a national political culture which commonly identified homosexuals as “perverts, psychopaths, deviants, and the like.”

⁵⁴ Elizabeth A. Armstrong and Suzanna M. Crago, “Movements and Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth,” *American Sociological Review* 71 (October 2006): 724-51 demonstrated that several gay riots preceded Stonewall, but Stonewall is remembered and commemorated, whereas the others are not. They identified two reasons for this: “activists considered the event commemorable and had the mnemonic capacity to create a commemorative vehicle.”

⁵⁵ The GLF and GAA differed from one another in key respects. The GLF focused on wide-system oppression and was fiercely democratic and consensus based. It embraced its label as a gay militant group. The GAA, by contrast, was reformist. While it too focused on the social and institutional construction of gay oppression, it placed heavy emphasis on legal reform and involvement in electoral politics. The GAA aimed to work within the system, whereas the GLF sought to create a new one. Chai R. Feldblum, “The Federal Gay Rights Bill: From Bella to ENDA,” in John D’Emilio, William B. Turner, Urvashi Vaid, eds., *Creating Change: Sexuality, Public Policy, and Civil Rights* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 150-51; Craig A. Rimmerman, *From Identity to Politics: The Lesbian and Gay Movements in the United States* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 18-44.

the many qualities of homosexuality. For both the GLF and GAA, the message was clear and unremitting: “gay is good.”⁵⁶

“Gay is good” clearly was a product of its time. Its wording and logic mimicked the “black is beautiful” slogan of black nationalist organizations, emphasizing militancy and pride over accommodation. “Gay is good” also found much of its inspiration from radical feminist and antiwar organizations. More significantly, little work was available for gay activists in the realm of organized politics at the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s. Although the GAA sometimes lobbied local and state governments for greater legal protection, these efforts usually consisted of calls for removal of anti-gay sodomy laws or bans on serving alcohol to gays. Apart from some major cities and liberal college towns, discussion of gay civil rights remained dormant throughout the early 1970s.⁵⁷

The mid-1970s witnessed a different political climate. The closing of the Vietnam War, the Watergate scandal, stagflation, and a newfound sense of cultural malaise overshadowed radical politics. Meanwhile, beginning with the American Psychiatric Association’s decision to remove homosexuality from its list of incurable diseases in 1973, lesbians and gay Americans saw marked improvement in their social standings. “[A]ctivists no longer had to force the subject of gay rights into the national political dialogue, now mainstream news reporters routinely asked politicians to comment on the issues,” said the historian David Eisenbach. “The political debate over gay rights suddenly became less theatrical, less impassioned.” Beginning in the end of 1973, new leading gay lobbying groups, such as the National Gay Task Force (NGTF) and Lambda Defense Fund formed, stressed incremental

⁵⁶ Frank E. Kameny, founder of the National American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO), coined “gay is good” in 1966.

⁵⁷ Feldbrum, “Federal Gay Rights Bill,” 150-51; Craig A. Rimmerman, *From Identity to Politics*, 24.

change rather than challenging heterosexuality as the standard of normal. The historian and NGLF charter board member Martin Duberman in 1974 summarized the object of his new organization as an effort to operate in “the liberal reform mode [of] ‘let us in,’ rather than ‘let us show you new possibilities.’”⁵⁸

Leading gay activist groups and gay publications followed this assimilationist approach in reacting to Bryant’s SOCC. They assumed that in order to prevent the ordinance’s repeal, they needed to accomplish two things. First, they needed to convince Dade County voters that lesbians and gay men needed the anti-discrimination ordinance to protect them from undue discrimination.⁵⁹ Second, they had to prove Bryant and her supporters wrong; that homosexuals did not threaten children. This was not an easy task. According to a Gallup Poll conducted a month after the referendum, fifty-six percent of the respondents believed that gay people should have equal job rights. However, when children became involved, attitudes toward homosexuality hardened. In the same Gallup Poll, respondents claimed by well over a two to one margin (sixty-five percent disapproved of their employment, while only twenty-seven percent approved) that gays should not be hired to work as elementary

⁵⁸ Schulman, *Seventies*; Eisenbach, *Gay Power*, 266, Martin Duberman is quoted on p. 247.

⁵⁹ Since the release of Louis Wirth’s 1945 essay, “The Problem of Minority Groups,” Americans typically have defined whether a particular group was entitled to legal protection by its perceived status as “victims.” According to the historian Philip Gleason, this “minority as victim” formulation provided the scaffolding for the black civil rights movement and what the sociologist John Skrentny referred to “the minority rights revolution” of 1965-1975, when members of Congress, presidential staffers, and federal courts passed laws, issued executive orders, and rendered court decisions that established nondiscrimination rights for groups including Asian-Americans, Latinos, Indian-Americans, the disabled, and (to a lesser extent) women. However by the early 1970s, this remarkable flourishing of minority rights created a new category of “unrecognized minorities,” a group that included gays, youth, the emotionally disturbed, the poor drug users, alcoholics, convicts, ex-cons, and others on the margins of society. As “unrecognized minorities,” lesbians and gay men typically were became lumped with minority groups deemed too deviant for legal protection. Louis Wirth, “The Problem of Minority Groups,” in Ralph Linton ed., *The Science of Man in the World Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 37-72; Philip Gleason, “Minorities (Almost) All: The Minority Concept in American Social Thought,” *American Quarterly* 43:3 (September 1991): 392-424; John D. Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2002).

teachers. By contrast, sixty-eight percent of the same people surveyed felt that gays ought to be allowed to work as salespeople. Only twenty-two percent did not. Americans generally seemed to be warming up to the idea of equal rights for homosexuals, but acceptance of homosexuality unraveled when the issue of child endangerment entered the debate.⁶⁰ Although many regarded homosexuals an oppressed minority,⁶¹ they did not necessarily find the group's oppression unwarranted. Some, such as those who voted to repeal the Dade County ordinance, regarded laws recognizing homosexuals as victims of harassment an implicit endorsement of homosexuality.

With child endangerment at issue, gay leaders decidedly adopted an assimilationist strategy. The historian John D'Emilio described this emphasis on "gay is normal" as opposed to "gay is good" as politically necessary. He argued that the nature of gay politics in 1977 was fundamentally different from what it was just five years earlier. Most Americans had grown impatient of radical protests, making groups such as the GLF politically outmoded. More significantly, gay politics itself had changed. Although the systemic critiques of the early 1970s had proven effective in challenging Americans to rethink their attitudes on homosexuality, gay activist groups in the mid and late 1970s took the next step of political lobbying. Political lobbying, D'Emilio argued, required gay leaders to compromise some of their political ideals in order to achieve legal victories. Compromise

⁶⁰ Connie de Boer, "The Polls: Attitudes toward Homosexuality," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 42 (1978): 272; Grace Lichtenstein, "Poll Finds Split on Legalizing Homosexual Acts," *The New York Times*, June 9, 1977, 17. The July 1977 Gallup Polls on American attitudes toward homosexuality were the first of its kind.

⁶¹ A 1977 national Harris Poll found homosexuals the most oppressed social group. Fifty-five percent of those polled felt that "homosexuals are more discriminated against than most people." Twenty-four percent felt that "homosexuals are no more discriminated against than most people" and only three percent felt that "homosexuals are less discriminated against than most people." Blacks placed second in the survey. Forty-one percent of those polled felt that "blacks are more discriminated against than most people." Polls are reprinted in de Boer, "The Polls," 273.

did not imply sexual shame. The lesbian and gay movement during the mid to late 1970s “had absorbed the lessons of pride and self-acceptance of the early 1970s,” D’Emilio wrote, “[and] many remained as bold and brazen as their GLF predecessors had been. They expected and demanded acceptance for who they were, without apology.”⁶²

The queer theorist Michael Warner disagreed. Warner saw this accommodationist approach as an admission of gay sexual shame. This movement, he argued, “has chosen to become a politics of sexual identity, not sex.” By emphasizing gay as normal and deliberately removing homosexuality from gay rights politics, leading gay activists engaged in what social theorist Erving Goffman called “in-group purification”: “the efforts of stigmatized persons not only to ‘normify’ their own conduct but also to clean up the conduct of others in the group.” Warner insisted that the accommodationist approach was flawed because it ostracized the sexual radicals who pushed the prescribed boundaries of sexual normativity which made gay liberation feasible. Homosexual normativity constantly needed to be performed and that performance necessarily excluded anyone whose presence within that group fell outside its established norms. Warner advocated a rejection of “normal” on both ethical and political grounds.⁶³

The Los Angeles-based *Advocate* magazine championed a “gay is normal” stance during the period of the Bryant-led SOCC and congressional hearings on child sexual exploitation. This position differed considerably from its radical origins in 1967. Although the quality of its articles initially was uneven, its editorial style was brash and pro-sex, with nude or nearly-

⁶² John D’Emilio, “After Stonewall,” in John D’Emilio, *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 247.

⁶³ Michael Warner, *The Trouble With Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (New York: Free Press, 1999); quotations from pp. 40, 32. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (New York: Touchstone, 1986 [1963]), 108.

nude men on many early covers. Articles explaining how to avoid police entrapment and detailed coverage on gay liberation activist groups ran side by side with lifestyle pieces about movie stars and male fashion. In 1974 businessmen and multi-millionaire David Goodstein purchased *The Advocate* and toned down the magazine's radical politics. Although the magazine continued to discuss political issues, Goodstein highlighted what he saw as mainstream concerns within the gay community.⁶⁴

Throughout much of 1977 Goodstein made coverage on the ordinance battle *The Advocate's* focus. Not coincidentally, Goodstein was the chief financial contributor in organizing the Dade County Coalition for Human Rights, the leading political action group designed to uphold the ordinance.⁶⁵ By one Miami gay resident's account, he was "the godfather of the whole operation." Goodstein emphasized professionalism, courting the national media, and respecting societal norms as keys to victory in Miami. He and *Advocate* writers did not simply report about the developments in Dade County, they used their stories as a call to arms in support of the ordinance. Goodstein thought that upholding the ordinance was critical to broader efforts to secure all homosexuals with basic legal protection.⁶⁶

On the surface, Goodstein and the rest of his staff adopted what appeared to be an inclusive political strategy. Throughout its coverage, *The Advocate* defined the Dade County battle as a human rights struggle over hate. The Miami story should not only concern lesbians and gay men, wrote the reporter Joe Baker, "[it] should concern *all* human rights

⁶⁴ Rodger Streitmatter, *Unspeakable: The Rise of the Gay and Lesbian Press in America* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995).

⁶⁵ Goodstein became involved in the campaign in March 1977. He coined the name of the operation. Originally, it was the Dade County Coalition for the Humanistic Rights of Gays.

⁶⁶ Sears, *Rebels, Rubyfruit, and Rhinestones*, 233; Quotations is from Howard Wallace in interview by James Sears, June 16, 1997.

supporters.” An advertisement released in an edition shortly after the Dade County vote emphasized that “human rights must include all people, all minorities ... [and] must include Us, too.” In fostering its “human rights” theme, *Advocate* writers celebrated the virtues of diversity within the gay community. “Diversity is the life-blood of democracy,” one noted in an April 20, 1977 editorial, “One Thousand Flowers.” “Let those who are radical create radical protests. Let those who are less radical finance lobbies and elections.... There is room for all, and if all are not allowed to blossom, there will be room for none.” The magazine represented Bryant and her supporters as chief threats not just to gay rights, but human rights as well. They frequently drew analogies depicting her as a symbol of hate, not just homophobia. “Even at his worst,” said Goodstein in an editorial, “Joe McCarthy did not sink to the lows of our enemies in Florida, and not since the Nazi’s campaign against Jews in Germany during the early 1930s has a group been vilified as much as we have.”⁶⁷ By comparing the situation homosexuals found in 1977 Miami with that of Jews in 1930s Germany Goodstein tried to deflect the SOCC’s claim that homosexuals did not need legal protection. Indeed, she argued, because homosexuals were *so* oppressed, their unpopular status should not have precluded them from receiving what he saw as universal human rights.

The inclusive rhetoric of “human rights” had advantages over other rights concepts. The political scientist Joel Feinberg defined human rights as universal moral rights, “which belong equally and unconditionally to all human beings, simply in virtue of their being human.” “Human rights,” unlike “minority rights,” did not require homosexuals to prove that they were oppressed or legitimate. The term, unlike “civil rights,” did not compel them

⁶⁷ Joe Baker, “The Lessons of Miami,” *The Advocate*, April 20, 1977, 6; “Save Our Human Rights,” advertisement, *The Advocate*, July 27, 1977, 6; David B. Goodstein, “Opening Space,” *The Advocate*, June 1, 1977, 5.

to show that they were “civil members” members of society, capable of personal independence and self-sufficiency. “Human rights” also had a clear advantage over “gay rights,” a term that implied that homosexuals should be entitled to certain legal privileges because they were gay. “Human rights,” like “natural rights,” were inalienable and pre-political. However, said the political scientist Richard A. Primus, “natural rights theorists often excluded non-whites, women, and other groups of people from the population of rights bearers.” “Human rights” have no such restrictions. “Human rights theorists,” Primus added, “insist that all people bear the same rights.” *The Advocate*’s decision to define the Dade County campaign as a “human rights” struggle seemed reasonable especially since the magazine represented a stigmatized social group.⁶⁸

Yet, beneath the inclusive veneer of “human rights” rhetoric laid a conflicting message. Shortly after the House hearings on child sexual exploitation and the referendum, *The Advocate* went on a mission to exculpate itself and gay men from their association with child sexual abuse. “Even liberal minded leaders ... believe Bryant’s myth” about homosexuals as inappropriate role models and child molestation strictly as a man-boy affair, Goodstein wrote shortly after the referendum vote. “We must develop effective arguments to communicate the truth.”⁶⁹

Those “effective arguments” never developed. Instead, *The Advocate* became defensive. In a June 29, 1977 edition, Goodstein issued a statement indicating that his magazine would like to “articulate its policy” and “make absolutely certain that no one can possibly use these

⁶⁸ Joel Feinberg, *Rights, Justice, and the Bonds of Liberty* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 213, 225; Gleason, “Minorities (Almost) All”; Skrentny, *The Minority Rights Revolution*; Richard A. Primus, *The American Language of Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 155-60, 191-97, quoted from p. 192. Also see *n58* for an explanation of “minority rights.”

⁶⁹ David B. Goodstein, “Opening Space,” *The Advocate*, July 13, 1977, 5.

pages to promote pornography involving children.” The statement seemed to come in response to the House Judiciary Committee identifying *The Advocate* as a major agent within the national child sex ring network during its hearings on child sexual exploitation.⁷⁰ Goodstein never mentioned the House hearings in his statement. Instead, he targeted “the national media” for staging a “moral war’ against child pornography and child pornographers.” “The yellowest media reports and quasi-documentaries,” he wrote, “focus – as would be expected – on alleged sexploitation within our [gay] community, even though *most* of this trash involves heterosexual conduct with children.” This statement is revealing in several respects. On one hand, Goodstein distanced “the gay community” from heterosexuals, who, he said, have made “gay men ... a convenient scapegoat to hide the[ir] sins.” On the other hand, he – like Bryant and especially *The Chicago Tribune* – clearly disassociated himself and “the gay community” from child pornographers by referring to the latter’s products as “trash.” By Goodstein’s account, homosexuals were the only group left with ethics – they (supposedly) do not scapegoat their sins on those with less power and they certainly did not sexually exploit children. For negative reasons, gay as good shifted from acceptable to ethical and moral.⁷¹

Goodstein particularly underscored his disapproval of people who “sexually exploited children.” Again, speaking on behalf of homosexuals at large, he wrote:

We do not believe that gay people approve of the sexual exploitation of children. In fact, we have more reasons to disapprove of it than any other community. Our survival depends on our communicating the reality that our interest is in *consensual sexuality* among those old enough to know what they are doing.⁷²

⁷⁰ See “Flowchart of National Connections, etc.,” in *Hearings: Sexual Exploitation of Children*, 80.

⁷¹ David B. Goodstein, “Opening Space,” *The Advocate*, July 29, 1977, 5.

⁷² *Ibid.*

For Goodstein, “survival” of the gay community required strict image control. It meant drawing a line between “normal” adult homosexuals – meaning those who had sex with other adults – and “abnormal” ones, who sought sex with children.

Significantly, Goodstein never defined “children.” Would a sixteen year old boy or girl be considered a “child?” Was it acceptable for an adult to have sex with someone from that age? Goodstein did not provide any answers. However, he did stress that adolescents should be permitted to have sex. “We ... know that adolescents are sexual beings,” he wrote. “What we oppose is their exploitation or abuse, not their sexuality. There is an enormous difference between the experimentation, romance, and love between teenagers and the abuse of young people by men old enough to know better.”⁷³

Goodstein’s language was ambiguous; perhaps for good reason. He wanted to express that his magazine did not participate in the alleged national child sex ring network. At the same time, he probably did not want to offend the political tastes of his readers and political and financial supporters. The age of consent issue was a divisive issue in gay politics. Since Stonewall, abolition of age of consent laws was a major plank for leading gay rights organizations. In 1969, both the GLF and GAA officially declared their opposition to these laws. In 1972 Chicago and New York chapters of the GAA jointly hosted a conference that brought together activists from eighty-five different gay rights organizations and eighteen states. Although the issue received less attention during the mid 1970s, it did not disappear. In 1976 the GAA hosted a forum on the topic reiterating its opposition to age of consent


⁷³ *Ibid.*

laws.⁷⁴ Goodstein seemed to fear losing the support of powerful gay rights organizations, which saw a man having sex with a sixteen year old boy permissible, provided that it was consensual. Goodstein conceivably did not want to make enemies with the rest of the gay community. He found no need explicitly to define the age requirements of an acceptable gay sexual arrangement.

Goodstein, thus, walked a fine line between accommodation and resistance. This middle ground was especially evident in the magazine's advertisements. For instance, one *Advocate* advertisement for ZZZYX & Co. (shown below) featured pictures of a (supposedly) young adult man who very easily could have passed as fifteen or sixteen years old. "Z&CO.," the advertisement read, "always the best looking young male adults in sunny Southern California!" One line above and again in big, bold typeface between the pictures was the statement, "All models depicted are 18 yrs & older."⁷⁵ Whether the models were at least eighteen years old is unclear. That is beside the point. More significantly, *The Advocate* and its advertisers felt compelled to reassure skeptics that they were following the rules, even though some of the advertisements continued to cater to men who found young men (or boys) sexually appealing.

⁷⁴ Elizabeth A. Armstrong, *Forging Gay Identities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 100.

⁷⁵ "ZZZYX & Co.," advertisement, *The Advocate*, July 13, 1977, 31.



ALL MODELS DEPICTED ARE 18 YRS. & OVER

The BEST in Male Action Cinematography


ZZZYX & CO. OFFERS 3 NEW J/O FILMS — SPECIAL PRICE!
 REG. 8 MM — 150 FT. — FULL COLOR — \$15 EACH —
 ALL MODELS DEPICTED ARE 18 YRS. & OVER.
 Z&CO. ALWAYS FEATURES THE BEST-LOOKING, YOUNG MALE ADULTS IN
 SUNNY SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA!

J/O FILM #1 "HOLT" • Blond Suffer, Tan, G., 150 Lbs., Handsome, Butch,
 Hard Body, & Hung -- Uses Motorcycle.

J/O FILM #2 "PAUL" • Brown Hair, Grn. Eyes, Smooth Slender Build, 5'10",
 & Hung -- Sex Appeal in Stormy Atmosphere.

J/O FILM #3 "LONNIE" • Very Blond Scandinavian, Super Smooth Skin,
 Blue Eyes, Hung -- Uses Sex Tools (Dildos, etc.)

ZZZYX, P.O. BOX 2330, DEPT. ZA-2, HOLLYWOOD, CALIFORNIA 90028

MAIL TO →  ← MAIL TO

FILM ORDERS LIST FILMS HERE	#1 — \$15	\$	WITH ANY ORDER YOU WILL RECEIVE FUTURE BROCHURES IF YOU DO NOT ORDER AT THIS TIME — SEND \$3 AND WE WILL SEND CURRENT AND FUTURE CATALOGS USE THIS ORDER BLANK.
	#2 — \$15	\$	
	#3 — \$15	\$	
	6% Calif. Sales Tax	\$	
	Total Postage	\$ 1.50	
	Grand Total Enclosed	\$	

CHECK ☐ CASH ☐ M.O. ☐

NAME _____
 ADDRESS _____
 CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____
 SIGN HERE _____

* PLEASE BE SURE YOU FILL OUT REST OF ORDER BLANK AND SIGN YOUR NAME BELOW — THANKS

MY SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT I AM OVER 21 YRS. OF AGE

711 N. WILSON BLVD. L.A. 90028

FIGURE 2: "ZZZYX & Co.," advertisement
The Advocate, July 13, 1977, 31.

Indirectly, *The Advocate* disassociated itself and its readers from men who engaged in any sort of sexual relations with boys. Although the magazine espoused the virtues of inclusion and diversity, the magazine sought to maintain certain boundaries. In the wake of Bryant's SOCC, *The Chicago Tribune* series, and the congressional hearings on child sexual

exploitation, *The Advocate's* notion of “the gay community” was a gated one. In a roundabout way, man-boy lovers were asked to stay away.

Yet, they did not. In December 1977 police raided a house in the Boston suburb of Revere, arresting twenty-four men on over one-hundred felony charges of statutory rape of boys aged eight to fifteen. Local and national media reported on the lurid details of the “sex ring.” “According to initial reports,” Philip Jenkins wrote, “hundreds of boys were ‘drugged and raped’ by a sex ring of perhaps dozens of men forced to make pornographic films.” These accounts were quite inaccurate. “In fact,” Jenkins noted, “the cases involved [were] not a ‘ring,’ with all its implications of hierarchy, centralized control, and division of labor.” Most of the individuals involved only had tenuous connections with one another and there was no concrete evidence that the men coerced the boys into performing sex. However, one fact proved true – men were having sex with underage males.⁷⁶

In the weeks following the Revere child sex scandal, numerous men avowed their participation in the incident and, more generally, professed their penchant for boys. One of those men was Tom Reeves, a teacher of political science in Boston. In a February/March 1978 edition of the Boston magazine, *Fag Rag*, Reeves wrote an essay typically regarded as the man-boy love manifesto.⁷⁷ The piece declared Reeves’s love for boys and discussed his conception of “man-boy love” in American society. His tone throughout the piece was simultaneously brazen and defensive. On one hand, he appeared proud of his sexual relationships with boys, detailing the ways that it enriched his and his partners’ lives. On the other hand, Reeves repeatedly insisted that his love for boys, though unpopular, was ethical

⁷⁶ Jenkins, *Decade of Nightmares*, 123.

⁷⁷ Daniel Tsang, “Men and Boys: The Boston Conference,” in Daniel Tsang ed., *Age of Taboo: Gay Male Sexuality, Power and Consent* (Boston: Alyson Publication, 1981), 38-43.

and normal. He maintained that although molestation, abuse, runaways, and hustling sometimes occurred, “more often [man-boy love] was quiet, enduring, reciprocal and certainly voluntary.” Reeves averred that all of his sexual relationships – some of which transpired with boys as young as twelve – were consensual. He claimed that his and other men’s sexual relations with boys were just as prone to abuse as any other sexual relationship. In fact, he wrote, “seduction of men *by* boys is at least as frequent as seduction *of* boys by men.” Reeves acknowledged the man’s physical dominance over the boy, but he discounted its significance in providing men physical dominance over boys. Reeves defined his sexual relationships with boys as entirely just since all of them had reached puberty. By his account, puberty was the benchmark for when boys became mature enough to decide what was in their best interests sexually and had acquired the basic knowledge to differentiate right from wrong and avoid dangerous sexual encounters.⁷⁸

Whether it was wishful thinking or a manifestation of his true beliefs, Reeves maintained that society would come to tolerate man-boy love as it came to tolerate homosexuality. The law “froths and foams” against my sexual activities, he claimed, “as it once did against all gay sex.” Reeves also claimed that incidence of man-boy sex was far more common than many wanted to admit. “The situation has been so misrepresented,” he wrote, “it is necessary to repeat the obvious: gay men fuck and suck teenage boys regularly. It happens in every city or rural rest stop.” Reeves insisted that there were many others out there like him. Though part of the sexual fringe, he carefully described his sexual practices as normal and, in so doing, advanced a claim for social acceptance.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Tom Reeves, “Loving Boys,” reprinted in Tsang, *Age of Taboo*, 25-37, quoted from 25, 28.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 28, 27. Reeves went on to form the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). The organization was founded after Reeves convened a meeting called “Man/Boy Love and the Age of Consent” on

Two and a half years after *Fag Rag* released Reeves's essay, *The Advocate* published a two-part series written by Pat Califia, a self-described "feminist, pornographer, and sadomasochist storyteller,"⁸⁰ on the age of consent issue and its damaging effects upon the gay movement. "Age of consent laws don't make sense," Califia wrote, "even if you believe that the desire and ability to have sex don't develop until puberty. They are completely arbitrary and do not take into account the varying degrees of physical and emotionally maturity possessed by young people." Califia expressed sympathy for man-boy lovers, a group that she felt had become undue targets of harassment. They are, she stated bluntly, "the new Communists, the new niggers, the new witches." In just three years, *The Advocate* went from publishing a piece labeling child pornography as "trash" and condemning men who had sexual encounters with "young people" as "abuse" to including a series where the author defined "man-boy lovers" as victims of hate. Additionally, the magazine had removed the statement, "all models depicted are 18 yrs & older" from its gay pornography advertisements where the models' appeared as if they could pass as minors. This increased tolerance towards "man-boy love" occurred while David Goodstein remained *The Advocate's*

December 2, 1978. At its conclusion, thirty-men and two boys established NAMBLA. The basic goals of NAMBLA included spreading awareness of its core values, inaugurating new members, and shaping public policy. NAMBLA's overriding political objective was to abolish age of consent laws. In 1979 it aimed to convince organizers of the first gay march on Washington to remove age of consent laws as one of the march's list of political demands. NAMBLA succeeded in getting the issue drafted into the platform, but it soon was removed as lesbian and gay groups petitioned march organizers insisting that they would decline their invitation to participate in the march if the age of consent demand was not removed. In the aftermath of the SOCC and congressional hearings on child sexual exploitation, few gay organizations wanted to be linked to advocating sex with minors. The fact that an organization espousing the virtues of man-boy sex headed the cause, made gay groups even more adamant in their disapproval of the demand. NAMBLA's membership and political clout declined significantly following the organization's failure to get the age of consent issue amended to the march of Washington's list of demands. By the mid 1980s, NAMBLA was isolated in its list of political demands and has since become virtually marginalized politically. Pat Califia, "A Thorny Issue Splits a Movement," *The Advocate*, October 30, 1977, 17-23; Matthew D. Johnson, <http://www.glbtc.com/social-sciences/nambla.html>.

⁸⁰ www.patcalifia.com.

owner and editor-in-chief. Much had changed, even in the absence of structural changes in the production of the magazine.⁸¹

The reason it changed was because it was 1980, not 1977. There was no Anita Bryant and, more directly no congressional hearings investigating the magazine's alleged involvement in a national sex ring. *The Advocate* could assert an inclusive vision that embraced the rhetoric of "human rights" without qualification. For the moment, sexual boundaries did not have to be defined because they served no explicit objective. Gay, once again, was "good." For now, *The Advocate* granted entry into the gay community to anyone who had homosexual sex. But "normal" was hardly a dead letter. Claims to sexual normativity usually surfaced when social stress was at its greatest and social groups felt threatened. Such claims were usually powerful and sometimes effective tools to claim social legitimacy and political entitlement.

⁸¹ Califia, "The Great Kiddy Porn Scare," 19-23, 45, quoted from 19; Califia, "A Thorny Issue," 17-23; Streitmatter, *Unspeakable*, 211-24.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

But normativity has costs. In an influential 1984 essay, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality,” Gayle Rubin argued that claims to sex that is “good,” “normal,” and “natural” are defined in relation to their negation – sex that is “bad,” abnormal,” and “unnatural.” In modern western societies “good” sex commonly refers to heterosexual, marital, monogamous, reproductive, or non-commercial sex. “Good” sex tends to be accepted without legal or moral stipulations. Conversely, “bad” sex may be homosexual, unmarried, promiscuous, non-procreative, or commercial. These sexual acts usually are subject to legal or moral regulation. Distinctions do become blurred; most people tend to engage in sexual practices from both sides of the binary. However, if someone is in the “bad” category, he or she might be stigmatized and accrue real damage. Normativity, thus, legitimates as well as oppresses. The drawing of sexual boundaries around a conception of “normal,” Rubin maintained, “grants virtue to dominant groups and relegates vice to the underprivileged.”⁸²

In 1977 America, concerns expressed about child endangerment in relation to homosexuality played a critical role in defining social order and political access. Anita Bryant’s SOCC highlighted an expansive notion of “homosexual recruitment,” a notion that

⁸² Rubin, “Thinking Sex,” esp. 281-83; quotation is from p. 283.

represented homosexuals as moral and sexual threats to children. Most scholars writing about Bryant's campaign have emphasized her negativity: her scathing indictment of homosexuality, her desire to closet homosexuals, and her exclusive political rhetoric. This depiction, though accurate, only tells part of the story. The other part is the idyllic world Bryant imagined, a world where men and women had defined gender roles and the nuclear family was firmly intact. Homosexuality threatened that vision. Bryant's campaign aimed to remove homosexuality from public space by representing homosexuality as sinful and immoral as well as deviant and shameful. She condemned homosexuality in large part to reclaim reproductive heterosexuality as *the* standard of normal.

The Chicago Tribune series on "child predators" followed suit. The newspaper never declared child sexual abuse a male homosexual dilemma, but it did not need to. The link was inferred as social fact, an inference that statistics generally discredit. The *Tribune* drew other questionable assumptions, too. It assumed that "child sexual abuse" had a definite meaning and the "child predator" had a clear profile. It insinuated that pedophiles and child pornographers lurked everywhere, but could not be found because they were so well-organized and clandestine. By the *Tribune's* account, child sexual abuse was something that occurred away from the home by men who conducted their lives with one purpose only – to sexually abuse defenseless children. Again, this belied statistics that commonly suggest that most forms of child sexual abuse are performed by people the child already knows. Fear proved crucial, but other motives also influenced *Tribune's* tenuous findings. By presenting child sexual abuse as a grave problem that transpired "out there" (rather than within the home) by sick homosexuals, heterosexuals could express outrage while feeling comfort in their understanding that they would never sink to such a low.

Homosexuals also asserted normativity to advance particular agendas. In responding to Bryant's SOCC, David Goodstein and *Advocate* reporters invoked inclusive, "human rights" rhetoric. The strategy seemed reasonable. Lesbians and gay men witnessed a marked improvement in their social standings since the beginning of the decade, but, for the most, they remained a marginalized social group. By referring to the Dade County ordinance battle as a human rights struggle, *The Advocate* did not have to prove their legitimacy or victim status, nor did "human rights" pigeonhole them as wanting "special rights." Yet, *The Advocate* encountered difficulty in adhering to the "human rights" ideal. Bryant's SOCC and Congress's allegations that the magazine was involved in a national pedophile ring placed Goodstein and his staff in a defensive position. Ultimately, *The Advocate* disassociated itself and normal homosexuals from ties to man-boy lovers. Political self-preservation resulted in *The Advocate* erecting boundaries within "the gay community." The politics of sexual normativity trumped "human rights" for *The Advocate* in 1977.

Although Anita Bryant, *The Chicago Tribune* writers, and David Goodstein came from very different positions and laid out multiple conceptions of what constituted "normal," they all agreed – either explicitly or not – that sexual normativity mattered. It mattered not necessarily as a tool of oppression, but as a yardstick for differentiating "right" from "wrong." We can and should criticize the application of sexual normativity as a tool to grant virtue to some at the expense of others.

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