

A guest column

Article in a 'respected' magazine suggests ideas that are just horrendous

By Daniel T. Zanoza

The following column deals with a subject most of us would consider outside the boundaries of civility. Unfortunately, however, it is necessary to openly address distasteful issues, in order to serve a greater purpose.

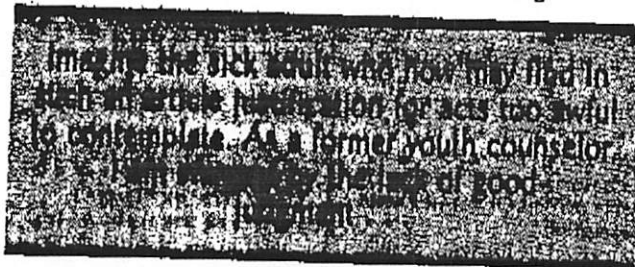
Reasonable people will agree children do not possess the maturity and life experience of an adult. Their bodies and minds are still in the developmental stages. With good nourishment and a nurturing environment, one day boys and girls will grow into healthy men and women.

Of course, adults play a vital role in this process. Parents must provide a positive and stable environment, rendering reasonable discipline tempered with love.

We must furnish positive leadership for children outside the home as well. In the past, in addition to the family unit, academia, religious institutions and the business community fostered an atmosphere which helped raise healthy, well balanced children.

However, in recent years, we have seen negative social forces supplant the positive. Many believe society on the whole is failing concerning America's youth. In many cases, the almighty lust for profit has replaced common sense. And often, some of those who we previously counted on to protect children now are promoting philosophies which are unhealthy and dangerous to their welfare.

Such is the case concerning an article recently published in the medical journal of the American Psychological Association: The piece was co-authored by Bruce Rind, Temple University; Philip Tromovitch, University of Pennsylvania; and Robert Bauserman, University of Michigan.



Incredibly, the article suggests that consensual sexual conduct between adults and children may not be as harmful as once believed. The disturbing article also advances the theory that sex between adults and children has been discouraged primarily because of outdated social mores and arcane traditional values. At least that's the way I read it. How else can you read it? The authors wrote: "Classifying a behavior as abuse simply because it is generally viewed as immoral or defined as illegal is problematic, because such a classification may obscure the true nature of the behavior and its actual causes and effects."

Please remember, this article appeared in a highly respected, clinical journal.

The authors also pay special attention to male children and point to some studies that cite a child's gender as a factor in making that individual more compatible — or, let's say immune — to any psychological damage from sexual relationships with adults.

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Now, if you are picking yourself up off the floor, suffering from a state of total shock and disgust as I was after learning about this appalling piece, rest assured there is some sense in an ever-maddening world.

State Sen. Patrick J. O'Malley, R-Palos Heights, introduced a resolution (SR 140) which was unanimously passed by the Illinois General Assembly condemning the article and the A.P.A. for even considering such an outrage. Later, the U.S. House of Representatives also enacted a similar resolution.

The truth is, politicians and community leaders should have been falling over themselves to come out in opposition to the APA article. But, all the same, O'Malley must be commended for his quick and decisive response to something I can only call repulsive and extremely dangerous thinking.

In a telephone interview, Sen. O'Malley said, "I find it utterly foolish that the APA could use such material in this day and age. This strikes right at the heart of our society and is a direct attack on the family unit."

He went on to say, "Such relations between children and adults are abusive, destructive, exploitive, reprehensible and should be punished by law."

Perhaps the most important question to ponder here is: Where is our society headed?

Can it be that this is the first salvo in a future attempt to legitimize and legalize the sexual abuse of children? The damage done by such an endorsement (and that's certainly what it sounds like to me) of what can only be defined as child abuse, is incalculable.

Imagine the sick adult who now may find in such an article justification for acts too awful to contemplate. As a former youth counselor, I am stunned by the lack of good judgment demonstrated by the APA.

But this is not the first time such garbage science has been given academic credibility. The Kinsey Report, published in 1948, actually observed pedophiles in sexual contact with children for its study. This, and the research resulting from it, has become the most widely quoted work of its kind. In fact, much of the sex education curriculum in American public schools is based on the Kinsey Report. Instead of being drummed out of society and maybe even thrown behind bars, this researcher became the most respected individual in his field.

self a mother of six children, said of the APA report: "The repudiated study was based on the flawed Kinsey research which originally promoted pedophilia. All public policies and laws that rely on Kinsey's studies should also be retracted."

Parenting in modern America is fraught with anxiety for many. Some wonder if their children are safe at school or on the playground. The world seems to be growing more dangerous, day by day. And after the horrific tragedies we witnessed in places like Littleton, Colo., and Pearl, Miss., it is time to protect our children more aggressively.

The American Psychological Association's decision to believe signifies a devolution of American culture. It must be noted the organization has since admitted the publication of the article was a mistake; all the same, a great deal of damage is done.

Fortunately, most of us understand what it takes to raise healthy, well-balanced children. Though there is no prescribed formula for effective child rearing, the operative word must be common sense. Our primary charge in life should be to make society a safer place for its most precious commodity. After all, children represent the future of our nation.

Dan Zanosa is former director of Republicans for Fair Media, a conservative organization based in Crestwood.