



Photo by Joseph Silverman/The Washington Times

Rep. Tom DeLay assails the APA's "lack of judgment" for publishing a study that condones some pedophilia.

Hill joins pedophilia-study critics

Lawmakers urge professional journal to disavow report

By Julia Duin
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A controversial academic study of pedophilia was roundly condemned yesterday by several congressmen, who chastised the American Psychological Association for publishing its findings.

House Majority Whip Tom DeLay and GOP Reps. Matt Salmon of Arizona, Joseph R. Pitts of Pennsylvania and Dave Weldon of Florida yesterday co-sponsored a resolution calling on President Clinton to join Congress in condemning the report, which suggests that sex between adults and children may not always be harmful.

"We as a society are not shocked by anything anymore," Mr. Salmon said. "And now we have a so-called credible psychological organization in this country that purports to say that maybe sex with children isn't so bad."

Published last July in the APA's *Psychological Bulletin*, "A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples" was roasted by members of Congress and conservative activists for suggesting lowering legal standards for sexual abuse of children.

"The lack of judgment shown by the American Psychological Association in publishing it absolutely confounds me," said Mr. DeLay, Texas Republican. "I will not equivocate on this issue. Sexual activity between an adult and a child is criminal all the time and in all cases."

He challenged the APA to admit it erred in publishing the article, "and do it publicly," he added, "so that subscribers to the North American Man/Boy Love Association Web page and their defense attorneys won't quote your journal in their closing arguments."

NAMBLA, a pedophile group, has touted the report as "good news" in a press release and refers to it twice on its Web site. That has caused headaches for the APA.

"NAMBLA is distorting the results of this study," APA spokeswoman Rhea Farberman said. "The APA in no way supports NAMBLA's position."

The House resolution escalated the running battle between the APA and conservative groups since the story broke in early March on Don Giordano's radio talk show on WWDB-FM in Philadelphia. It was picked up by nationally syndicated talk-show host Laura Schlessinger.

"What really terrifies me," Miss Schlessinger said yesterday by satellite feed from Los Angeles, "is the idea that the... study will now

be used to normalize pedophilia, to change the legal system and further destroy the family... It is the policy of the APA that scientific data should be used to influence public policy."

The APA will not retract the article, Miss Farberman said, but does not endorse it.

"There's nothing in this article that suggests pedophilia is not harmful," she said. "The article tried to determine whether there are varying degrees of harm, if the child's age, resiliency and family environment were factors."

"I don't get it," Miss Schlessinger said. "If it's science, then why aren't they endorsing it? And if it isn't science, why did they publish it?"

The APA released a statement yesterday from the authors of the study, Bruce Rind, a psychology professor at Temple University; Philip Tromovitch, a doctoral student at the University of Pennsylvania; and Robert Bauserman, a psychology professor at the University of Michigan.

"If adverse childhood events are found to be less psychologically harmful than previously thought, or in some cases not measurably harmful at all, researchers have an ethical duty to report this," they wrote.