

**ACCOUNTS AND SEXUAL DEVIANCE IN CYBERSPACE:
THE CASE OF PEDOPHILIA**

by

Keith F. Durkin

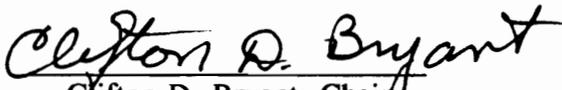
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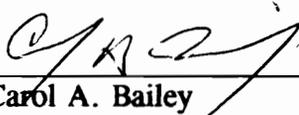
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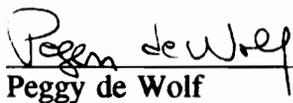
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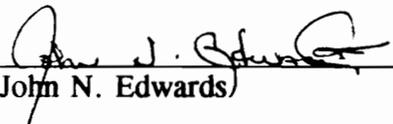
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(ABSTRACT)

This research is unique because it represents the first sociological study of pedophiles who use the Internet. The data were gathered from a Usenet newsgroup that is frequented by pedophiles. A content analysis was performed on all of the postings from admitted pedophiles (N=41) that appeared on this newsgroup during a one month period.

Scott and Lyman's classic formulation of accounts served as the conceptual framework for this study. The primary research question was: "How do pedophiles who use the Internet account for their deviance?" There were four ancillary objectives to this analysis: (1) to ascertain the degree to which pedophiles who participate in this newsgroup provide validation to, and seek validation from, other users; (2) to investigate the extent to which pedophiles who participate in this forum provide information to, and seek information from, other users; (3) to assess the degree to which pedophiles use this newsgroup to seek correspondence with other pedophiles; and (4) to determine the extent to which users of this newsgroup are members of the pedophile organization NAMBLA (the North American/Man Boy Love Association).

Slightly more than one-half of the pedophiles in the sample provided some type of account in defense of pedophilia or adults having sex with children. Thirty-nine percent offered a denial of injury account; 31.7% proffered a condemnation of condemners account; 14.6% provided a BIRGing account; and 4.9% used an appeal to loyalties account. Also, nearly one-fourth of these pedophiles used polythematic accounts.

The results of this research also indicate that this computer forum serves a validation function for these pedophiles. Moreover, many of the postings that appeared on this newsgroup contained information that should be of interest to pedophiles. Some of these on-line pedophiles use this newsgroup to establish correspondence with other pedophiles. Although only a few of the pedophiles in this sample indicated a NAMBLA affiliation, these individuals frequently provided accounts which reflect the ideology of that pedophile organization.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

JUSTIFICATION

The impact of computer technology on social life has been revolutionary. This innovation has influenced numerous aspects of human behavior, including work, education, communication, and recreation, to mention but a few. A recent poll found that nearly one in three American households now has a personal computer (Associated Press 1994). Several million more Americans have access to a computer at work or school.

Recent advances in telecommunication technology have made possible the existence of vast computer networks, often collectively referred to as the Internet or the "information superhighway". An estimated 30 to 40 million people in more than 160 nations have access to the Internet (Elmer-Dewitt 1995). This giant global network consists of over 46,000 interconnected computer networks, including those at academic, government, and business facilities, as well as commercial on-line services (e.g. America On-Line, Prodigy, and CompuServe) and private bulletin board systems (*Time* 1995).

There has been a considerable amount of deviant behavior associated with computer technology. Accordingly, there is a growing body of scholarly literature addressing various manifestations of computer crime and deviance, such as "hacking"

and computerized theft (see Becker 1982; Pfuhl 1987; Coldwell 1990; Forester 1990; Carter 1995). However, some configurations of deviant behavior which are related to computer technology have essentially been ignored by social scientists. For instance, academic literature addressing sexual deviance associated with the computer is conspicuously absent. In a recent paper, Durkin and Bryant (1995, p.197) documented the existence of sexually proscribed behaviors in cyberspace, which they argued "seem to constitute the newest frontiers in the field of deviant behavior".¹

The computer networks which comprise the "information superhighway" are an unprecedented source of pornographic materials.² These computer networks afford individuals from all across the country (and even the world) the opportunity to obtain pornographic materials that may have been otherwise unavailable to them. Interested parties can access several classes of pornographic materials, such as text stories, pictures, and videotapes via the Internet and other computer networks.³

¹The term cyberspace refers to "the world of computers and the society that gathers around them" (Pitter, Amato, Callahan, Kerr, and Tilton 1995, p.116). The major component of this phenomenon involves the giant computer network known as the Internet or the "information superhighway".

²There are over 170 sexually oriented topical groups on the Internet (Mason 1995), many of which contain pornographic materials. Interestingly, the most popular newsgroup on the Internet is alt.sex.stories, while the second most popular newsgroup is dedicated to pornographic pictures (Hoke 1995).

³There is a proliferation of text stories and pictures of a prurient nature in cyberspace. Although much of this material is banal, pornographic materials addressing a broad array of deviant sexual themes, such as transvestism, bestiality, klismaphilia, coprophilia, and pedophilia are available. The content of some of this material is extremely violent, and may include depictions of bondage, torture, and

Another sexually deviant adaptation to computer technology involves using this medium to contact other individuals with similar sexual predilections. Durkin and Bryant (1995, p.187) noted that these computer networks:

... provide an enormous, and extremely rapid, contact network for persons of related interests, including those interested in sexual deviancy. Individuals can seek, identify, and communicate with fellow deviants of similar carnal persuasions across the country, and even around the world. Information from deviant subcultures can be broadly disseminated, and interested new persons can be recruited.

Individuals can engage in sexually explicit interactive discussions, often referred to as "hot chatting" or "computer sex" with like-minded parties.⁴ For some users, these networks serve "as a pickup bar and a place to set up assignments in the no-tell motels of America" (Van Der Leun 1995, p.37). Interested parties meet in interactive discussion groups, or by responding to the plethora of personal ads posted on computer networks. There are numerous computer forums dedicated to personal ads which are "of the ilk published in the back of swingers' magazines" (Van Der Leun

rape. There are frequent advertisements regarding pornographic videotapes for sale on the Internet. Materials depicting a vast array of sexual behaviors are available. Some "entrepreneurs" have recently placed ads for tapes depicting such socially proscribed activities as bestiality, klismaphilia, urolinga, and coprophilia. Other offerings are available which contain extremely violent forms of sadomasochistic activities, including the genital torture and mutilation of women.

⁴These interactive discussion groups are often referred to as "chat rooms". These groups are "actually a window in which comments from many users scroll by" (Markoff 1992, p.5). Many of the commercial services, such as America On-Line and CompuServe, have these chat rooms. These rooms tend to cater to users with similar sexual predilections, such as heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals, transvestites, and sadomasochists (see Markoff 1992; Garreau 1993; Schwartz 1993).

1995, p.37). These newsgroups are topically organized and cater to a wide assortment of sexual deviants, including swingers, transvestites, bisexuals, spanking enthusiasts, and bondage aficionados.

Although a variety of sexual deviants have made use of these computer networks, the use of this new technology by pedophiles constitutes a growing social problem. There appears to be three ways in which pedophiles are utilizing the Internet: to traffic child pornography; to meet children to molest; and to communicate with other pedophiles.

Traditionally, pedophiles would traffic child pornography via newsletters or other tightly controlled exchange networks (Carter 1995). Now such materials can be transmitted through computer networks. There appears to be a significant amount of this activity occurring. According to federal authorities, pedophiles in the United States have been downloading illegal child pornography from computer services in Europe (U.S. Department of Justice 1993). Moreover, an informant who recently testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee, which was holding hearings about child pornography on the Internet, referred to America On-Line (the nation's largest commercial on-line service provider) as "an anonymous superstore for pedophiles" (Heaton 1996, p.6). There have also been reports of pedophiles sending child pornography to youngsters who use the Internet (Cady 1996).

A trend of particular concern involves pedophiles using computer networks to meet children to molest. Regarding this trend, one prosecuting attorney observed that

"instead of hanging around the playground looking for the loneliest kid, potential child molesters simply have to log on" (Kantrowitz, King, and Rosenberg, 1994). There are a growing number of reports of this phenomenon. For instance, a Massachusetts man was indicted for sexually assaulting a 12-year-old boy he met through a computer bulletin board (Markoff 1992). Also in Massachusetts, two young boys were recently abducted and raped by a man who operated a computer bulletin board service that the boys used, called "The County Morgue" (Mills 1996). In Oregon, a 14-year-old-girl was lured into having sex with an adult male she met on the Internet (Rubenstein 1996). A 16-year-old boy was recently sodomized by a California man who lured the youngster to his Fresno home after meeting him on a computer network (Mills 1996).

Pedophiles also use the Internet to communicate with each other. Kenneth Lanning (1987, p.22), a Supervisory Special Agent with the Behavioral Science Unit of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, noted that:

There is a modern invention that is of invaluable assistance to the pedophile: the computer ... Now instead of putting a stamp on a letter or package, they can use their computers to exchange information.

Pedophiles can use their computers to locate individuals with similar interests.

Just as the Internet has become an unprecedented source of pornographic materials, it may also become an unprecedented source of support for pedophiles. A writer who explored the "chat rooms" of America On-Line which are frequented by pedophiles observed that these sexual deviants can "all get together and make themselves feel better about what they are doing" (Heaton 1996, p.6). In fact, one Usenet news-

group, alt.support.boy-lovers, is intended to be a support group for adult males who are sexually attracted to underage boys.⁵ The postings to this newsgroup often contain statements which attempt to justify or otherwise validate such a deviant orientation. Moreover, there also appears to be a considerable amount of postings on this newsgroup that contain information that may be of interest to pedophiles (e.g., how to join the North American Man/Boy Love Association and how to obtain "literature" about adult-child sex).⁶ Finally, the possibility exists that pedophiles may use computer networks to conspire with each other to molest children. An especially horrifying example of this phenomenon involved two Virginia men who used a computer bulletin board in an attempt to locate a young boy to use in a "snuff film" (Jackson 1989).⁷ Fortunately, a law enforcement agent was monitoring this particular computer service and discovered this despicable plot. When arrested, police discovered that one of the men had a supply of muriatic acid to apply to the

⁵Usenet is "a giant set of more than 10,000 discussion groups (called newsgroups) distributed in a large part over the Internet and devoted to every conceivable subject, from Rush Limbaugh to particle physics" (*Time* 1995, p.9). The user of these newsgroups can read and post messages. The postings are organized in an archival fashion and can be read like a daily newspaper (Pitter et al. 1995).

⁶The North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA) is a pedophile organization that advocates the abolition of laws regarding the age of consent, as well as the release of all adult males incarcerated for "non-coercive" sexual acts with minors (de Young 1984, 1988, 1989). The group, which has its organizational headquarters in Boston, has approximately 1,000 members (Van Biema 1993).

⁷A snuff film is an extremely violent pornographic movie which graphically depicts torture, death, and dismemberment (Bryant 1982).

youngster's corpse.

The activities of pedophiles on the Internet have not escaped the attention of law enforcement authorities. Attorney General Janet Reno recently stated that "we are not going to let exciting new technology be misused to injure and exploit children" (Swisher 1995, p.A1). Criminal investigations have resulted in the arrest of numerous pedophiles for trafficking child pornography and soliciting sex from children on-line. For example, last September, as part of an operation dubbed "Innocent Images", FBI agents arrested a dozen people for transmitting child pornography and soliciting children for sexual purposes via America On-Line, a commercial on-line service provider. The impetus for this investigation was the case of a missing 10-year-old Maryland boy who was lured from his home by on-line pedophiles (Marshall 1995; Swisher 1995). In a 1993 law enforcement effort named "Operation Long Arm", federal agents served over 30 warrants against individuals who were using computer networks to import child pornography from Denmark (U.S. Department of Justice 1993). A 1989 investigation of computer networks conducted in Illinois by federal, state, and local law enforcement officials resulted in the arrest of 90 people on charges of child pornography and child molestation (Jackson 1989). More recently, "a number of people have been arrested for traveling across state lines to meet undercover agents posing as minors they had met on-line" (Swisher 1995, p.A13).

Although the misuse of the Internet by pedophiles clearly constitutes an emerging social problem, this topic virtually has been ignored by behavioral science

researchers.⁸ This certainly appears to be a significant oversight given the growing societal concern about this innovative pattern of sexual deviance and its possible consequences. The mass media is beginning to provide glimpses into this phenomenon, but the topic awaits systematic research by social scientists.

A sociological examination of pedophiles who use the Internet could make substantive contributions. Such an undertaking could help establish a baseline of academic knowledge about the parameters of this phenomenon and the individuals who are involved in this behavior. Furthermore, the results of such an inquiry should be of interest to several groups of people. First, law enforcement officials who are responsible for investigating and managing child molesters who use computer networks would certainly benefit from such information. The findings of such a study should also be important for those involved in the treatment of pedophiles. In addition, this information is potentially useful to legislators who are currently contemplating the need for regulation of indecent communications on the Internet. Moreover, a deeper awareness and understanding of this phenomenon will surely have utility for the purpose of crime prevention.

⁸There is a paucity of scholarly literature on the use of these computer networks by pedophiles. The existence of this phenomenon has been noted in two recent papers (Carter 1995; Durkin and Bryant 1995). In another recent paper, Davis, McShane and Williams (1995) discussed the possible need to control the computer access of convicted child molesters. However, these scholars emphasized the need for a more substantive body of academic knowledge on the abuse of computer networks by pedophiles.

Research on pedophiles who use the Internet will certainly make an important contribution to the extant literature on pedophilia. Although pedophilia has been the topic of a tremendous amount of research conducted by psychologists, sociologists, sexologists, epidemiologists, and law enforcement experts, the vast majority of this research has utilized subjects from clinical or correctional populations. Finkelhor (1986, p.138) argued:

A major problem with research on sexual abusers has to do with the fact that almost all such research is based on subjects recruited from the criminal justice system, either incarcerated offenders or probationers in treatment ... Incarcerated offenders or probationers in treatment constitute at most a very tiny and unrepresentative fraction of all sexual abusers.

Therefore, there is a large number of pedophiles about whom little information is known. These computer networks offer the unique opportunity for a study of a group of pedophiles who are not drawn from a correctional or clinical population.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The current undertaking is unique since it constitutes the first sociological study of pedophiles who use the Internet. The data for this study were gathered from a Usenet discussion group frequented by pedophiles, alt.support.boy-lovers. The central research question is: "How do pedophiles who use the Internet account for their deviance?" There are four ancillary objectives to this investigation: (1) to examine the degree to which users of this newsgroup seek validation from, and provide validation to, other users; (2) to ascertain the degree to which pedophiles who

participate in this newsgroup seek information from, and provide information to, other participants; (3) to determine the degree to which these individuals use this medium to seek contact and correspondence with other pedophiles; and (4) to examine the extent to which users of this newsgroup are members of the pedophile organization NAMBLA.

Scott and Lyman's (1968) classic formulation of accounts serves as the conceptual framework for this study. Accounts consist of "socially approved vocabularies that neutralize an act or its consequences when one or both are called into question" (Scott and Lyman 1968, p.46). There are two categories of accounts: excuses and justifications. Excuses involve the acknowledgement that the act in question was wrong, but also include a denial of complete responsibility for that act. On the other hand, justifications involve an acknowledgement of responsibility for the act in question, but also include a denial of the pejorative qualities normally associated with that act.

The accounts framework appears to be an excellent conceptual tool for examining pedophiles and the attitudes that they hold about their deviant orientation and behavior. Accounts reveal a certain way of looking at the world, and can be considered to be an indicator of the deviant's cognitive structure (Benson 1985; Pogrebin, Poole, and Martinez 1992). Some authorities have maintained that the explanations offered by pedophiles are "manifestations of underlying cognitive distortions or belief systems which may play a role in initiating or maintaining patterns

of sexual offending" (Pollock and Hashmall 1991, p.54). A conceptual examination of pedophiles' accounts has the capacity to make substantive contributions to the development of theories about individuals who sexually abuse children (Stermac and Segal 1989; Pollock and Hashmall 1991). Scott and Lyman (1968, p.62) argued that "the study of deviance and the study of accounts are intrinsically related, and a clarification of accounts will constitute a clarification of deviant phenomenon." An understanding of the accounts offered by Internet pedophiles will make an important contribution to our understanding of the general nature of pedophilia.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

MANAGING A DEVIANT IDENTITY

There is frequently a stigma associated with deviancy. Stigma is a social stain, "an indicator to the world that one has been singled out as a shameful, morally discredited human being" (Goode 1994, p.104). Stigma has the tendency to "spoil" the social identity of its bearer (Goffman 1963). Social interaction may be difficult for the stigmatized deviant since they possess an attribute which tends to evoke negative or punitive responses from others (Susman 1994). The social psychological consequences of this stigma include feelings of shame and a diminished sense of self-worth (Schur 1979; Westbrook, Bauman, and Shinnar 1992).

Because of the stigma associated with deviance, identity management is an important consideration for anyone who engages in such behavior (McCaghy 1968). Although individuals who are involved in deviant behavior must confront some difficult issues, "the protection of their identity and self-image from possible destruction" is probably the foremost concern (Kelly 1996, p.484). Consequently, deviants may utilize a variety of strategies to circumvent, or at least partially alleviate, the stigma that is normally associated with deviance. Sociologists have advanced a plethora of theories and concepts to address this phenomenon. These include: vocabularies of motive (Mills 1940); vocabularies of adjustment (Cressey 1973);

techniques of neutralization (Sykes and Matza 1957); deviance disavowal (Davis 1961; McCaghy 1968); deviance avowal (Turner 1972); disclaimers (Hewitt and Stokes 1975); tertiary deviation (Kitsuse 1980); and accounts (Scott and Lyman 1968).¹

There has been a great deal of research conducted on the management of a deviant identity. Sociologists have investigated the identity management strategies of a wide assortment of people whose behavior or beliefs are considered deviant, including convicted child molesters (McCaghy 1968), dishonest shoe salespersons (Friedman 1974), motorists who are suspected of driving while intoxicated (Warren and Phillips 1976), participants in singles dances (Berk 1977), taxi-dancers (Hong and Duff 1977), a hit man (Levi 1981), convicted rapists (Scully and Marolla 1984), college students who miss class (Kalab 1987), convicted murderers (Ray and Simons 1987), participants in chain letters (Boles and Myers 1988), pedophile organizations (de Young 1988, 1989), obese persons (Hughes and Degher 1993), police officers who work in internal affairs departments (Mulchahy 1995), and female bodybuilders (Duff and Hong 1996).

Mills' (1940) germinal notion of vocabularies of motive emphasized the important role that language can play in explaining problematic behavior. He conceptualized motive as "a complex of meaning which appears to the actor himself (sic) or to the observer to be an adequate grounds for his (sic) conduct" (Mills 1940,

¹The author acknowledges that this list of stigma management techniques is in no way exhaustive. However, it reflects those sociological notions which are germane to the current undertaking.

p.906). Mills argued that motives may be "avowed or imputed by social actors whenever conduct is interrupted directly or inferentially by the actor himself (sic) or someone else asking the question, 'Why?'" (Lyman and Scott 1989, p.136). When an individual engages in such "motive talk" they describe a line of action as well as their reasons for that action (Ray and Simons 1987). Mills (1940, p.907) asserted:

A satisfactory or adequate motive is one that satisfies the questioners of an act ... The words in which a type of situation will fulfil this function are circumscribed by the vocabularies of motives acceptable to such situations. Motives are acceptable justifications for present, future, or past programs or acts.

Not only are vocabularies of motive learned in the context of social groups, they are also utilized in what are defined by those groups as appropriate situations (Stephens 1984).

Cressey (1973) advanced the concept of vocabularies of adjustment to explain the criminal behavior of a group of embezzlers that he studied. These embezzlers were "high in status, and hence likely to have high self-esteem and unlikely to see themselves as criminal" (Thio 1995, p.334). Cressey (1973, p.93) noted that these embezzlers often defined their offenses:

... in language which enables him to look upon trust violation (a) as essentially non-criminal, (b) as justified, or (c) as part of a general irresponsibility for which he is not completely accountable.

According to Cressey (1973, p.94), "the application of certain key verbalizations to his conduct enables his conception of himself as a trusted person" despite involvement in criminal behavior. The verbalization is the embezzler's "motivation, and it not

only makes his behavior intelligible to others, but makes it intelligible to himself"

(Cressey 1973, pp.93-94). McCaghy and Capron (1994, p.268) noted that:

... these motives are not dreamed up to account for long past behavior. Instead, trusted persons acquire these motives from the culture in advance and apply them to their own specific situation.

The most common verbalization used by the offenders that Cressey studied was that they were "borrowing" the entrusted funds rather than "stealing" them.

Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization also address the management of a deviant identity. These theorists identified five specific techniques of neutralization: denial of injury; denial of responsibility; denial of victim; condemnation of condemners; and appeal to higher loyalties.² Although this theory was originally proffered as an explanation of juvenile delinquency, it has been applied to a wide variety of criminal and deviant behaviors. These theorists assume "that both delinquents and non-delinquents are morally committed to conventional norms"

(Thurman 1984, p.291). Sykes and Matza (1957, pp.666-667) argued that by using these techniques of neutralization:

Disapproval flowing from internalized norms and conforming others in the social environment is neutralized, turned back, or deflected in advance. Social controls that serve to check or inhibit deviant motivational patterns are rendered inoperative, and the individual is free to engage in delinquency without serious damage to their self-esteem.

²Each of these specific techniques will be addressed in greater detail later in this undertaking during the discussion of accounts.

The techniques of neutralization place "deviance in an acceptable framework by convincing the deviant that the norm does not apply to them for some reason" (Clinard and Meier 1985, p.28). Sykes and Matza (1957) argued that these techniques occur prior to the deviant act and "form part of the motivation" for that act (Coleman 1989, p.212).³

Another strategy that may be employed in the management of a deviant identity is deviance disavowal. This concept was first advanced by Davis (1961) based on his study of visibly handicapped persons. He found that these individuals:

... did not deny or try to conceal the handicap but sought to normalize relationships and to deny awkward, embarrassing, or negative aspects of social interaction.

(Sagarin 1975, p.204)

This technique may be utilized by other types of deviants who attempt to convince others "that the deviation is not an impediment to normal existence" (Schur 1979, p.296). For example, McCaghy (1968) found that convicted child molesters used this strategy. These men frequently attributed their offenses to drinking and claimed that their child molesting was not an indicator of their "true person". McCaghy (1968, p.48) argued that:

³The causal ordering of the techniques of neutralization has been the subject of a recent debate in the professional literature. Hamlin (1988) argued (with no real empirical support) that the techniques of neutralization actually occur subsequent to the deviant behavior in question. However, Hollinger (1991) dismissed this causal ordering criticism as a "straw man" argument. The reader is referred to these two papers for a complete treatment of both sides of this contemporary debate.

Thus insulated from the offending behavior the molester can present to his audience the image of a person who possesses socially approved attributes ... child molesting is simply an unhappy side effect of his "real problem" [which is drinking].

Alternately, the deviant may engage in a process of deviance avowal. In this case, the individual actively seeks "to be labeled as a deviant" (Turner 1972, p.308).

Perhaps the best known example of deviance avowal involves the so-called "recovering alcoholics". Pfuhl and Henry (1993, p.202) observed that in this case the:

... avowal seeks to separate the deviant condition from the deviant role ... alcoholics who have their drinking under control acknowledge that they are alcoholics but stress they are no longer drunks.

Nusbaumer (1990) noted that accepting the label of "recovering alcoholic" leads to a reduction of social costs for the problem drinker. Deviance avowal may also involve attempts to "accentuate the positive aspects of the stigma" normally associated with deviance (Bryant 1990, p.421). For instance, homosexuals who attend "gay pride" parades may carry banners stating "gay is good", and bald men may wear buttons proclaiming "bald is beautiful".

Another strategy for managing a deviant identity involves the use of disclaimers. Hewitt and Stokes (1975, p.3) defined a disclaimer as "a verbal device employed to ward off and defeat in advance any doubts or negative typifications that may result from intended conduct". The use of a disclaimer can allow an actor to avoid "the imputation of deviance by altering the meaning of behavior" (Stephens 1984, p.245). When the actor recognizes that an intended action is discrediting, they

can use a disclaimer "to acknowledge that, although the act normally implies a negative identity, theirs is an extraordinary case" (Michner, DeLamater, and Schwartz 1986, p.273). For instance, before making a remark that may be considered anti-semitic, the speaker may assert their "credentials": "I'm not prejudice, I have a friend who is Jewish, but ...". Similarly, an individual who is about to break a rule may assert: "I know this is against the rules, but ...". Stokes and Hewitt (1976, p.846) argued:

Disclaiming the apparent negative implications of a word or deed pays honor to the ideal cultural standards that generate those implications; at the same time, the person "gets away with" his (sic) intended act.

Kitsuse (1980) advanced the concept of tertiary deviation to describe yet another strategy for the management of a deviant identity. He offered this concept as an extension of the idea of secondary deviation (see Lemert 1951). According to Kitsuse (1980, p.9), tertiary deviation:

... refers to the deviant's confrontation, assessment, and rejection of the negative identity imbedded in secondary deviation, and the transformation of that identity into a positive and viable self-concept.

Kitsuse (1980, p.8) called those involved in tertiary deviation the "new deviants" and cited "gays, fat people, little people, and old people" as examples of this phenomenon. Becker (1963, pp.38-39) described a similar tendency in his discussion of deviant groups:

... deviant groups have a self-justifying rationale ... such rationales operate ... to neutralize the conventional attitudes that deviant may still find in themselves toward their own behavior ... The person who

quiets his (sic) own doubts by adopting the rationale moves into a more principled and consistent kind of deviance.

Yet another type of strategy for managing a deviant identity, one of primary importance to the current undertaking, involves the use of accounts.

ACCOUNTS

The notion of accounts was first advanced by Marvin Scott and Stanford Lyman (1968). They defined accounts as "socially approved vocabularies that neutralize an act or its consequences when one or both are called into question" (Scott and Lyman 1968, p.46). These theorists conceptualized two categories of accounts: excuses and justifications.⁴ Excuses are "accounts in which one admits that the act in question was bad, wrong, or inappropriate, but denies full responsibility for it," whereas justifications are "accounts in which one accepts responsibility for the act in question but denies the pejorative qualities associated with it" (Scott and Lyman 1968, p.47). Accounts can serve as explanatory mechanisms for deviance (Pogrebin et al. 1992). They are normally recognized as occurring subsequent to the deviant act.

Sociologists have noted that accounts serve important social functions for deviants. First, they have an exculpatory function (Scott and Lyman 1968; Benson 1985). Hamlin (1988, p.436) noted:

⁴There are several individual types of excuses and justifications. Each will be addressed in complete detail later in this discussion.

... the guilt that individuals will feel after being told that what they did was wrong or that they themselves are bad can be destructive of social identity. Justifications and excuses neutralize guilt and enable individuals to feel good about themselves.

Second, accounts are a type of impression management technique which protects the social identity of the deviant in the face of potential societal disvaluation. Accounts allow a deviant "to mitigate blameworthiness by representing one's behavior in such a way as to reduce personal responsibility" (Pogrebin et al. 1992, p.236). The proper use of accounts can allow an individual to avoid the stigma that is normally associated with deviance (Benson 1985). Finally, accounts may facilitate future deviance. Weinstein (1980, p.578) argued that "the reasons given for an act are often the conditions for its continuation." Accounts can be converted into attitudes and beliefs which in turn permit further deviance (Sheley 1980).

The accounts framework has enjoyed a good deal of popularity among sociologists. It has been applied to a variety of people whose behaviors, beliefs, or identities are considered deviant. These include: motorists who are suspected of driving while intoxicated (Warren and Phillips 1976); drug users (Weinstein 1980); white-collar offenders (Rothman and Gandossy 1982; Benson 1985); individuals who commit suicide (Stephens 1984); convicted rapists (Scully and Marolla 1984); college students who have missed class (Kalab 1987); convicted murderers (Ray and Simons 1987); pedophile organizations (de Young 1989); psychotherapists who have sex with their patients (Pogrebin et al. 1992); obese persons (Hughes and Degher 1993); and police officers who work in internal affairs departments (Mulchahy 1995).

The first category of accounts is excuses. When an individual offers an excuse, they admit that the behavior in question was wrong, but they deny full responsibility for the act or its consequences (Scott and Lyman 1968). Excuses cite "circumstances mitigating or entirely eliminating the everyday requirement of accountability" (Rothman and Gandossy 1982). A successful excuse may reduce the tendency of others to hold the actor responsible for the behavior in question or to make negative inferences about the actor's character (Michner et al. 1986). There are four types of excuses: appeals to defeasibility; appeals to accidents; appeals to biological drives; and scapegoating.

One type of excuse is called an appeal to defeasibility. Lyman and Scott (1989, pp.136-137) maintained:

The appeal to defeasibility invokes a division in the relation between action and intent, suggesting that the later was malfunctioning with respect to knowledge, voluntariness, or state of complete consciousness.

In doing so, the individual attempts to excuse himself or herself of the responsibility for having knowingly or willing caused the untoward consequences associated with the deviant act (Pogrebin et al. 1992).⁵ Appeals to defeasibility include claims of duress, misinformation, undue influence, intoxication, or lunacy (Scott and Lyman 1968).

There are numerous examples of this type of account noted in the sociological literature. For instance, Weinstein (1980, p.582) observed that marijuana users

⁵Scott and Lyman (1968, p.51) argued that one of the neutralization techniques "mentioned by Sykes and Matza, denial of responsibility, is subsumed" in the accounts framework under the rubric of appeal to defeasibility.

sometimes claim "constant exposure to the drug scene or the pervasiveness of pot made it difficult for them not to indulge." Psychotherapists who have sexual relations with patients may claim ignorance of the professional rules which proscribe such conduct (Pogrebin et al. 1992). In their study of convicted murderers, Ray and Simons (1987) found that several of these individuals asserted that they were intoxicated at the time of the offense and did not have an understanding of their homicidal actions.

A second type of excuse is known as an appeal to accident. This specific account attributes untoward behavior to accidental factors or contingencies (Weinstein 1980). According to Scott and Lyman (1968, p.47):

... excuses claiming accident as the source of conduct or its consequences mitigate (if not relieve) responsibility by pointing to generally recognized hazards in the environment, the understandable inefficiency of the body, and the human incapacity to control all responses.

Warren and Phillips (1976) observed that motorists stopped by police on suspicion of drunk driving would often provide this type of excuse as an explanation of their erratic driving. For instance, these drivers would sometimes claim that they were distracted by a another passenger in the car. In her research on accounts for absences given by college students, Kalab (1987) found that the appeal to accident was one type of excuse that was commonly proffered. Students often attributed their absences to factors such as a faulty alarm clock or problems finding a parking space.

Another type of excuse invokes an appeal to biological drives. Lyman and Scott (1989, p.137) noted that:

Invoking biological drives suggests a distinction between the animal and human characteristics of humankind as a explanation for untoward behavior, acknowledging that the former sometimes overrides the latter characteristics.

Kalab (1987) found that this was the most common type of excuse offered by college students for their absences. This typically consisted of an illness or an overwhelming need for sleep. Warren and Phillips (1976) noted that this excuse was sometimes offered by suspected drunken drivers to account for their erratic driving or poor performance on field sobriety tests. These motorists claimed that tiredness or some form of physical incapacitation induced by medication caused problems with their coordination. Various forms of sexual deviance have also been attributed to biological drives (see Scott and Lyman 1968).

A final type of excuse is called scapegoating. This involves the allegation that the act in question was the result of the behavior or attitudes of another person (Scott and Lyman 1968; Weinstein 1980; de Young 1989). For instance, psychotherapists who have sexual relations with patients may attribute their deviance to seduction, manipulation, or deceit on the part of the patient (Pogrebin et al. 1992). Hughes and Degher (1993, p.308) found that some obese "individuals assert that they are fat because of the actions of others, most frequently a relative" (e.g., a parent or grandparent who "forced" food on them when they were a child). Ray and Simons (1987, p.66) discovered that some convicted murderers provided this type of account:

Individuals who employed this excuse were convicted of homicides involving more than one perpetrator. The respondents maintained that they participated in the act because they were coerced or afraid of the other participant in the crime.

Justifications are the second category of accounts. Justifications are accounts "in which the individual or group accepts responsibility for the deviant behavior or belief but denies the pejorative or stigmatizing quality of it" (de Young 1989, p.114). This usually involves some "attempt to change the audience's perception of the act" in question (Riordan, Marlin, and Gidwani 1988, p.496). Deviants who use justifications seek "to make a normally immoral act moral", or at the very least, not as aberrant as it is typically considered (King 1987, p.220). There are six types of justifications: denial of victim; denial of injury; condemnation of condemners; appeal to loyalties;⁶ the sad tale; basking in the reflected glory of related others (BIRGing); and a claim of self-fulfillment.⁷

⁶Scott and Lyman (1968, p.51) specifically referred to this type of account as an "appeal to loyalties". However, Sykes and Matza (1957) advanced a technique of neutralization called an "appeal to higher loyalties". This particular justification has been referred to as both an "appeal to loyalties" (e.g. Weinstein 1980; Kalab 1987; Ray and Simons 1987) and an "appeal to higher loyalties" (e.g. de Young 1989; Nichols 1990) in the literature on accounts. Since Scott and Lyman (1968) used the term "appeal to loyalties", this particular usage has been adopted in the current undertaking.

⁷Although Scott and Lyman (1968) adopted some of Sykes and Matza's (1957) terminology, it is important to be mindful of the fact that the techniques of neutralization occur *prior* to the deviant act, whereas accounts occur *after* the deviant act. However, accounts can be converted into attitudes and beliefs which may encourage future deviance.

One type of justification is called the denial of victim. This account involves the claim that the offense is justified as rightfully inflicted on a deserving victim.

Sykes and Matza (1957, p.668) argued that:

... the moral indignation of self and other may be neutralized by an insistence that the injury is not wrong in light of the circumstances. The injury, it may be claimed, is not really an injury; rather it is a form of rightful retaliation or punishment.

Individuals who use this type of account "may appeal to widely held ideas about valued and disvalued people to justify their acts" (Conklin 1995, p.212). For instance, deviants sometimes attempt to justify victimizing members of unpopular minority groups by employing this type of account (Sykes and Matza 1957; Rogers and Buffalo 1974; Bynum and Thompson 1992).

A second type of justification is called denial of injury. When using this particular account, the deviant attempts to justify the behavior in question "by redefining the activity in such a way as to negate its negative quality, such as injury, harm, or wrong" (Pogrebin et al. 1992, p.244). This particular type of justification seeks to break the ordinary link between an act and its consequences (Sykes and Matza 1957; Rogers and Buffalo 1974). For instance, white-collar criminals often assert that no one was actually harmed by their offenses (Coleman 1989). Moreover, marijuana users frequently claim "pot is less harmful than many of the licit drugs" available over-the-counter (Weinstein 1980, p.582). Finally, psychotherapists who have sex with patients may contend that no real harm was caused by their indiscretions (Pogrebin et al. 1992).

Friedman (1974) described a type of justification, the claim of benefit, which can be conceptualized as an extension of the denial of injury. This particular account goes a step beyond the claim that the act in question was harmful, and asserts that it was actually beneficial. For instance, some topless dancers argue that they provide a "therapeutic" service which protects other women from sexual assaults which would occur if the patrons did not have this vicarious carnal outlet (Thompson and Harred 1992). Stephens (1984) found a claim of benefit in some of the suicide notes she examined. This consisted of the contention that the person could spare others of suffering by committing suicide. Research has indicated that female bodybuilders also employ this type of account by claiming that their excessive muscularity is beneficial to their health (Hong and Duff 1996).

Another type of justification is called the condemnation of condemners. The deviant who employs this type account attempts to shift the focus from their untoward behavior to the alleged transgressions of those who condemn them (Rogers and Buffalo 1974; Hollinger 1991; Conklin 1995). The deviant may claim that their condemners "are hypocrites, deviants in disguise, or impelled by personal spite" (Sykes and Matza 1957, p.668). For example, topless dancers and prostitutes often use this justification. Bryant (1982, p.153) noted:

They rationalize that what they do is no different from what all women do. All women, as they see it, even wives, are really exhibitionists and prostitutes, but they charge a different kind of price such as dinners and marriage.

Another type of justification involves an appeal to loyalties. This particular account consists of an attempt to justify deviant behavior "by the demands of the group - such as juvenile gang or corporation - that is smaller than the whole society but that requires its members conform to standards" which are at variance with the dominant normative code (Conklin 1995, p.213). Sykes and Matza (1957, p.669) argued that "internal and external social controls may be neutralized by sacrificing the demands of the larger society for the demands of smaller social groups." For instance, drug users may justify their deviance by claiming that they are conforming to friends' expectations (Weinstein 1980). Moreover, Kalab (1987) found that college students frequently accounted for absences by claiming that familial or friendship obligations took precedence over class attendance.

An additional type of justification is called a sad tale. This account involves "a selected (often distorted) arrangement of facts that highlight an extremely dismal past, and thus explain the individual's present state" (Scott and Lyman 1968, p.52). Goffman (1961) observed that patients in mental hospitals often offer sad tales to account for their hospitalization. For instance, one patient claimed: "I was going to night school to get my M.A. degree, and holding down a job in addition, and the load got too much for me" (p. 152). Pogrebin et al. (1992) noted that some psycho-therapists who had sex with patients offered sad tales to account for their deviance. In their study of convicted murderers, Ray and Simons (1987, p.65) found several examples of this type of justification:

Persons providing accounts of this type described, usually in great detail, a series of unfortunate events that they encountered prior to their act of violence. These events included unemployment, divorce, death of a loved one, serious financial loss, abuse from others, and so forth. The respondents contended that they were so emotionally distraught by these stressful events that they were not thinking and acting rationally.

Another type of justification involves a claim of self-fulfillment. Scott and Lyman (1968, p.52) observed that deviants:

... who invoked the justification of self-fulfillment did not appear to find anything wrong with their behavior. They indicated a desire to be left alone or to enlighten what they considered to be the unenlightened establishment.

These theorists cited LSD users as an example of deviants who employ this account. Similarly, Weinstein (1980, p.583) argued that this justification is utilized by drug users who claim that they take illicit substances "for the personal satisfaction derived from the drug's psychological and somatic effects."

A final type of justification involves basking in the reflected glory of related others (BIRGING). This technique involves "publicly trumpeting some connection with a successful other" (Richardson and Cialdini 1981, p.41). Individuals who are in need of interpersonal prestige, such as deviants, are likely to use this tactic (Richardson and Cialdini 1981). For instance, a marijuana user may cite the fact that several noted politicians and jurists have admitted to using the drug. Duff and Hong (1996, p.565) found that female bodybuilders would sometimes deal with societal disapproval by "basking in the reflected glory of the few glamorized, exceptionally attractive women bodybuilders."

Nichols (1990) observed that accounts can be tremendously complex in the "real world". He argued that there is a distinction between monothematic and polythematic accounts. Monothematic accounts utilize only one defensibility, whereas polythematic accounts draw on two or more defensibilities. For example, a polythematic account may combine denial of injury and condemnation of condemners. Although there is virtually no discussion of polythematic accounts in the extant literature, examples of this phenomenon can be found nonetheless. In their research on convicted murderers, Ray and Simons (1987, p.65) discovered an example of an account that can be conceptualized as polythematic:

Some respondents maintained that a series of stressful events had driven them to use intoxicants as a way of numbing their psychological pain. They contended that in this stress motivated intoxication, they acted irrationally [and committed murder].

The aforementioned account combines a sad tale (i.e., a series of stressful events) with an appeal to defeasibility (i.e., stress induced intoxication). In her research on the use of accounts in the publications of pedophile organizations, de Young (1989, p.117) cited an example of a polythematic account which appeared in a NAMBLA (North American Man/Boy Love Association) newsletter:

Why can't we here in America do as those in the Netherlands have done? That is, EDUCATE the public to see that, in proper context, a man/boy relationship can be of benefit to the boy and that the trauma that the police so quickly point as connected to such a relationship is caused not by the relationship, but by what the police themselves subject the boy to.

The previous account combines a denial of injury (actually a claim of benefit) with a condemnation of condemners (i.e., the assertion that the police are actually causing the harm normally associated with this activity).

PEDOPHILIA

There are a veritable plethora of definitions of pedophilia and child molestation in the professional literature. However, pedophilia typically refers to a sexual orientation or preference (Faller 1990), whereas child molestation normally refers to an actual behavior.⁵ Pedophilia is normally defined as the sexual preference for children. A pedophile is an adult "whose sexual fantasies and erotic imagery focus on children" (Lanning 1987, p.2). A pederast is an adult male who is sexually attracted to boys (see Rossman 1974). Pederasts sometimes refer to themselves as "boy-lovers". On the other hand, a child molester is an adult "who engages in any type of sexual activity with individuals legally defined as children" (Burgess and Lottes 1988, p.6). Not all people who molest children are pedophiles. However, even if a pedophile does not engage in sex with children, he may participate in related activities that are unlawful such as the possession of child pornography (Lanning 1987;

⁵Despite the fact that there is a conceptual distinction between these two terms, there is tendency to use them interchangeably in the extant literature. This distinction is made at this point in the discussion to avoid any confusion. However, some of the literature cited in this discussion uses these terms interchangeably. For instance, Lanning (1987, pp.1-5) acknowledged this conceptual bifurcation, but used the terms interchangeably later in his discussion (pp.27-33).

Prendergast 1991).⁹

There are three types of child molesters described in the professional literature. The first type is called a situational or regressed child molester. These particular individuals would not be classified as pedophiles. Their sexual orientation is for adults, and they normally engage in sexual relations with agemates (Holmes 1991; Prendergast 1991). However, there is typically some stressor in the individual's life which precipitates this behavior (Mayer 1985). Holmes (1991, p.38) noted:

Because of some situation or occurrence in his life - a poor job performance review, an unfaithful wife, some social maladjustment, or whatever - the regressed offender develops feelings of inadequacy that frequently result in alcoholism as well as child molestation.

This is probably the most common type of child molester (Lanning 1987). Their victims are typically female (Holmes 1991).

The second type of child molester is the preferential or fixated molester. These individuals are classified as pedophiles. They have a "definite sexual preference for children" and their "sexual fantasies and erotic imagery focus on children" (Lanning 1987, p.5). Mayer (1985, p.28) argued that this type of child molester has an "habitual compulsion to molest children of a certain age, comparable in some ways to the compulsion of alcoholics to drink." They are usually single men

⁹Although there have been cases of women committing acts of child molestation, virtually all pedophiles are male. For instance, Faller (1990, p.66) noted that she had "never encountered a female perpetrator who fits this definition of pedophilia." Therefore, masculine pronouns will be used to refer to pedophiles throughout this undertaking.

who have little or no contact (either social or sexual) with agemates and tend to be introverted (Lanning 1987; Prendergast 1991). They typically molest boys (Holmes 1991). They may be members of pedophile organizations such as the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). This type of molester often uses child pornography (Prendergast 1991; Davis et al. 1995). Although this type of offender is much less common than the situational or regressed child molester, they have the potential to molest a tremendous number of victims (Lanning 1987). In fact, the molesters with the greatest number of victims are preferential or fixated molesters who target boys (Burgess and Lottes 1988). Also, the preferential or fixated molesters who target boys have the highest recidivism rate among child molesters (Hanson, Steffy, and Gauthier 1993; Davis et al. 1995).

The final type of child molester is the mysoped. Although they are the rarest type of child molester, they are greatly feared because of the brutal nature of their attacks. These offenders "are intent on molesting children with the expressed desire to harm their victims physically" (Holmes 1991, p.36). They typically abduct their victims who are frequently mutilated and murdered during the attack (Mayer 1985).

There is a voluminous body of scholarly literature which suggests that children who are molested often experience a wide variety of problems as a result of their victimization. These children frequently experience affective problems such as fear, anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem (Mayer 1985; Burgess and Lottes 1988; Conte and Berliner 1988; Jumper 1995). They may also experience post traumatic

stress disorder (Fuller 1989; McLeer, Callaghan, Henry, and Wallen 1994). Moreover, they may suffer physical difficulties such as sleep disorders (Burgess and Lottes 1988; Conte and Berliner 1988; Green 1988). Furthermore, children who are sexually abused may also manifest behavioral problems such as poor academic performance and aggressive behavior (Burgess and Lottes 1988; Conte and Berliner 1988). Finally, children who are sexually victimized may experience sexual problems such as "heightened sexual activity, compulsive masturbation, exhibitionism, and preoccupation with sex and nudity" (Burgess and Lottes 1988, p.4). Children who are molested often become child molesters themselves when they reach adulthood (Mayer 1985; Barnard, Fuller, Robbins, and Shaw 1989; Prendergast 1991).

Adults who engage in sexual activity with children, or possess such a sexual orientation, are considered to be among the most serious deviants in our society. Such contacts are illegal everywhere in the United States (McCaghy and Capron 1994). Child molesters and pedophiles enjoy very little social support. Not one of the 2,753 respondents to a recent national survey on sexual behavior indicated that they believed it was "normal" or "all right" for adults to have sexual contact with children (Janus and Janus 1993). The thought of adults engaging in sexual activity with children "inspires an innate disgust in most people" (Finkelhor 1979, p.693). These adults are "considered to be among the most degenerate" of all deviants (Bryant 1982, p.332). In fact, they are even disvalued by other deviants. In prison, "pedophiles occupy the lowest rung of the inmate social system" (Heitzeg 1996,

p.325).

PEDOPHILE ORGANIZATIONS

In recent years, pedophile organizations have formed and become increasingly vocal about their support for adult sexual behavior with children. Such groups have "emerged from the lunatic fringe and into public attention" (de Young 1984, p.72). These groups have been rather militant in their rhetoric and have even attempted to proselytize their carnal ideology (Bryant 1982). These organizations, as well as a few radical scholars who support their cause, have been referred to as the "children's rights movement" (McCaghy and Capron 1994) or the "propedophilia movement" (Gonsiorek 1994).

There have been several European groups which advocated adult sexual contact with children. Perhaps the best known was an English group called the Pedophile Information Exchange (PIE). PIE was founded in 1971 to advance the cause of adult-child sex (Bryant 1982). According to Plummer (1981, p.114), this group:

... wanted to provide advice, legal assistance, counseling, and avenues by which paedophiles (sic) could get in contact with one another; they wanted to "clear away the myths connected with paedophilia" (sic) and campaign for the legal and social acceptance of paedophile (sic) love.

This organization was politically active in lobbying for the end of laws against "consensual sexual acts between adults and minors" (de Young 1988, p.583). The group advocated that the age of consent be lowered to four-years-old (Mayer 1985).

This group is not nearly as vociferous as it once was and had stopped publishing its newsletter by 1979 (Plummer 1981). Pedophile groups have been active in other European countries as well. These include Norway's Amnesty for Child Sexuality and Norwegian Pedophile Group, as well as the Studiegroep Pedofilie in Belgium (de Young 1988, 1989).

There have also been pedophile organizations in the United States. There were two organizations which advocated adult sexual activity with children, the Rene Guyon Society and the Childhood Sensuality Circle, that are currently inactive. The Rene Guyon Society, founded in 1962, once claimed a membership of 8,500 persons (Mayer 1985). This group's slogan was: "Sex by eight or else its too late". The now defunct Childhood Sensuality Circle, formed in 1971, advocated the "abolition of age of consent laws" and encouraged "children to use their own standards in the selection of adult sexual partners" (de Young 1984, p.72). This group promoted the "exchange of information and child pornographic materials including tapes, films, and photographs" (Mayer 1985, p.9). Both of these groups ceased their organizational activities by the mid-1980s.

The only major pedophile group currently active in the United States is the North American Man/Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). Founded in 1978 after the arrest of 24 Massachusetts men for having sexual contact with adolescent boys, this group advocates the abolition of laws regarding the age of consent, as well as the release of all men incarcerated for "non-coercive" sexual acts with minors (de Young

1984, 1988, 1989). The group is currently estimated to have about 1,000 members (Van Biema 1993). NAMBLA has its organizational headquarters in New York City, and local chapters in Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Toronto (Holmes 1991). The group publishes a newsletter called the *NAMBLA Bulletin*. This organization has received a great deal of publicity, and even had a spokesman appear on the *Larry King Live* television program.

Many NAMBLA members have been arrested on charges related to child molestation and child pornography. In 1982, police raided a Massachusetts cabin and arrested two NAMBLA members. During the raid, officials found two 16-year-old boys who had run away from home and 200 pounds of child pornography (Leo 1983). During the last decade, more than a dozen men affiliated with the group's San Francisco chapter have been convicted of sexual offenses (Van Biema 1993). The head of NAMBLA's West Coast steering committee, who was the alleged organizer of a sex-tourism operation for pedophiles, was arrested on child-molestation charges in Bangkok (Kortum-Stermer 1990). Many of the NAMBLA members who have been arrested on child-sex charges were prominent members of society, including a California physicist, a New York City neurologist, and an Ohio politician (Leo 1983). Men with close ties to NAMBLA have also been arrested in Sacramento, Boston, and the United States Military Academy at West Point (Kortum-Stermer 1990).

The primary interests of these organizations appear to be personal and immediate (McCaghy and Capron 1994). These groups attempt to make their

philosophy palatable by attempting to change the public perceptions of the activities of their members (de Young 1984). However, public reaction to these groups and their claims has been less than charitable (Bryant 1982). These groups adhere to a philosophy which is "repugnant to the larger society" and membership in such an organization "is judged as perverted" (de Young 1988, p.74). The public is in staunch opposition to groups such as NAMBLA. Regarding these organizations, Lanning (1987, p.33) argued:

... it is doubtful that they have had any significant impact on the American public in general. Their greatest threat to society is as a source of support and validation for child molesters and pedophiles.

ACCOUNTS AND PEDOPHILIA

A review of the relevant academic literature suggests that pedophiles employ a variety of strategies in an attempt to rationalize, justify, and otherwise normalize their deviance. Mayer (1985, p.21) noted that "one striking characteristic of the pedophile is the ability to minimize or rationalize his activities." In fact, pedophiles are "notorious" for the justifications and rationalizations they provide for their deviant behavior (Finkelhor 1979). These deviants appear to have distorted belief systems that manifest themselves in the explanatory statements proffered by these individuals (Stermac and Segal 1989; Pollock and Hashmall 1991). Consequently, the accounts framework (Scott and Lyman 1968) appears to be an excellent conceptual tool to examine how pedophiles deal with the stigma and social disvalment associated with

their carnal proclivities.

The accounts proffered by pedophiles include both excuses and justifications. When an individual offers an excuse, they acknowledge that the behavior in question was wrong, but deny full culpability for the act or its consequences (Scott and Lyman 1968). Based upon a review of the literature on pedophilia and child molestation, it appears that these individuals tend to offer two types of excuses for their behavior - appeals to defeasibility and scapegoating.

An appeal to defeasibility makes a distinction between action and intent, claiming "that the later was malfunctioning with respect to knowledge, voluntariness, or state of complete consciousness" (Lyman and Scott 1989, p.137). In his classic paper on child molesters and drinking, McCaghy (1968) found that many molesters attributed their sexually deviant behavior to alcohol. The following examples of accounts offered by McCaghy's (1968, p.48) research subjects are particularly illustrative of this type of excuse:

If you (sic) been drinking a lot your passions get aroused.

I was drunk. I didn't realize their age and I was half blind. I've always been a drinker. (The victims in this case were six and seven years old).

Drinking is the reason. I could always get women. I can't figure it out. A man's mind doesn't function right when he's got liquor on it.

In each of the previous examples, the child molester attempts to excuse his behavior by claims of intoxication. McCaghy (1968, p.48) concluded that:

For child molesters, reference to drinking in connection with their offenses plays an important role ... It permits them to admit their deviant behavior without accepting responsibility for it.

A second type of excuse used by these individuals is scapegoating. This "involves an attempt to blame others for one's untoward behavior" (Pogrebin et al. 1992). Mayer (1985, p.21) noted that adults who have sexual contact with children often "try to place the blame on the child for seductive behavior". Lanning (1987, p.27) observed that a child molester who has been apprehended by authorities "may claim that he was seduced by the victim, that the victim initiated the sexual activity, or that the victim is promiscuous or a prostitute."

These sexual deviants also offer justifications for their orientation and actions. This is a category of accounts which involves "an admission of full responsibility for the act in question, coupled with a denial that it was wrongful" (Lyman and Scott 1989, p.136). The relevant academic literature on pedophiles and child molesters indicates that they attempt to offer three types of justifications for their deviance: denial of injury; condemnation of condemners; and an appeal to loyalties.

The denial of injury involves the redefinition of the behavior in question in a manner which attempts to "negate its negative quality, such as injury, harm, or wrong" (Pogrebin et al. 1992, p.244). Many molesters argue that their actions were not harmful to the child involved (Finkelhor 1979; Mayer 1985). Clinical reports reveal that many child molesters believe that such activity will not harm a youngster unless force is used (Stermac and Segal 1989; Pollock and Hashmall 1991).

Gonsiorek (1994, p.29) noted that they claim that the negative effects associated with such activity are:

... illusionary or fabricated either to discredit pedophiles or to squelch childhood sexuality; or as a misunderstanding in that society's negative reaction to childhood sexuality, not sexual contact between children and adults, causes negative effects.

De Young (1989) examined the publications of NAMBLA to determine how this group "accounts" for its deviance. She found that denial of injury was a prevalent theme in NAMBLA literature:

... for NAMBLA, this justification involves the admission that the organization advocates adult-child sexual behavior, and that its members engage in the behavior, and the justification that neither the behavior nor the philosophy is in anyway injurious to children.
(p. 116)

One specific way in which these individuals attempt to deny the injurious quality of adult sexual contact with children is to claim that youngsters are capable of giving informed consent to engage in such behavior. Pollock and Hashmall (1991) examined the clinical case files of 86 child molesters for justificatory themes. These researchers found that 29% of their sample claimed that the victim had consented to engaging in sexual activity. Other authorities have also noted the presence of similar justificatory themes in the clinical reports of child molesters (Finkelhor 1984; Stermac and Segal 1989).

An extension of the denial of injury justification involves a claim of benefit (Friedman 1974). This entails the assertion that the behavior in question not only lacks injurious qualities, but is actually beneficial. Many adults who have sexual

contact with children assert that the behavior is beneficial to the child. Stermac and Segal (1989, p.582) found that "men who have sexual contact with children differ from other men in the types of cognitions and beliefs that they have regarding the salutary consequences of this behavior on children." Lanning (1987, p.27) noted:

A child molester typically attempts to justify his behavior to the police. He might claim that he cares more for the children than the children's parents do and that what he does is beneficial to the child.

Barnard et al. (1989, p.154) provided information obtained in a clinical interview with a pedophile who asserted:

I was fairly convinced that what I had done was OK and that the law was really wrong. Although I knew it was against the law, I was convinced that I was really helping the kids.

On the group level, pedophile organizations also offer a similar claim of benefit justification. Some of these organizations "take the extreme view that children might profit from early sexual indoctrination" by adults (Hunter 1991, p.118). The Rene Guyon Society argued that adult-child sex could cure many social ills. For instance, one of the group's slogans was: "Avoid juvenile delinquency and divorce with sex at a very early age" (Plummer 1981, p.121). In her examination of NAMBLA literature, de Young (1989, p.117) also discovered "the publication of youngsters' accounts of the benefits that they have [allegedly] experienced from sexual relationships with adult males."

Another type of justification used by these individuals is a condemnation of condemners. Deviants who use this type of account attempt to shift the focus from

their behavior to the "alleged" transgressions of those who condemn them (Hollinger 1991; Conklin 1995). This particular type of account is featured prominently in the literature of pedophile organizations such as NAMBLA. Law enforcement officers and social workers are typically the targets of diatribes which accuse them of engaging in a variety of unscrupulous and incompetent practices. For instance, one newsletter of the now defunct Childhood Sensuality Circle contained the assertion that:

... the protectors of children are the real perverts, the real child abusers, the real molesters who take advantage of innocence and inexperience to spread the venom of guilt and fear. They damage a child's self-image and self-esteem in a way impossible for any loving relationship, no matter what the age difference.

(de Young 1988, p.588)

One specific way in which these individuals attempt to condemn their condemners involves the invocation of a claim of persecution. This consists of assertions that police and social workers are conducting a draconian crusade against pedophiles. For instance, during one press conference a NAMBLA spokesman accused police and the FBI of conducting a "witch hunt" against members of that organization. On another occasion, a NAMBLA spokesman claimed that "the situation of man/boy love in America is quite analogous to the situation of Jews in Nazi Germany before it crystallized" (Hechler 1988, p.295).

A final type of justification proffered by these individuals is an appeal to loyalties. Scott and Lyman (1968, p.51) noted that this particular justification involves the assertion by the actor that their "action was permissible or even right since it served the interests of another to whom he (sic) owes an unbreakable

allegiance or affection." The central allegiance claimed by pedophiles is the so-called "rights" of children. One observer noted that the members of NAMBLA "have learned to package their desires in the language of free sexual expression and the childrens' rights movement" (Leo 1983, p.47). This type of justification typically involves the claim that:

... the repression of childhood and adolescent sexuality is damaging to minors and therefore society. As part of the liberation of children and adolescents free sexual expression is encouraged. This sexual expression includes the "right" of children and adolescents to be sexual with adults.

(Gonsiorek 1994, p.29)

De Young (1988, p.589) maintained that groups such as NAMBLA and the Rene Guyon Society:

... tend to embed their advocacy of adult-child sex within the larger context of the liberation of children. This allows them to present themselves to the larger society as organizations with goals higher and more legitimate than those of advocating adult sexual behavior with children.

SUMMARY

There is frequently a stigma associated with deviance. Consequently, deviants engage in a variety of strategies to circumvent or alleviate this stigma. Sociologists have advanced a multitude of concepts and theories to describe the identity management strategies of deviants. Scott and Lyman (1968, p.46) advanced the notion of accounts to refer to "socially approved vocabularies that neutralize an act or its consequences when one or both are called into question." When an individual

proffers an excuse, they admit that the act in question was wrong, but they deny complete responsibility for that action. On the other hand, when an individual offers a justification, they acknowledge responsibility for the act in question, but deny the pejorative qualities normally associated with it.

While pedophilia refers to a sexual orientation, child molestation refers to an actual behavior. There are three types of child molesters: the situational or regressed molester; the preferential or fixated molester; and the mysoped. There is a wealth of literature that documents the negative consequences that child molestation has on children. There is a strong societal consensus that such behavior is wrong, and that adults who engage in sexual activity with children are deviant. However, in the past 25 years, there has been an emergence of pedophile organizations such as NAMBLA (the North American Man/Boy Love Association). These groups have called for the revocation of age of consent laws and the abolition of legal sanctions against adults who engage in sexual activity with children.

A review of the relevant literature indicates that pedophiles and child molesters often offer accounts in defense of their deviant sexual proclivities. They may offer excuses in which they appeal to defeasibility or attempt to blame the victim for the sexual activity (i.e., scapegoating). These individuals also offer several justifications including denial of injury, condemnation of condemners, and an appeal to loyalties.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

The major objective of this research is to determine how pedophiles who use the Internet account for their deviance. The data were gathered from a Usenet newsgroup frequented by pedophiles -- alt.support-boy.lovers. A content analysis was performed to determine what types of accounts these individuals proffer for their deviant orientation and behavior. There are also four secondary objectives to this analysis: (1) to examine the degree to which users of this newsgroup seek validation from, and provide validation to, other users; (2) to assess the degree to which pedophiles who participate in this newsgroup seek information from, and provide information to, other pedophiles; (3) to determine the degree to which these individuals use this medium to seek contact and correspondence with other pedophiles; and (4) to determine the extent to which users of this newsgroup are members of the pedophile organization NAMBLA (the North American Man/Boy Love Association).

DATA SOURCE

The data for this research were gathered from the Usenet discussion group alt.support.boy-lovers. According to this newsgroup's frequently asked questions list

(FAQ),¹ which is regularly posted to acquaint new users with the purpose of the group:

Alt.support.boy-lovers is a forum for males to discuss their feelings towards boys. It is intended to provide a sense of peer support for those having difficulties with their feelings, for boy lovers who feel isolated with their orientation, for those who have no other avenue of discussion than via a group such as this ... With a group such as this, the sense of hopelessness can be combatted. Peer support is vital for anyone dealing with feelings that are difficult to talk about; the anonymity of Usenet is a useful tool for expressing thoughts and feelings that many boy lovers otherwise find impossible to talk about in life.

Users of the alt.support.boy-lovers newsgroup can read and post messages.

These postings are organized in an archival fashion. These messages can be downloaded to the user's personal computer or sent directly to a printer.

Consequently, messages can be printed for content analysis. There are approximately five to ten new messages posted daily. There are between 150 and 200 messages posted to the newsgroup each month. These postings range in length from several sentences to several paragraphs.

PROCEDURE

A content analysis was performed on all of the postings to the Usenet newsgroup alt.support.boy-lovers for a period of one month, from April 17, 1996, to

¹A FAQ sheet is a list of frequently asked questions about a Usenet newsgroup. They are regularly posted to the respective newsgroups to orientate new users to the newsgroup's purpose. The FAQ sheets are typically a rich source of information about Usenet newsgroups (Pitter et. al 1995).

May 17, 1996.² There were a total of 154 postings from 80 individuals that appeared on the newsgroup during this time period. Ninety-three of these postings were contributed by 41 users who are admitted pedophiles. These 93 postings constitute the data that will be analyzed for this undertaking.³ Slightly more than half (51%) of the individuals who posted to the newsgroup during the month were admitted pedophiles. These individuals contributed 60% of the postings for this time period.

Content analysis allows the researcher to use "data on communications to identify patterns" (Marshall and Rossman 1989, p.98). This technique can be used to identify "indicators that point to the state of beliefs, values, ideologies, or other culture systems" of the group the researcher is studying (Weber 1985, p.10). Content analysis is essentially a coding operation in which data are classified according to a conceptual framework. According to Lindkvist (1981, p.34):

²Although this time period was selected for the sake of convenience, there is no reason to suspect that the activity on the newsgroup for this particular month was systematically different from other months. In the course of making preparations for this research, the author monitored this computer forum for several months. There appeared to be little variation in the quantity and types of postings from month to month. Therefore, the data collection for this research began immediately after the development of the coding scheme was completed.

³It seemed appropriate that only those individuals who admitted to a pedophilic orientation should be included in this analysis. The author had examined the postings on this newsgroup for several months prior to the actual data collection procedure. This examination indicated that not all posters admitted to possessing such a sexual preference. In fact, some of the most vociferous defenders of adult-child sex never indicated that they are pedophiles. Although it is reasonable to assume that this is the case, there is no way to be absolutely confident of this without an admission. Therefore, the decision was made that only the postings of admitted pedophiles would be used in this analysis.

... content analysis applies empirical and statistical methods to textual material. Content analysis particularly consists of a division of text into units of meaning and the quantification of these units according to certain rules.

There are several steps that are necessary in the planning of a content analysis.

First, the researcher must distinguish between the unit of analysis and the unit of observation (Babbie 1989). Next, the researcher must decide on the recording unit. Weber (1985, p.22) argued that "one of the most fundamental and important decisions concerns the definition of the basic unit of text to be classified." This recording unit may consist of a word, sentence, theme, or paragraph (Bailey 1978; Johnson and Joslyn 1986). The next step entails defining the appropriate categories to be utilized in coding scheme. It is necessary for the researcher to operationally define the variables of concern for this step of the procedure (Babbie 1989). The coding categories will be based on these operational definitions. Finally, the researcher must devise a strategy to enumerate the data that has been coded into these categories (Bailey 1978; Johnson and Joslyn 1986). After the data has been enumerated, it is ready to be analyzed.

The *unit of analysis* for the current undertaking is the individual pedophile (i.e each poster). However, the *unit of observation* is the specific postings. The recording unit used was a theme rather than a particular word, sentence, or paragraph. The postings were examined to determine the presence or absence of themes which correspond to the respective variables of interest. The postings of each pedophile were then aggregated for quantitative analysis.

As part of the preparation for this analysis, a test coding of sample text was conducted by the author. Weber (1985, p.23) argued that "the best test of clarity of category definitions is to code a small sample of text". Approximately 75 postings, which represented 27 admitted pedophiles, were used for this purpose. All of these postings were obtained prior to the time period designated for data collection. Consequently, they do not appear in the actual sample. This preliminary data proved to be exceptionally useful in operationally defining the variables of interest and developing the appropriate coding categories. This test coding procedure provided insights for the categories that would not have been gained by only reviewing the relevant literature on pedophilia and sexual deviance in cyberspace. For instance, the postings in this preliminary data set often contained accounts which took the form of justifications (i.e., denial of injury, condemnation of condemners, appeal to loyalties, and BIRGing). However, none of these postings included accounts which took the form of excuses. Moreover, there seemed to be several recurrent themes among the accounts offered by the pedophiles in this preliminary data set. These modalities included a claim of persecution, a claim of benefit, and the assertion that the poster believed that children could give informed consent to engage in sexual activity with adults. This preliminary coding procedure, along with information from obtained from the limited literature available on this subject, was used as the basis for the development of the final coding scheme. This coding scheme was then used to classify the content of the 93 postings contributed by the 41 users who were admitted

pedophiles during the selected time period.

The recording sheet for the individual postings is presented in Appendix A.

The coding categories are based upon the following operational definitions of the respective variables:

Admission of Orientation: the poster indicates a sexual orientation toward boys, thus identifying himself as a pedophile. This may involve: using the term "boy-lover" in a self-descriptive fashion; speaking of an attraction to underage males; speaking of his "relationships" with boys; or indicating an affiliation with the pedophile organization NAMBLA (the North American Man/Boy Love Association).

NAMBLA Affiliation - the poster of the message indicates an affiliation with the pedophile group NAMBLA. Although this category is subsumed under admission of orientation, it is indicated by a special variable for use in statistical analysis.

Admission of Behavior - the poster indicates that he has personally engaged in sexual contact with children. This includes anal sex, oral sex, fondling, kissing, or having children undress for him.

Account Offered - the posting contains some type of explanation offered in defense of pedophilia or adults having sexual contact with children.

Condemnation of Condemners - the poster attempts to shift the focus from pedophiles and their behavior to the actions of those who condemn them. Targets of condemnation may include law enforcement officers, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and others. This may involve a claim of persecution.

Claim of Persecution - the poster asserts that pedophiles are a persecuted group. This may include the contention that police and others are staging a draconian witch hunt against pedophiles. Although the claim of persecution is subsumed under the account category condemnation of condemners, this particular justificatory statement appears to be common among pedophiles who use this newsgroup. It is indicated separately for use in statistical analysis.

Denial of Injury - the poster claims that adult sexual behavior with children does not cause harm to children. This may include an assertion that the poster believes that a child can give informed consent to engage in sexual activity with an adult. Additionally, it may involve a claim of benefit assertion. Since the contention that children can consent to engage in sexual activity with an adult and the claim of benefit assertion appear to be common justificatory themes among pedophiles who use this newsgroup, they are also indicated separately for use in statistical analysis.

Children Can Consent - the poster indicates that he believes that children can give informed consent to engage in sexual activity with adults. This is a type of denial of injury account.

Claim of Benefit - this particular account is an extension of the denial of injury account. The poster goes a step beyond simply asserting that adult-child sex does not harm the child, and claims that such behavior is actually beneficial for the child involved.

Appeal to Loyalties - the poster attempts to justify pedophilia and adult-child sex by claims of an allegiance to "children's liberation" or "children's rights".

BIRGing - the poster makes the assertion that "great men" have also been pedophiles.

Polythematic Account - the posting contains an appeal to more than one defensibility. It includes any combination of the following accounts: condemnation of condemners; appeal to loyalties; denial of injury; and BIRGing.

Seeking Validation - the poster is seeking validation for his orientation and/or behavior from other users. The poster may be seeking support in coming to terms with his pedophilic orientation. The poster may also be seeking advice in how to deal with a personal crisis revolving around his sexual predilections.

Providing Validation - the poster is providing advice, encouragement, or support for other pedophiles who are using the newsgroup.

Seeking Information - the poster is requesting information. This may involve a query about other computer sites for pedophiles, where to obtain literature about pedophilia, or how to get in contact with the pedophile organization NAMBLA.

Providing Information - the poster is presenting some type of information that may be of interest to other pedophiles.

Seeking Correspondence - the poster is requesting that other pedophiles communicate with him privately via electronic mail, conventional mail, or the telephone.

The data for individual postings were enumerated using a binary coding system discussed by Bailey (1978). The presence of a respective theme in a posting was indicated by a "1", while the absence of the theme was indicated by a "0".

A serious concern associated with conducting a content analysis is the issue of reliability. This is normally measured by intercoder reliability, which "refers to the extent to which content classification produces the same results when the text is coded by more than one coder" (Weber 1985, p.17). The greater the level of agreement between these coders, the more likely it is that the meaning of the text is not based on the subjective perceptions of the individual coders (Johnson and Joslyn 1986). A high level of disagreement among the coders is cause for concern since it is probably indicative of problems with the coding categories.

In order to determine the reliability of the coding categories used in this research, a sample of the postings used in this study was coded by another individual. This sample was comprised of 10% (n=16) of the postings included in this research. Postings were selected for inclusion in this sample based on a set random numbers

drawn from a random number table. The second coder was provided with a list of operational definitions for these variables (which appeared earlier in this chapter) and asked to code these 16 postings. Reliability coefficients, based upon the Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR-20) statistic, were calculated to assess the intercoder reliability for each item, as well as the overall reliability for the coding categories.⁴

The intercoder reliability scores (KR-20) for the variables used in this study are reported in Table 1. There was an exceptionally high level of agreement between the two coders.⁵ Both were in complete agreement on the classifications for 11 of the 17 variables (KR-20=1.0000). The reliability scores for the remaining 6 variables were also quite high. Five of these had a KR-20 value of .9302, while the other one had a value of .7742. The average intercoder reliability score was .9662. As previously mentioned, the postings for each pedophile were aggregated for analysis. The presence or absence of each of the variables of interest for the individual posters

⁴The KR-20 statistic is the appropriate measure of reliability for dichotomous variables (Ferguson 1976). Its interpretation is the same as Pearson's correlation coefficient (r). If the correlations between the two coders' classifications of text are low, the KR-20 values will also be low. Alternately, if the two coders are frequently in agreement on the classification of text, the KR-20 values will be high (i.e., approaching 1.00).

⁵When there were discrepancies, the second coder typically indicated that he thought a given variable was present in the text while the author did not. For example, there were two disagreements on the variable admission of behavior. The second coder believed that an admission of behavior was present, whereas the author did not. In each of these postings, the poster spoke of "hugging" or "cuddling" a young boy. The second coder indicated that he believed these statements implied an admission of behavior, while the author did not classify these similarly because of the lack of an explicit admission of behavior.

TABLE 1**Intercoder Reliability Scores (KR-20) for the Variables Used in the Study**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Reliability</u>
Admission of Orientation	.9302
NAMBLA Affiliation	1.0000
Admission of Behavior	.7742
Any Type of Account Offered	1.0000
Polythematic Account Offered	1.0000
Condemnation of Condemners Account Offered	.9302
Denial of Injury Account Offered	1.0000
Appeal to Loyalties Account Offered	1.0000
BIRGing Account Offered	1.0000
Claim of Benefit Justificatory Statement	1.0000
Claim That Pedophiles Are a Persecuted Group Justificatory Statement	.9302
Claim That Children Can Consent to Sex with Adults Justificatory Statement	1.0000
Poster Seeking Validation	1.0000
Poster Providing Validation	.9302
Poster Seeking Information	1.0000
Poster Providing Information	.9302
Poster Seeking Correspondence with Other Pedophiles	1.0000
Average Intercoder Reliability Score	.9662

were similarly indicated using a binary coding procedure. The author had already gathered a list of the names of 27 admitted pedophiles from the test coding procedure. The determination was made that if these individuals posted to the newsgroup during the designated period for data collection, they would also be included in this analysis even if they did not make an admission of pedophilic orientation during this time period. However, 40 of the 41 pedophiles in the sample made such an admission during the period of data collection. Only one individual was included in the final sample solely because of an admission that he made previously.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data were entered into a computer file for analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Since the unit of analysis for this study was the individual pedophile (i.e., the posters not the postings), the data for each poster were aggregated prior to analysis.⁶ In terms of univariate statistics, frequencies were computed for each of the major variables. These were supplemented with qualitative data to provide a richer description of the pedophiles who use this newsgroup. This qualitative data consisted of excerpts from postings that the author thought were particularly illustrative of the major variables included in the study.

⁶Although the individual poster is indeed the unit of analysis, each posting that contained a polythematic account was analyzed separately to provide greater insights into the semantic structure of that particular type of account.

The bivariate relationships between the various accounts/justificatory statements and the other variables were examined. These variables (admission of behavior; NAMBLA affiliation; seeking validation; providing validation; providing information; and seeking correspondence with other pedophiles) will henceforth be called the "ancillary variables".⁷ These bivariate relationships were examined using the phi statistic.⁸ This is the appropriate measure of association for two dichotomous variables (Hickey 1986; Howell 1987). It is the equivalent of Pearson's *r* for these variables and is interpreted in a similar manner. The hypothetical values for the phi statistic range from -1.00 to 1.00. A phi coefficient of 1.00 indicates a perfect positive relationship between the two variables, while a coefficient of -1.00 indicates a

⁷The variable called seeking information was omitted from the bivariate analysis since only 1 of the 41 pedophiles included in this study had contributed a posting in which he was seeking information.

⁸At this point in the discussion, the reader may be curious about why the author did not use the chi-square statistic to examine the relationships between these dichotomous variables. The reason involves the size and distribution of the sample used in this study. Capon (1988, p.197) noted that "the chi-square statistic may be used as long as no expected frequency is less than 1 and 80% of the expected frequencies are 5 or greater." Small cell sizes violate the assumption of normality that is associated with the chi-square statistic (Howell 1987). There are a total of 41 pedophiles in this sample. The frequencies for the presence of some of the variables of interest were quite low. For instance, 3 indicated a NAMBLA affiliation and 7 admitted to engaging in sexual activity with children. Consequently, using these variables in a chi-square analysis would result in small expected frequencies. Although there are correction factors for chi-square that may theoretically be used, their practical value is questionable for this particular analysis. However, the phi statistic is an excellent method for "evaluating the practical significance (importance) of a relationship between two dichotomous variables" (Howell 1987, p.261). Therefore, the determination was made to use the phi coefficient to examine the bivariate relationships between the variables used in this research.

perfect negative relationship. A value of 0 for phi indicates that there is no relationship between the two variables.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

UNIVARIATE RESULTS

The frequency distributions for the various types of accounts (including polythematic accounts), as well as the number and percentage of pedophiles in this sample who offered any type of account, are presented in Table 2. Slightly more than one-half (53.7%) of these 41 on-line pedophiles proffered some type of account in defense of pedophilia or adults engaging in sexual activity with children.

The most common type of account offered by the pedophiles in this sample was denial of injury. Thirty-nine percent provided this type of account which consisted of the assertion that sexual contact with adults does not cause harm to children.¹ For instance, one poster, who was speaking of his sexual relationships with boys wrote:

The experiences were always mutual and I don't feel/think those [boys] were mentally damaged by this as many people believe.

Another pedophile asserted that:

I don't see anything wrong with a teenager having a sexual relationship with an adult providing both are consenting and that there is some sort of friendship for this closeness to be based on.

¹The assertion that children can provide informed consent to engage in sexual activity with adults, as well as the claim that such activity is beneficial to children, are classified as denial of injury accounts. However, each of these specific justificatory statements are addressed in complete detail later in this discussion.

TABLE 2

**Number and Percentage of Pedophiles Offering
Each of the Various Types of Accounts**

<u>Account</u>	<u>Number Offering</u>	<u>Percentage Offering</u>
Any Type of Account	22	53.7%
Denial of Injury	16	39.0%
Condemnation of Condemners	13	31.7%
Polythematic Account	10	24.4%
BIRGing	6	14.6%
Appeal to Loyalties	2	4.9%

The next most popular account, condemnation of condemners, was offered by nearly one-third (31.7%) of the pedophiles in this sample. This involved shifting the focus from pedophiles to those who would condemn them.² Targets of these vituperations often included law enforcement officers, social workers, mental health professionals, and parents. They were typically accused of engaging in a draconian persecution of pedophiles, as well as "brainwashing" children. Interestingly, gay men were targets of condemnation as well. Some of the pedophiles who use this newsgroup had apparently argued that they were an oppressed sexual minority similar to homosexuals. They had made these claims on networks dedicated to discussions of homosexuality. In response, several gay men had posted messages on alt.support.boy-lovers claiming that the behavior of pedophiles is aberrant and has nothing to do with homosexuality. One of the pedophiles responded:

Oh wow, you're a good homosexual. You should be accepted by society. And in many countries you will indeed. You might even find yourself integrated in society as being a homosexual. No, you don't want to be classified in the same category as those nasty, tasteless, and horrible pedophiles. You don't like the young boys so you don't even want to think about those pedophile bastards. Come on you guys! What was the situation about half a century ago? Homosexuals were in the same position as pedophiles are nowadays. People looked upon homosexuals as being nasty, tasteless and horrible bastards. Now YOU are doing the same towards another group. You're right: pedophiles aren't in the same group, but a little bit of understanding is the least pedophiles could expect from previously repressed groups.

²This type of account frequently involved a claim that pedophiles are a persecuted group. However, this particular justificatory statement is discussed separately later in this undertaking.

Another object of condemnation was people who had contributed postings to the newsgroup which expressed opposition to pedophiles. For instance, one individual, who claimed he had found this newsgroup by accident, argued that pedophiles were mentally ill and should seek psychiatric help. In response, one pedophile remarked:

Most likely that's because you have the brain of a chimpanzee and are just as brainwashed by the mythologies of your culture as the other 90% of your putrid country.

Approximately 15% of the pedophiles in the sample offered a BIRGing account. This involved the claim that great men have also been pedophiles. For example, one poster wrote:

A favorite pastime of boy lovers is collecting pictures of boys, and those boy lovers who have no desire to break the law usually make excellent photographers. An example is the German photographer Hermann List, who is internationally renowned as one of the finest photographers of the first half of this century.

Another maintained:

Some of the more famous lovers of boys throughout history include the following: Alexander the Great. The Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato. Plato was 13 when the two met. The Greek poets Anacreon, Alcaeus, Meleager, Strato, and many others far too numerous to mention Oscar Wilde, commonly thought to be the "father of the modern gay movement". In fact, he loved boys, not men. Allan Ginsberg, the beatnik poet of the '60s, and his literary guru William S. Burroughs (of "Naked Lunch" fame).

The least popular account among these pedophiles was an appeal to loyalties, which was only offered by 4.9% of the sample. One pedophile briefly spoke of his support for the "sexual rights of minors" in a posting. Another individual always concluded his posting with the statement "In Liberation". This was obviously an

allusion to the so-called "children's liberation movement".

Nearly one-quarter (24.4%) of the pedophiles in this sample offered polythematic accounts which appealed to more than one defensibility. They included some combination of denial of injury, condemnation of condemners, BIRGing, and appeal to loyalties. Some of these accounts were quite lengthy and presented detailed arguments. For example, one pedophile contributed a posting which he titled "An Open Letter to All Who Care About the Children of the World":

Our children are in danger. There are predators loose in the world who, in the guise of "protecting" children are, in fact, profiting immensely--meantime destroying the very ones they pretend to protect. Throughout history, one group of people or another has been singled out for attack by the "mainstream" population. These groups have included people of differing nationality or religion; people who may be "different" due to skin color, or physical appearance; and people who are physiologically and psychologically drawn to those of their own gender. Now, another group is under attack--directly putting our children at risk. A group that, throughout the history of the world, have played a vital role in the shaping of societies. A group of people who, in many cultures held positions of prominence and prestige. For thousands of years, these people have been reaching out, when no one else cared, or took the time, to lead, instruct, and see to the general welfare of our youths. Among the members of this group have been such names as: Socrates; Leonardo De Vinci; Michelangelo; Alexander the Great, and many, many others, including a large number of rulers, spiritual leaders, and teachers ... The group that I am referring to is men who are attracted and drawn to those younger people who are under the arbitrary "legal age" - commonly referred to as "pedophiles". In translation: lovers of children ... Not one child, in the history of the world, has been damaged mentally simply because of a physical relationship with someone older than themselves. Mental scarring does occur, however, when the child (or adult) is made to believe that the love they feel for the other person is wrong, and that the relationship that they freely consented to is made to appear evil. Thousands of children a year are being "brainwashed" by supposedly well-meaning psychiatrists and psychologists, as well as

"child protection agencies", who all, as previously stated, derive 100% of their profit from perpetuating the lie that a person who loves a child is a "child molester".

The previous polythematic account appealed to three defensibilities - denial of injury, condemnation of condemners, and BIRGing. Another pedophile contributed a polythematic account which was of similar detail:

A child is a sexual being. Therefore, children should have the right to explore any aspect of sexuality they desire to engage in. Why do parents, politicians, and police (the 3 p's) feed guilt into children that are sexually active? The guilt and shame put on the child's senses does a major amount of damage to the child. The majority of damage comes when the parents press charges and the boy lover goes to jail and the boy has to deal with the fact that the relationship which was consensual has put this guy away for a long time. There is no doubt that children can and do have the ability to decide for themselves what they want ... Children that are sexually active should be left to themselves to decide who should be the sex partner ... Consensual sex is justified in all forms, so there should not be a tag of criminal placed on intergenerational sex.

The previous posting combined a denial of injury account with a condemnation of condemners account.

During the course of this research, three specific justificatory statements were identified. While each of these statements are subsumed under the various types of accounts, they are noteworthy since they represent recurrent and circumscribed themes offered by these pedophiles. These justificatory themes were: the assertion that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults; the claim that pedophiles are a persecuted group; and the argument that sexual contact with an adult is beneficial for children. The number and percentage of pedophiles that offered each

of these justificatory statements is shown in Table 3.

The most popular one of these justificatory statements was the claim that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults. This statement, which is a type of denial of injury account, was provided by slightly more than one-third (34.1%) of the pedophiles in the sample. For instance, one wrote:

Let me state that there are boys who want this (sexual) part of a man!
The most important principle of every true boy lover is that: The boy has to make the first step.

Another poster claimed:

There are some boy lovers who have a desire to practice their orientation in a sexual way ... There are boys in the world who are capable of sex with boy lovers, and who indeed desire it and seek it out.

In both of the previous examples, the assertion was made that children can be a consensual participant in sexual activity with adults.

Twenty-two percent of the sample claimed that pedophiles are a persecuted group. This type of justificatory statement falls under the rubric of the condemnation of condemners account. This involved the assertion that the police and other agents of social control are engaging in a draconian crusade against pedophiles. For instance, one pedophile argued that "burning witches is a pastime which is just regaining popularity in the United States". The "witches" he was referring to in this postings were pedophiles. Another poster claimed:

The witch-hunt mentality of some of the ignorant wacko's here in the states (yes, I will admit what country I am from at least) has kept me hiding inside a padlocked trunk inside my dead-bolted closet.

TABLE 3**Number and Percentage of Pedophiles Offering
Each of the Various Justificatory Statements**

<u>Justificatory Statement</u>	<u>Number Offering</u>	<u>Percentage Offering</u>
Claim That Children Can Consent to Engaging in Sexual Activity with Adults	14	34.1%
Claim That Pedophiles Are a Persecuted Group	9	22.0%
Claim That Sexual Contact with an Adult Is Beneficial to Children	4	9.8%

The final justificatory statement, the claim that sexual contact with an adult is beneficial to children, was offered by 9.8% of the pedophiles in the sample. This statement is a type of denial of injury account. It involved the contention that rather than being detrimental to children, sexual contact with an adult has salubrious effects. Speaking of the boys that he was sexually involved with, one pedophile remarked:

In all cases the boys had a noticeable improvement in their self-esteem, their grades in school went up, they became more stable emotionally, and in one case I pulled a boy back from the drug/school dropout scene and he is now an officer in the Army.

Another poster wrote:

I feel that a consensual intergenerational relationship can be a learning experience for people that want to get involved in one.

The frequency distribution for the various types of polythematic accounts appears in Table 4. These represent the statistics for each time each type of polythematic account was offered, rather than the number of pedophiles who proffered each type of polythematic account. Although the individual pedophiles were the unit of analysis in all of the other statistical analysis presented in this undertaking, this strategy was used to gain a better understanding of the semantic structure of polythematic accounts. The most common type of polythematic account combined condemnation of condemners with denial of injury. It constituted 46.2% of the polythematic accounts. The next most popular type polythematic account, which combined condemnation of condemners, denial of injury, and BIRGing, comprised 38.4% of the polythematic accounts. The two other types of polythematic accounts,

TABLE 4**Frequencies for the Various Types of Polythematic Accounts**

<u>Contents of Polythematic Account</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Condemnation of Condemners + Denial of Injury	6	46.2%
Condemnation of Condemners + Denial of Injury + BIRGing	5	38.4%
Condemnation of Condemners + BIRGing	1	7.7%
Condemnation of Condemners + Appeal to Loyalties	1	7.7%
Total	13	100.0%

one which combined condemnation of condemners and BIRGing, and one which included condemnation of condemners and appeals to loyalties, were each offered once. Every single polythematic account utilized condemnation of condemners, while approximately 86% of these accounts included denial of injury.

Table 5 contains the frequency distributions for the other variables included in this study. Three of the pedophiles (7.3%) in the sample indicated an affiliation with the pedophile organization NAMBLA (the North American Man/Boy Love Association). For instance, the postings of one particular pedophile, who claimed that he was a member of the NAMBLA steering committee, normally contained the following caveat:

Though I am an active member of NAMBLA, I express my views, which may not be those of the organization.

A few of these pedophiles (17.1%) contributed postings which indicated that they had engaged in sexual behavior with children. This activity included anal sex, oral sex, fondling, kissing, or having children undress. One pedophile wrote:

I got involved (not sexually however) with a group of boys when they were 12 years old and I was 22. At 15 (three years later) one of the boys told me he was in love with me and though I was rather shocked at first, he convinced me a couple of days later and we had a very sexually-orientated relationship for about 6 months. After that I viewed things a lot differently and had multiple sexual relationships with friends of 13-16 years old.

Another pedophile provided a very detailed and graphic description of a sexual encounter that he had with an 11-year-old boy:

TABLE 5**Frequency Distributions for the Ancillary Variables**

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
<u>NAMBLA Affiliation</u>		
Yes	3	7.3%
No	38	92.7%
<u>Admission of Behavior</u>		
Yes	7	17.1%
No	34	82.9%
<u>Seeking Validation</u>		
Yes	6	14.6%
No	35	85.4%
<u>Providing Validation</u>		
Yes	18	43.9%
No	23	56.1%
<u>Seeking Information</u>		
Yes	1	2.4%
No	40	97.6%
<u>Providing Information</u>		
Yes	16	39.0%
No	25	61.0%
<u>Seeking Correspondence</u>		
Yes	10	24.4%
No	31	75.6%

One night, Joshua's mom called and asked if I would mind if he spent the night at my place, as she had to make a trip out of town. After pretending to think about it, I told her that it would be fine with me. Upon breaking the news to Joshua, he informed me that I would have to help him take his bath. As I reluctantly agreed, he ran off to the bathroom, leaving a trail of clothes in his wake. Attempting not to appear to eager, I slowly followed him in. As I came through the door, the imp was standing by the tub with his hands on his hips, sans all but his white Fruit-of-the-Looms, and asked me what took me so long! I start the water running, and adjust the temperature for him. He shucks off his remaining covering, and clamors in. I turn to leave, and he informs me that I have to help him wash where he can't reach. It happened that he couldn't reach most of his body. And, of course, I was very thorough with my ministrations. After drying him off, I playfully carried him into the guest bedroom, tucked him in, and gave him a peck on the cheek. Then I went to my room to, shall we say, "relieve the tension", as I mentally replayed bath-time. I was going strong, and just about to burst the flood-gates, when I heard a knock on my bedroom door. Quickly pulling the covers up, I told Joshua to come in. At that, the object of my very recent fantasy opens the door and asks if he could get into bed with me! Fearing having to go to sleep "frustrated", I tried (not very hard) to talk him out of it. Then the other shoe dropped. He told me that he knew what I had been doing, and that he would help me, if I wanted him to! Someday, I hope to find out where an 11-year-old learned about some of the things that we did that night!

Approximately 15% of the pedophiles contributed postings in which they were seeking validation for their orientation and/or behavior from other users. For example, one wrote:

I can't seem to find someone to talk to. I am beginning to wonder where I can find help ... If you want to visit, please e-mail me.

Some of these postings were lengthy pleas for help and support. The following example is illustrative of such a posting:

This is to be my first and last post. My father is taking this computer to work with him and I will not be able to speak to all of you my friends here. I am afraid that I can no longer go on if I don't have anyone with whom I can speak freely. You are the only ones I can be open with about my life. My parents would throw me out if they knew that I love boys ... I have to be able to speak with people who understand me and don't condemn me. I can't even be totally honest with my therapist. I am afraid. I just lost a relationship and now the thoughts of ending it all are coming back to me. I don't know if I can stop them without someone I can talk to. I only have one place left to turn, and that is you. I can't live here anymore, pretending to be someone I'm not, I can't lead this double life. I can't tell my parents the truth, because they would throw me out. I have nothing left. I'm spent.

This individual also included his phone number at the end of the posting, and requested that other pedophiles contact him.

Nearly one-half (43.9%) of the on-line pedophiles in this sample made postings which provided validation to other individuals who were using this newsgroup. This involved offering advice, encouragement, and support to other users. Many of these posts were responses to individuals who indicated that they were struggling in coming to terms with their sexual orientation. The following is a typical example of this type of posting:

I deduce that what you've found over these years exactly the same as I have. Peculiar sexuality? Nonsense. I congratulate you on being one of us lucky people who truly appreciate the beauty of the younger man.

Some of the postings included in this category involved providing validation to pedophiles who were facing personal problems because of their orientation or behavior. For instance, the following was posted in response to an individual who indicated that his car had been burned by neighbors who discovered that he was a

pedophile:

These outrages against a gentle, loving people will continue but not forever. Straight society dares to treat us this way because of our temporary weakness, but the virulence of their reaction shows they recognize the (intellectual/moral) strength of our challenge to their way of life. Our reaction should be to continue to come out, to make them come to terms with our existence. Eventually they will.

Another example of this phenomenon is a posting offered in response to a pedophile who was forbidden to see the boy he was "involved with" by the boy's parents:

I guess every boy lover knows the pain (in various ways) in which you have been and in which you will be again, also everyone of us knows how serious it can get when you are about to loose your beloved one ... You will be happy again but first let the time heal that wounds. Easy said, I know, but it's just a fact. Though I don't know what I would do when my loved one would be taken away from me. Don't look back at what you did wrong, see it as an experience to do it better the next time. You are in a position where paranoia can take you over easily - everyone tells you the opposite than what you feel is alright, and the only people who share your opinions are out there in cyberspace. There are ups and downs that spread above our lives - it's also out of the reason that we never fully can control our relations together with the boys we love, but have to accept the fact that there are third parties who have the legal right to tell us what to do and what not ... Get your head up, there are people thinking of you, and perhaps a special boy is waiting for you.

Only one of the pedophiles in this sample contributed a posting in which he was seeking information. This individual requested that regular users provide him with more information regarding the nature and purpose of this newsgroup.

Thirty-nine percent of the sample offered posting which contained information that may be useful to other pedophiles. For example, one poster informed the users of this group about a mail-order company that sold "erotic novels for boy lovers."

Another supplied the address of a company that sold "boy love comic books". Two users regularly included directions on how to get in touch with NAMBLA. At the end of each of their postings was the following:

North American Man/Boy Love Association - For membership info & brochure write to: NAMBLA, Dept. xxx, P.O. Box xxxx, Uptown Station, NYC, NY 10018. Send \$5 a for sample Bulletin. Publications list available upon request.

Additionally, one individual who regularly posted to alt.support.boy-lovers frequently gave directions to access his private computer system which contained his "boy love poetry archives".

Finally, approximately one-quarter (24.4%) of the pedophiles made postings which indicated that they were seeking correspondence (via e-mail, traditional mail, or telephone) with other pedophiles. For example, one wrote:

I am missing one thing: Somebody I can talk to who has the same feelings as I have. It is great to know Manni and others from the net but I need somebody I can see, hear, smell, and feel if I talk to him. So please, if there is somebody from Vienna lurking around try to contact me via e-mail. If you have doubts that I am a cop - and I bet you have because I had those too when I wrote my first mail - use an anonymous remailer or something like that. Maybe we learn to trust each other after a while. In short: Is there a boy lover from Vienna, Austria? Please e-mail me!

Some pedophiles were apparently attempting to contact other users to trade pornographic materials with. The following is an example of this type of request:

I would like to make the acquaintance of discreet "Same Souls" for the purpose of trading information, etc. I have a superb 10 year collection. I distrust things in writing. I do feel comfortable conversing. If you are interested, please call. I live alone in California, USA, so you may call at any time. My name is Joseph.

BIVARIATE RESULTS

The bivariate relationships between each of type of account and the various ancillary variables were examined using the phi coefficient. This measure of association for dichotomous variables is the equivalent of Pearson's correlation coefficient.³ It is interpreted in a similar fashion. Table 6 contains the phi coefficients for the relationship between the poster offering any type of account and the ancillary variables. None of these was statistically significant.⁴ The phi coefficients for the association between offering a polythematic account and the ancillary variables appear in Table 7. Two of these relationships were statistically significant. First, an indication of NAMBLA affiliation was significantly related to offering a polythematic account ($\phi = .4947, p < .01$). Second, there was a significant

³It is particularly important to note that the value of the phi coefficient is dependent on the distributions of the respective variables used in the analysis. Although this statistic has a hypothetical range of -1.00 to +1.00, these values can only be attained when the marginal distributions for the variables are balanced (Hickey 1986). If the distributions are skewed (i.e. unevenly distributed), "phi can attain a maximum or minimum value that may be considerably short of the hypothetical range between -1.00 and +1.00" (Bohrnstedt and Knoke 1994). Because the distributions of many of the variables used in this analysis were skewed, it is highly unlikely that the phi coefficients obtained from this bivariate analysis could approach the minimum or maximum values possible for this statistic.

⁴An important factor influencing the likelihood that any given statistical test will be significant is the size of the sample used (Blalock, 1979). With small sample sizes an extreme result is needed to have a significant test statistic. On the other hand, it is much easier to establish a significant relationship with a large sample. Since the size of the sample ($N=41$) used in this research was relatively small, only extreme relationships achieved statistical significance. It is highly plausible that more of these bivariate relationships would be significant had a much larger sample been used.

TABLE 6

**Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables
and Offering Any Type of Account**

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering Any Type of Account</u>		
	<u>ϕ</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>P</u>
Admission of Behavior	.2917	41	n.s.
NAMBLA Affiliation	.2611	41	n.s.
Seeking Validation	.1080	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	.1322	41	n.s.
Providing Information	-.0587	41	n.s.
Seeking Correspondence	-.1556	41	n.s.

TABLE 7

**Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables
and Offering a Polythematic Account**

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering a Polythematic Account</u>		
	ϕ	N	P
Admission of Behavior	.1951	41	n.s.
NAMBLA Affiliation	.4947	41	.01
Seeking Validation	.0682	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	.1842	41	n.s.
Providing Information	.3607	41	.05
Seeking Correspondence	-.0581	41	n.s.

relationship between providing information and proffering a polythematic account ($\phi = .3607, p < .05$). The ϕ coefficients for the relationships between offering a denial of injury account and the ancillary variables are displayed in Table 8. Only one of these bivariate relationships was statistically significant. Those pedophiles who admitted to engaging in sexual activity with children were more likely than those who did not to provide this specific account ($\phi = .4343, p < .01$). Table 9 contains the ϕ coefficients for the associations between the various ancillary variables and providing a condemnation of condemners account. An indication of a NAMBLA affiliation ($\phi = .4124, p < .01$) and providing information ($\phi = .3145, p < .05$) were both significantly related to the use of this particular account. The ϕ coefficients for offering an appeal to loyalties account and the various ancillary variables are shown in Table 10. The relationship between NAMBLA affiliation and this account was significant ($\phi = .3712, p < .05$). Table 11 contains the ϕ coefficients for the relationships between providing a BIRGing account and the ancillary variables. The only ancillary variable that was significantly related to using this account was providing information ($\phi = .3761, p < .05$).

The bivariate relationships between the three justificatory statements and the ancillary variables were also examined using the ϕ statistic. Table 12 contains the ϕ coefficients for the relationship between the justificatory statement that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults and the ancillary variables. Pedophiles who indicated that they had engaged in sexual behavior with children were

TABLE 8**Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables and
Offering a Denial of Injury Account**

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering a Denial of Injury Account</u>		
	<u>ϕ</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>P</u>
Admission of Behavior	.4343	41	.01
NAMBLA Affiliation	.1592	41	n.s.
Seeking Validation	.0932	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	.1990	41	n.s.
Providing Information	-.1275	41	n.s.
Seeking Correspondence	-.1051	41	n.s.

TABLE 9

**Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables and
Offering a Condemnation of Condemners Account**

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering a Condemnation of Condemners Account</u>		
	<u>ϕ</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>P</u>
Admission of Behavior	.2480	41	n.s.
NAMBLA Affiliation	.4124	41	.01
Seeking Validation	.0145	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	.2421	41	n.s.
Providing Information	.3145	41	.05
Seeking Correspondence	-.1429	41	n.s.

TABLE 10

**Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables and
Offering an Appeal to Loyalties Account**

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering an Appeal to Loyalties Account</u>		
	<u>ϕ</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>P</u>
Admission of Behavior	-.1028	41	n.s.
NAMBLA Affiliation	.3712	41	.05
Seeking Validation	-.0938	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	-.2003	41	n.s.
Providing Information	.0510	41	n.s.
Seeking Correspondence	-.1286	41	n.s.

TABLE 11

Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables
and Offering a BIRGing Account

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering a BIRGing Account</u>		
	ϕ	N	P
Admission of Behavior	-.0045	41	n.s.
NAMBLA Affiliation	.1487	41	n.s.
Seeking Validation	.2190	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	.1899	41	n.s.
Providing Information	.3761	41	.05
Seeking Correspondence	.0862	41	n.s.

TABLE 12

Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables and Offering a Children Can Consent to Engaging in Sexual Activity with Adults Justificatory Statement

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering a Children Can Consent to Engaging in Sexual Activity with Adults Justificatory Statement</u>		
	<u>ϕ</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>P</u>
Admission of Behavior	.3567	41	.05
NAMBLA Affiliation	.1927	41	n.s.
Seeking Validation	-.0071	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	.0885	41	n.s.
Providing Information	-.0489	41	n.s.
Seeking Correspondence	-.0497	41	n.s.

more likely than other posters to offer this particular justificatory statement ($\phi = .3567$, $p < .05$). The coefficients for the relationships between claiming that pedophiles are a persecuted group and the ancillary variables are displayed in Table 13. Two of these variables, indicating a NAMBLA affiliation ($\phi = .5298$, $p < .01$) and admitting to engaging in sexual activity with children ($\phi = .3858$, $p < .05$), were significantly related to offering this justificatory statement. Finally, none of the relationships between claiming that sexual contact with an adult is beneficial to children and the ancillary variables was significant (see Table 14).

TABLE 13

Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables and Offering a Claim That Pedophiles Are a Persecuted Group Justificatory Statement

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering a Claim That Pedophiles Are a Persecuted Group Justificatory Statement</u>		
	ϕ	N	P
Admission of Behavior	.3858	41	.05
NAMBLA Affiliation	.5298	41	.01
Seeking Validation	-.0529	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	.1245	41	n.s.
Providing Information	.1797	41	n.s.
Seeking Correspondence	-.1640	41	n.s.

TABLE 14**Correlations (ϕ) between the Ancillary Variables and Offering a Claim That Sexual Contact with an Adult Is Beneficial to Children Justificatory Statement**

<u>Ancillary Variable</u>	<u>Offering a Claim That Sexual Contact with an Adult Is Beneficial to Children Justificatory Statement</u>		
	<u>ϕ</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>P</u>
Admission of Behavior	.2877	41	n.s.
NAMBLA Affiliation	.2233	41	n.s.
Seeking Validation	.0964	41	n.s.
Providing Validation	-.1252	41	n.s.
Providing Information	-.0945	41	n.s.
Seeking Correspondence	-.1867	41	n.s.

SUMMARY

Slightly more than half of the pedophiles in this sample offered some type of account in defense of pedophilia or adults engaging in sexual activity with children. The most popular type of account was denial of injury. It was used by 39% of the sample. The next most prevalent account, condemnation of condemners, was provided by 31.7% of these pedophiles. Less than 20% offered a BIRGing or appeal to loyalties account. Approximately one-quarter of the pedophiles in this sample used a polythematic account. Interestingly, every polythematic account included condemnation of condemners, while 84.6% contained denial of injury.

During the course of this research, three particular justificatory statements were identified. Although each of these assertions were subsumed under one type of account or another, they represented recurrent justificatory themes given by the pedophiles in this sample. The claim that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults was offered by slightly more than one-third of these on-line pedophiles. Twenty-two percent argued that pedophiles are a persecuted group. Less than 10% claimed that sexual contact with an adult is beneficial to children.

Approximately 8% of the pedophiles in this sample indicated an affiliation with the pedophile organization NAMBLA. Slightly less than 20% indicated that they had engaged in sexual activity with children. While 14.6% of the sample made postings in which they were seeking validation from other users, 43.9% contributed postings which provided validation to other pedophiles who were involved in this newsgroup.

Thirty-nine percent made postings containing information that should be interest to other pedophiles. However, only one individual made a posting that was a request for such information. Nearly one-quarter of the on-line pedophiles in this sample indicated that they were seeking correspondence from other pedophiles.

The bivariate relationships between the various accounts/justificatory statements and the ancillary variables were examined. Several statistically significant relationships were discovered. There was a positive relationship between indicating an affiliation with NAMBLA and offering a polythematic account, condemnation of condemners account, and an appeal to loyalties account. Furthermore, an affiliation with NAMBLA was also positively related to claiming that pedophiles are a persecuted group. There was a positive association between admitting to engaging in sexual activity with children and using a denial of injury account. Moreover, there were similar relationships between admitting to such conduct and claiming that children can give consent to engage in sexual activity with adults, as well as making the assertion that pedophiles are a persecuted group. Providing information that should be of interest to other pedophiles was positively associated with three types of accounts: condemnation of condemners; BIRGing; and the polythematic variety. Finally, three of these ancillary variables were not significantly related to any of the various accounts or justificatory statements. These were seeking validation, providing validation, and seeking correspondence with other pedophiles.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Computer technology has precipitated a veritable revolution in the social enterprise. Advances in telecommunications have made possible the massive computer network known as the Internet or the "information superhighway". This has impacted numerous aspects of human behavior, such as education, work, communication, and recreation, to mention but a few. It has also influenced the parameters of crime and deviance. Although there is a growing corpus of academic literature on some of the various manifestations of computer related deviance, other configurations have been essentially ignored by social scientists. For instance, scholarly literature on sexual deviance that is related to computer technology is conspicuously absent.

While a wide assortment of sexual deviants have made use of the Internet, the activities of pedophiles on this network clearly constitute an emerging social problem. There are three ways in which pedophiles are utilizing the Internet. First, they traffic child pornography via this medium. Second, they are using this network as a means of contacting children for sexual purposes. Finally, pedophiles are communicating with each other on the Internet. However, these activities have not escaped the attention of law enforcement authorities. Recent criminal investigations have led to the arrest of scores of pedophiles for transmitting child pornography and soliciting sex

from children on-line. Although this topic has received a modest amount of attention from journalists, it virtually has been ignored by sociologists.

The current undertaking is unique because it represents the first study conducted on pedophiles who use the Internet. The data were gathered from an Usenet newsgroup that is frequented by pedophiles -- alt.support.boy-lovers. Scott and Lyman's (1968) classic formulation of accounts served as the conceptual framework for this study. The primary research question was: "How do pedophiles who use the Internet account for their deviance?" There were four secondary objectives to this analysis: (1) to ascertain the degree to which pedophiles who participate in this newsgroup provide validation to, and seek validation from, other users; (2) to investigate the extent to which pedophiles who participate in this forum provide information to, and seek information from, other users; (3) to assess the degree to which pedophiles use this newsgroup to seek correspondence with other pedophiles; and (4) to determine the extent to which users of this newsgroup are members of the pedophile organization NAMBLA (the North American Man/Boy Love Association).

A content analysis was performed on all of the postings from admitted pedophiles that appeared on the Usenet newsgroup alt.support.boy-lovers during a one month period (April 17, 1996 through May 17, 1996). The data were then aggregated for each individual poster. The final sample consisted of 41 admitted pedophiles who had contributed 93 postings during the period designated for data collection.

Frequencies were calculated for each of the major accounts and justificatory statements offered by these pedophiles. The bivariate relationships between each of these accounts/justificatory statements and several ancillary variables (i.e., seeking validation, providing validation, providing information, seeking correspondence with other pedophiles, NAMBLA affiliation, and an admission of engaging in sexual activity with children) were examined using the phi coefficient.

Slightly more than one-half of the pedophiles in the sample provided some type of account in defense of pedophilia or adults having sex with children. Thirty-nine percent of the pedophiles in the sample offered a denial of injury account; 31.7% proffered a condemnation of condemners account; 14.6% provided a BIRGing account; and only 4.9% used the appeal to loyalties account. Also, nearly one-fourth of these pedophiles used polythematic accounts. Every polythematic account included a condemnation of condemners, while 84.6% of the polythematic accounts contained a denial of injury. During the course of the study, three specific justificatory statements were identified. Although each of these was subsumed under the various types of accounts, they represented recurrent justificatory themes offered by these pedophiles. These justificatory themes, and the percentage of on-line pedophiles who offered them, were: the claim that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults (34.1%); the claim that pedophiles are a persecuted group (22.0%); the claim that sexual contact with an adult is beneficial to children (9.8%).

The bivariate analysis indicated that three of the ancillary variables were significantly related to some of the accounts/justificatory statements. First, NAMBLA affiliation was positively related to offering three types of accounts (i.e., condemnation of condemners, appeal to loyalties, and a polythematic account), as well as claiming that pedophiles are a persecuted group. Second, an admission of engaging in sexual activity with children was positively related to using a denial of injury account. Moreover, posters who admitted engaging in sexual activity with children were more likely than other posters to offer two particular justificatory statements -- the claim that children can consent to engaging in such activity and the claim that pedophiles are a persecuted group. Finally, providing information that should be of interest to other pedophiles was positively related to offering three types of accounts: BIRGing; condemnation of condemners; and a polythematic account.

INTERPRETATION OF THE RESULTS

Caution should be exercised in the interpretation of these results. First, these findings cannot be generalized to the entire population of pedophiles who use the Internet with any certitude. They are reflective of admitted pedophiles who participate in the Usenet newsgroup alt.support.boy-lovers. There is no way to know if the users of this particular group are similar to or different from pedophiles who participate in other computer forums (e.g., America On-Line). Second, these findings are probably not generalizable to pedophiles in the general population. On-line pedophiles are

probably of higher socioeconomic status than other pedophiles since they have the resources necessary to access expensive computer and telecommunications equipment. Although there are some problems associated with the generalizability of the results of this research, this study is important nonetheless since it represents the first substantive data on pedophiles who use the Internet. Furthermore, a major problem associated with previous research on pedophiles is the fact that the samples used were drawn from clinical and correctional populations (Finkelhor 1986). Therefore, the current undertaking can serve as a useful supplement to the extent body of knowledge on pedophilia.

Before addressing the specific results of this research, it is necessary to discuss the way in which the overall tone and demeanor of this newsgroup may contribute to the management of the deviant identity of pedophile. In the context of this newsgroup, pedophiles are referred to as "boy lovers". In fact, this newsgroup is named alt.support.boy-lovers. Sex between adults and children is called "love".¹ However, in the context of the larger society, pedophiles are referred to with such pejorative appellations as "pervert", "child molester", and "baby-raper". Thompson and Harred (1992) observed a similar tendency in some occupations. They noted that trash collectors call themselves "sanitational engineers", undertakers refer to themselves as "funeral directors", and dog catchers use the term "animal control

¹Interestingly, this technique is also used by the pedophile organization NAMBLA (the North American Man/Boy Love Association). The term "boy lover" is implied in this group's name.

officer" in a self-descriptive fashion. This technique has implications not only for the self-concept of the practitioners of these occupations, but also for the public perceptions of these vocational endeavors. Although it is highly unlikely that the use of the term "boy lover" will have any impact on public perceptions of pedophiles, it nonetheless may have important implications for the self-concept of pedophiles. Rather than conceiving of themselves as "child molesters" or "perverts", these pedophiles can now conceptualize themselves as adults who have a "romantic" interest in boys.

An important finding of this research is the fact that slightly more than half of the on-line pedophiles in this particular sample offered accounts in defense of pedophilia or adults having sex with children. Four individual types of accounts were offered: denial of injury; condemnation of condemners; BIRGing; and appeal to loyalties. The large percentage of pedophiles in the sample who offered accounts suggests that the giving of accounts constitutes an important part of the discussions on this particular newsgroup.

Interestingly, all of the accounts offered by these on-line pedophiles took the form of justifications, none took the form of excuses. The absence of excuses in this particular sample of pedophiles is probably a function of the social context in which these accounts are proffered. Those observers who have noted that pedophiles offer excuses for their deviant orientation and behavior (e.g., McCaghy 1968; Pollock and Hashmall 1991) studied pedophiles from clinical or correctional populations. The

excuses offered by these pedophiles were appeals to defeasibility and scapegoating. Pedophiles in such settings may attempt to deny complete responsibility for their actions to give a favorable impression to clinicians and criminal justice officials. It is highly plausible that they use such impression management strategies in an attempt to receive lenient treatment. On the other hand, the Internet is an entirely different social context. Most of the users of alt.support.boy-lovers are presumably pedophiles. They are certainly a more sympathetic audience than law enforcement officials or clinicians, and lack the power (or motivation) to sanction on-line pedophiles. Also, the anonymity of the Internet provides a forum where the pedophile does not need to be apologetic for his orientations or actions since it is unlikely that he will be personally identified by law enforcement officials.

The most popular account, which was offered by 39% of the pedophiles in this sample, was denial of injury. This involved the contention that sexual contact with an adult is not harmful to a child. The use of this type of account by pedophiles has been noted by other observers (Finkelhor 1979; Mayer 1985; Stermac and Segal 1989; Pollock and Hashmall 1991). Moreover, de Young (1989) found that this particular account was featured prominently in the literature of the pedophile organization NAMBLA. When an individual offers an account, they are trying to convince themselves as well as others of a certain point of view (Pogrebin et al. 1992). While it is highly unlikely that on-line pedophiles will persuade the general public that sexual contact with an adult will not harm a child, they may be trying to convince themselves

that such activity is not injurious to children. Furthermore, accounts can serve an exculpatory function (Scott and Lyman 1968; Benson 1985; Hamlin 1988). The denial of injury account may serve this function for pedophiles. This may assuage the guilt associated with engaging in (or desiring to engage in) sex with children. Moreover, accounts can facilitate future deviance (Weinstein 1980; Sheley 1980). Pedophiles who possess this particular attitude may be likely to molest children in the future.

Nearly one-third of the pedophiles in this sample offered a condemnation of condemners account. This involved shifting the focus from pedophiles and their behavior to the attitudes and behavior of those who would condemn them (e.g., police, social workers, mental health professionals, and parents). De Young (1989) also found this account present in her examination of NAMBLA literature. It appears that pedophiles use this strategy in an attempt to discredit their condemners. Although it is highly unlikely that this account will succeed in discrediting their condemners in the eyes of the general population, it may function to discredit them in they eyes of other pedophiles. Such an attitude may make pedophiles less sensitive to punishment and less amenable to treatment efforts.

A BIRGing account was proffered by 14.6% of the on-line pedophiles in this sample. This involved the assertion that "great men" have also been pedophiles. Although this particular account was relatively rare among these pedophiles, its presence is noteworthy nonetheless. The extant literature on accounts and pedophilia

does not contain any documentation of the existence of this account. Moreover, it appears to be somewhat of a rarity among deviants in general. Previously, the use of this account has only been documented in a study of female bodybuilders. These women deflected social disapproval by "basking in the reflected glory of the few glamorized, exceptionally attractive women bodybuilders" (Duff and Hong 1996, p.565). Pedophiles represent some of the most devalued individuals in contemporary society. The use of the BIRGing account allows them to feel a connection to noteworthy men such as Oscar Wilde, Allan Ginsberg, and many of the ancient Greek poets and philosophers. Consequently, this may function to enhance the self-esteem of the pedophiles who use this account.

Less than 10% of these on-line pedophiles offered an appeal to loyalties account. This consisted of claims of an allegiance to "children's liberation" or "children's rights". De Young (1989) found that this type of account was present in the literature produced by the pedophile organization NAMBLA. However, this particular justification is not an important accounting strategy for the on-line pedophiles included in this study. Only 2 of these 41 pedophiles used this account. Moreover, when they did so, it was always offered in a brief statement which appeared to be peripheral to the main focus of the respective posting.

About one-quarter of the pedophiles in this sample used a polythematic account. This type of account, which appealed to more than one defensibility, included some combination of the following: denial of injury; condemnation of

condemners; BIRGing; and appeal to loyalties. The number of these on-line pedophiles who offered a polythematic account suggests that many of them have complex accounting strategies. Every one of the polythematic accounts offered by the pedophiles in this sample included a condemnation of condemners, and approximately 86% of the polythematic accounts included a denial of injury. These two individual elements are the most important constituents of these polythematic accounts. In essence, the on-line pedophile who offers such an account is indicating that he believes that having sex with children is not wrong, and that the real wrongdoers are those who condemn such behavior (e.g., police, mental health professionals, and parents). It would certainly be difficult to rehabilitate such an individual because of the attitudes that he holds about his behavior and the authorities. Moreover, such a distorted belief system may be a catalysis for engaging in sexual behavior with children in the future.

Three specific justificatory statements were identified during the course of this research. The first one was the claim that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults. This was subsumed under the rubric of the denial of injury account. This statement was offered by 34.1% of the pedophiles in this sample. The use of this particular statement by pedophiles has also been documented in the clinical literature (Stermac and Segal 1989; Pollock and Hashmall 1991). The logic of this justificatory strategy appears to be straightforward. One of the main reasons for societal opposition to pedophilia is the widely held belief that children do not have the

capacity to give informed consent for participating in sexual activity with adults. Consequently, there is a societal consensus that such activity is inherently exploitative of children (McCaghy and Capron 1994). This particular justificatory statement is an attempt to challenge the dominant societal posture toward adult-child sex. Although it is doubtful that pedophiles will change societal attitudes about the issue of consent, they may very well convince themselves that children can consent to participate in sexual activity with an adult. This statement seems to be indicative of a deviant belief system which may be conducive to molesting children. A pedophile who thinks that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with an adult may be likely to misinterpret the innocent actions of a child to be sexual in nature and consequently molest that child.

The second justificatory statement, the claim of persecution, was offered by 22% of these on-line pedophiles. This consisted of the assertion that pedophiles are a persecuted group. Posters who offered this justificatory statement, which was classified as a condemnation of condemners account, frequently declared that law enforcement agents, social workers, and mental health professionals were conducting a draconian witch hunt against pedophiles. None of the scholarly literature on pedophilia has documented this particular justificatory statement. However, spokesmen for NAMBLA have made this assertion in the past (see Leo 1983; Hechler 1988). This statement can be used as an appeal to the sympathies of the general public. It implicitly seeks to link the status of pedophiles in contemporary society to

that of other oppressed groups. Pedophiles who have offered this justificatory statement made frequent references to witch hunts and the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. It is unlikely that these pedophiles will convince many members of the general public of this assertion. However, this particular justificatory statement may serve to convince pedophiles that the opposition they personally and collectively experience is "persecution" and "harassment". Pedophiles who hold such a belief pose a serious challenge to mental health professionals. It is doubtful that they would be amenable to any type of treatment or intervention since they believe that they have been "persecuted" by members of the mental health professions.

The final justificatory statement, the claim of benefit assertion, was offered by less than 10% of the on-line pedophiles in this sample. This statement, which is a type of denial of injury account, involves the claim that sexual contact with an adult is actually beneficial to a child. The use of this statement by pedophiles has been noted elsewhere (e.g., Barnard et al. 1989; de Young 1989; Stermac and Segal 1989). However, it does not appear to figure prominently in the accounting systems of these on-line pedophiles. For the few who used it, it may serve some sort of exculpatory function which relieves the guilt associated with engaging in (or desiring to engage in) sex with children. The remorse that may be associated with pedophilia can plausibly be eliminated (or at least partially ameliorated) through the belief that one is "helping" children.

One of the four ancillary objectives of this analysis was to examine the degree to which users of this newsgroup seek validation from, and provide validation to, other users. Slightly less than half (43.9%) of the on-line pedophiles in this sample contributed postings which provided validation to other users. These individuals provided advice, encouragement, and support to other users. This suggests that the provision of validation is an important function of this newsgroup. This is an especially significant finding since pedophiles tend to be socially isolated individuals (Lanning 1987; Prendergast 1991). However, the Internet can serve as a social consolidation mechanism by bringing sexual deviants together in a group setting (Durkin and Bryant 1995). Computer forums such as alt.support.boy-lovers provide a support system that was previously unavailable to pedophiles. Moreover, simply knowing that there are other pedophiles with similar feelings and experiences may also serve a validation function in and of itself. Approximately 15% of these on-line pedophiles made postings in which they were seeking validation for their orientation and/or behavior from other users. Despite the relatively small percentage of pedophiles who made such postings, their content appears to be additional evidence for the validation function of this newsgroup. Some of these particular postings discussed problematic issues facing pedophiles. For instance, one poster indicated that he felt so isolated that he was experiencing suicidal ideations. Another discussed how his automobile had been burned by neighbors who had discovered his deviant sexual orientation. Other users offered support and encouragement to both of these

pedophiles in subsequent posts. Furthermore, many other users may conceivably receive vicarious validation from reading this newsgroup. For instance, the aforementioned pedophiles are probably not the only users who have experienced suicidal ideations or had their property vandalized because of their pedophilic orientation. The support that these two received may provide affirmation to others who have had similar experiences.

Another ancillary objective of this research was to determine the extent to which pedophiles who participate in this newsgroup seek information from, and provide information to, other users. Approximately 40% of the pedophiles in this sample contributed posts that contained information that should be of interest to other pedophiles. These postings provided a wide assortment of information including how to contact NAMBLA, as well as how to obtain novels, poetry, and comic books for pedophiles. This suggests that the provision of information is a major function of this newsgroup. However, only 1 of the 41 pedophiles in this sample made a posting in which he was directly seeking information from other pedophiles. Although this frequency is especially low, it does not necessarily indicate that only one pedophile obtained information from this newsgroup. There was such a wide variety of information that appeared on this forum that it is plausible that pedophiles did not need to request the information that they were seeking since it was already made available by other users.

Another ancillary objective of this undertaking was to ascertain the degree to which pedophiles use this medium to seek contact and correspondence with other pedophiles. This involved a user making a request that other pedophiles privately communicate with him via electronic mail, conventional mail, or telephone. Nearly one-quarter of the on-line pedophiles in this sample made postings which indicated that they were seeking correspondence with other pedophiles. Several users had also indicated that they had in-person meetings with other pedophiles they had met via this newsgroup. This suggests that some pedophiles use this medium to network and form lasting relationships with other pedophiles. This is an especially significant finding since it appears to be additional evidence that the computer can serve as a social consolidation mechanism which brings like-minded persons together. Although pedophiles traditionally have been an isolated group of individuals, the computer can, and apparently does, bring them into direct contact with one another.

A final ancillary objective of this research was to determine the extent to which users of this newsgroup are members of the pedophile organization NAMBLA. Only 3 of these 41 on-line pedophiles claimed a NAMBLA affiliation. One of these individuals indicated that he was a member of NAMBLA's steering committee. None of the pedophiles in this sample indicated that they were involved with any pedophile organizations other than NAMBLA. However, the frequency for this variable may be misleading since these NAMBLA members frequently offered accounts in their postings. The results of the bivariate analysis indicated that NAMBLA affiliation was

positively related to several accounts/justificatory statements. These were: appeal to loyalties; condemnation of condemners; a polythematic account; and the claim that pedophiles are a persecuted group. These results suggest that involvement with NAMBLA has an effect on the accounting practices of these on-line pedophiles.

Plummer (1981, p.118) argued that:

... one of the central functions of deviant organizations (or indeed any organization) is the provision of a belief system (or ideology) which both legitimates the activities and sometimes structures the experience.

Similarly, Becker (1963, pp.38-39) noted that such organizations provide the deviant with rationales that:

... neutralize the conventional attitudes that the deviant may still find in themselves toward their own behavior ... The deviant who quiets his (sic) own doubts by adopting the rationale moves into a more principled and consistent kind of deviance.

NAMBLA's beliefs are reflected in the literature that the group publishes and widely distributes. In her analysis of literature published by NAMBLA, de Young (1989) found that accounts such as an appeal to loyalties and condemnation of condemners were commonplace. Some of the accounts she reported were quite complex and actually appealed to more than one defensibility. Moreover, NAMBLA spokesmen have frequently asserted that pedophiles are a persecuted group. The accounts provided by the on-line pedophiles who indicated a NAMBLA affiliation seem to reflect the group's ideology. Scores of other pedophiles will be exposed to NAMBLA's ideology because of their exposure to this newsgroup.

Nearly 20% of the on-line pedophiles in this sample admitted that they have engaged in sexual activity with children.² The results of the bivariate analysis indicated that making such an admission was positively related to offering the following accounts/justificatory statements: denial of injury; the claim that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults; and the claim that pedophiles are a persecuted group. The denial of injury account and the claim that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults probably serve an exculpatory function for the on-line pedophiles who have admitted to engaging in such behavior. There is a strong societal condemnation of adults who have engaged in sexual activity with children. Members of society refer to such individuals as "perverts", "child molesters", and "baby-rapers". Strong criminal penalties are typically imposed on these adults when they come to the attention of law enforcement officials. However, any guilt that these particular on-line pedophiles may experience because of the disapproval of their actions may be assuaged through the use of the denial of injury account and the claim that children can consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults justificatory statement. In essence, these on-line pedophiles are asserting that the child was not harmed by their actions and the child can consent to engaging in this activity. An admission of such behavior was also positively related to making the

²Although it is highly likely that more of these on-line pedophiles have molested children, there is no way to ascertain the actual number who have done so. Moreover, the admission of such behavior is a sociologically interesting variable since it involves a public acknowledgement of having molested a child.

claim that pedophiles are a persecuted group. This probably serves a pragmatic function. By claiming that police, social workers, and mental health professionals are engaging in a draconian crusade against pedophiles, these admitted child molesters can reconceptualize social control efforts as "persecution" and thus maintain a positive self-image.

Finally, contributing postings that provide information which should be of interest to other pedophiles was positively associated with three types of accounts: condemnation of condemners; BIRGing; and the polythematic variety. The demeanor of their postings seems to indicate that for these individuals the defense pedophilia is an intellectual rather than pragmatic concern. For instance, the BIRGing accounts were frequently fraught with historical information about famous pedophiles. Similarly, the condemnation of condemners accounts offered by this particular subset on-line pedophiles often contained discussions of historical persecutions of minorities or short comings of law enforcement officials, mental health professionals, and social workers. The intellectual nature of these individuals' accounting practices is also reflected in their tendency to provide polythematic accounts.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of this research certainly have implications for the sociological study of deviant behavior. The accounts framework proved to be an excellent conceptual tool for the sociological examination of this group of on-line pedophiles.

Scott and Lyman (1968, p.62) maintained that "a clarification of accounts will constitute a clarification of deviant phenomena." Accounts constituted a significant amount of the posting activity to this newsgroup. An examination of these accounts yielded useful insights into how these particular on-line pedophiles attempt to manage their deviant identities. Consequently, this undertaking provides a baseline of knowledge about individuals who are involved in an emerging deviant phenomenon.

These on-line pedophiles certainly make extensive use of accounts. Two specific accounts, denial of injury and condemnation of condemners, were particularly popular among this group of pedophiles. The BIRGing account figured prominently in the accounting systems of some of these on-line pedophiles. This is a noteworthy finding since there has been little previous documentation of deviants who use this particular account. When examining the use of accounts by other types of deviants, researchers should consider the presence (or absence) of the BIRGing account.

The results of this research also indicate that accounts have a greater complexity than is normally indicated in the literature. This is an especially significant oversight since accounts can be tremendously complex in the "real world" (Nichols 1990). Nearly one-quarter of these on-line pedophiles offered polythematic accounts. However, they are not the only deviants who proffer accounts that appeal to more than one defensibility. Although not originally conceptualized in such a manner, the extant literature contains examples of polythematic accounts. For instance, convicted murderers (see Ray and Simons 1987) and members of pedophile

organizations (see de Young 1989) have offered this type of account. Therefore, it is extremely important that sociologists involved in the study of accounts take this into consideration.

The use of the Internet by pedophiles, as well as wide assortment of other deviants, appears to have implications for social learning theory. Current formulations of this theory of deviance (e.g., Akers 1985) draw heavily from Burgess and Akers' (1966) differential association-reinforcement theory. Burgess and Akers (1966) incorporated theories of operant conditioning into a reformulation of Sutherland's (1947) differential association theory. According to this theory, deviant behavior, like non-deviant behavior, is learned mainly in interactions with primary groups. These primary groups, known as differential associations, serve as role models for deviant behavior. These differential associations not only provide instruction in the means for committing deviant acts, but they also provide reinforcement for such behavior. These groups also provide definitions which are favorable to deviant behavior. According to social learning theory, these definitions include "verbalizations, rationalizations, techniques of neutralizations, accounts, and disclaimers" (Akers 1994, p.97). These definitions are conducive to deviant behavior when, on balance, they outweigh the definitions of the deviant act as undesirable.

Although this research was not a formal test of social learning theory, its results certainly seem to be relevant to this theory nonetheless. According to social learning theory, accounts can be learned in the context of social interaction and may

be incorporated into deviant subcultures (Akers 1985). Pedophiles who read this newsgroup are frequently exposed to the accounts of other users. There is the distinct possibility that they may learn these accounts from other on-line pedophiles.

Furthermore, the pedophiles who participate in this newsgroup may serve as a quasi-primary group. For instance, the group's frequently asked questions list (see page 46 for an explanation of the FAQ list) states that this newsgroup:

... is intended to provide a sense of peer support for those having difficulties with their feelings, for boy lovers who feel isolated with their orientation, and for those who have no other avenue of discussion via a group such as this.

The results of this research indicate that this group has both a validation and information function. The user is exposed to definitions that portray pedophilia and adult-child sex in a positive light within the context of a supportive environment.

Based upon social learning theory, one may hypothesize that some users may develop, refine, or act on pedophilic desires because of their exposure to this forum. The case of one user provides anecdotal evidence which supports this position. This user wrote:

Because of this newsgroup, I realized only one and a half months ago that I am a boy lover. I laughed, I cried, and shared all your beautiful, sad, and funny postings. It was the first time in my life that someone showed feelings which seemed to be mine. Even I have to admit that I never was in love with a boy until now. Last week I found him and I want to be with him all the time ... His name is Lukas (not his real name). He is 13-years-old and he is the son of a friend I know from the University ... I fell in love with him the first second I saw him ... I look at him and imagine what we could do if we were alone.

While there is no way to systematically accept or reject this social learning hypothesis based on this research, behavioral scientists should be mindful of the possibility that exposure to such an on-line forum could have this effect.

The results of this research also have implications for the study and treatment of pedophilia. This study described a variety of accounts and justificatory statements offered by a group of on-line pedophiles. Pollock and Hashmall (1991, p.54) argued that the explanatory statements of pedophiles are derived from a finite number of themes "with a well defined logical and semantic structure." The results of this research, as well as a review of the relevant literature, indicate that this appears to be the case. What seems to be emerging is a readily identifiable and fairly well circumscribed set of explanatory statements for pedophilia and adult-child sex. These are:

Appeal to Defeasibility - the individual attributes his sexual misconduct to intoxication or some other factor which allegedly diminished his mental capacity.

Scapegoating - this involves blaming the victim. The actor asserts that the child initiated the sexual activity, or is promiscuous or a prostitute.

Denial of Injury - the individual claims that sexual activity with an adult is not injurious to children. This may include an assertion that children can consent to engaging in such activity or a claim that such activity is beneficial to children.

Condemnation of Condemners - the individual attempts to shift the focus from pedophiles and their behavior to the attitudes and behavior of those who would condemn them (e.g., police, social workers, mental health professionals, and parents). May include a claim that pedophiles are a persecuted group.

BIRGing - the individual claims that great men have also been pedophiles.

Appeal to Loyalties - the individual attempts to justify pedophilia and adult-child sex by claims of an allegiance to "children's liberation" or "children's rights".

It is important to be mindful of the fact that accounts can have a complex structure.

A pedophile can offer an explanatory statement which combines any two or more of the above accounts.

The previous typology of accounts has implications for the treatment of pedophilia. Stermac and Segal (1989, p.583) argued that the explanations of pedophiles represent cognitive distortions and that "these beliefs or attitudes themselves need to be considered as important treatment targets." Treatment implications derived from social learning theory would indicate the teaching of prosocial definitions (Williams & McShane 1994). Prosocial definitions could be provided to counteract each of these respective accounts or belief systems. The following list contains some possible suggestions:

Appeal to Defeasibility - there is no acceptable excuse, including intoxication, for an adult engaging in sexual activity with a child.

Scapegoating - it is not acceptable for an adult to blame a child for initiating sexual activity with them. Even if a child is promiscuous or a prostitute, this is not adequate grounds for an adult to engage in sexual activity with a child.

Denial of Injury - there is a wealth of scientific evidence which indicates that engaging in sexual activity with an adult is harmful to children. Some of these harmful effects may not be readily apparent to the pedophile since they may not become manifest until several years after the sexual abuse occurs. Furthermore, children simply do not have the capacity to consent to engaging in sexual activity with adults.

Society recognizes the fact that children do not have the fully developed mental capacity of adults in laws that prohibit them from voting, driving, purchasing firearms, and entering into legal contracts.

Condemnation of Condemners - this particular account has serious implications for those involved in the treatment of pedophiles since they are among those being condemned. It is important to make clear the fact that any alleged transgressions of law enforcement officers, social workers, or mental health professionals are not a sufficient justification for an adult to molest a child. Moreover, these individuals are not engaging in a draconian crusade against pedophiles. They are the duly appointed agents of social control of a society that strongly believes that adults who have sex with children constitute a serious social problem.

BIRGing - the mere fact that great men allegedly have been pedophiles does not provide an adequate justification for any orientation or behavior. Furthermore, many of the men that these pedophiles allude to were ancient Greeks. First, given the time that has elapsed since that society existed, there is a disagreement over whether or not these men were actually pedophiles. Second, ancient Greece is not contemporary America. The allegation that such behavior was accepted in ancient Greece does not negate the laws and mores of American society.

Appeal to Loyalties - The reasoning behind this account is flawed. This argument misquotes "the rights of children with the alleged right of pedophiles to have sexual access to children" (Gonsiorek 1994, p.34). Adults engaging in sexual activity with children is in no way "liberating" to children.

Another implication of this research is that not all pedophiles are social isolates. It has normally been assumed that pedophiles are isolated individuals who have little or no social contact with agemates (Lanning 1987; Prendergast 1991). However, this study indicates that some pedophiles are using the Internet to interact with other pedophiles. There are several other computer forums for pedophiles other than alt.support.boy-lovers. This suggests that hundreds, maybe even thousands, of

pedophiles are using the Internet to interact with like-minded individuals. Moreover, groups like NAMBLA provide an additional outlet for pedophiles to network.

Those persons involved in law enforcement need to be aware of the activities of pedophiles on the Internet. Pedophiles are utilizing this technology to traffic child pornography, meet children to molest, and communicate with other pedophiles. However, as with most forms of computer crime and deviance, the actions of pedophiles appear to have out-paced the ability of law enforcement to respond effectively (Carter 1995). Investigative strategies need to be developed to deal with this emerging social problem. Investigators should be cognizant that any given pedophile may be using a computer for deviant purposes. As Lanning (1987) suggested, a search warrant for the residence of a pedophile who is suspected of involvement in illegal activities should specify computer equipment and files. This can provide evidence of illegal activities. For instance, the results of this research indicate that some pedophiles make admissions of child molestation in their postings to computer newsgroups. Davis et al. (1995) recommended that the computer access of pedophiles should be limited as a condition of their probation. The results of this research buttress their recommendation. Even if a pedophile who is on probation does not use the computer for illegal purposes, he can still receive support for his orientation and activities via computer groups such as alt.support.boy-lovers.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of study raise some especially intriguing questions for future research. One especially important one is whether a computer forum like alt.support.boy-lovers is merely an outlet for the extant thoughts and feelings of pedophiles or whether it has the capacity to initiate and motivate sexually deviant behavior. This will be a particularly challenging research question to answer. A study designed to address this question would need to be conducted over a substantial period of time. Also, other computer forums for pedophiles should be included in such a study. Researchers could examine the postings made by scores of on-line pedophiles for an extended period of time using such a design. Since child molesters who target boys have the greatest number of victims (Burgess and Lottes 1987), if only a few of the users of groups like alt.support.boy-lovers are motivated to act on their pedophilic urges this would indicate that these computer forums are significantly contributing to the sexual abuse of children. If researchers found that these computer groups had inspired a dozen pedophiles to molest children, this may translate into hundreds (or even thousands) of victims.

The results of this research, along with the relevant academic literature on the topic of pedophilia, indicate that there are several readily identifiable accounts that pedophiles offer for their deviant orientation and behavior. However, this raises an important question: "Do these accounts play a direct role in the initiation and maintenance of patterns of sexual offending, or are they simply post hoc

rationalizations for past behavior or a deviant sexual orientation?" Future research that attempts to address this question would certainly be worthwhile. Moreover, it would be useful to determine whether these accounts are the creation of the individual pedophile or whether they are learned from exposure to the literature of groups such as NAMBLA or computer forums such as alt.support.boy-lovers.

Sociologists also need to examine other forms of deviant behavior that are reliant upon the computer. Durkin and Bryant (1995, p.197) noted that:

What seems to be conspicuously lacking are investigative efforts to document, explore, and analyze the newly emerging socially deviant uses of computers, founded on the unique capabilities, characteristics, and application of computer communication, especially the evolution of non-white-collar deviant and criminal behavior patterns.

Given the wide variety of deviants who are using the Internet, this certainly appears to be a significant oversight. For instance, pedophiles are not the only sexual deviants who are using the Internet. There are computer forums dedicated to nearly every conceivable form of sexual deviance including bestiality, coprophilia, sadomasochism, and transvestism, to mention but a few. Also, hate groups, such as White-supremacy and Holocaust-denial groups, are using the Internet to proselytize and organize. A former Ku Klux Klan official who runs a racist site called Stormfront claimed "we're reaching tens of thousands of people who never before had access to our point of view" (Kanaley 1996, p.05). Also, a number of children involved in bomb making incidents have received guidance and support from other Internet users (see Jackson 1989). There is a definite need for sociologists to be more attentive to the novel

configurations of deviant behavior which are reliant upon the computer. The mass media is beginning to provide glimpses into the use of the Internet for deviant purposes, but the topic still awaits systematic research by sociologists.

CONCLUSIONS

Although there has been a growing concern about the activities of pedophiles on the Internet, there has been no previous research on this topic. The data for this study were gathered from an Usenet newsgroup that is frequented by pedophiles -- alt.support.boy-lovers. The central focus of this investigation was the accounts that these on-line pedophiles offer for their deviant orientation and behavior. These accounts constituted a substantial amount of the posting activity to this newsgroup. More than half of the 41 on-line pedophiles in this sample offered some type of account. The two most popular types of accounts, denial of injury and condemnation of condemners, were offered by more than 30% of the on-line pedophiles in this sample. The two other types of accounts that were offered by these pedophiles, BIRGing and appeal to loyalties, were not as popular. Nearly 25% of these individuals offered polythematic accounts.

The results of this research indicate that the Usenet newsgroup alt.support.boy-lovers serves important functions for pedophiles. First and foremost, this forum serves as a social consolidation mechanism. It brings previously isolated individuals together in a group context. The results of this research indicate that several of these

pedophiles also use this medium as a means of establishing personal contact and correspondence with other pedophiles that extends beyond the context of this newsgroup. Furthermore, this network appears to serve a validation function for its users. These pedophiles often provide support, encouragement, and advice to each other. Simply knowing that there are other pedophiles with similar feelings and experiences can also contribute to this validation function. Moreover, this newsgroup functions to provide information for these pedophiles. Users of this forum can access a plethora of information that should be of interest to them, ranging from how to join NAMBLA to where to purchase erotic novels for pedophiles.

Computer forums such as alt.support.boy-lovers constitute a significant development. The Internet affords pedophiles the opportunity to come together in a supportive environment where they do not have to be apologetic for their actions or orientation. Because the Internet is a global network, these groupings transcend national boundaries. Members of pedophile organizations such as NAMBLA can expose hundreds (if not thousands) of other pedophiles to this groups' ideology via the Internet.

The emergence of these computer groupings of pedophiles is reason for serious concern. The Internet provides an unprecedented source of validation and information for pedophiles. Users are exposed to accounts which define pedophilia and adult-child sex in a positive light. There is the distinct possibility that some individuals will develop, refine, or act on pedophiliac inclinations because of their exposure to this

medium. Participation in such a computer group may also make pedophiles less amenable to treatment and less sensitive to punishment. If computer groups such as alt.support.boy-lovers inspire only a few pedophiles to molest children, this would translate into hundreds (or even thousands) of victims. However, given the popularity of the Internet, it is plausible that more than a few pedophiles will be adversely influenced by their exposure to these computer forums. In any case, these groups would be significantly contributing to the sexual abuse of children.

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APPENDIX A
RECORDING SHEET

Poster Information

Poster Identification Number

Admission of Orientation (0=No 1=Yes)

NAMBLA Affiliation (0=No 1=Yes)

Admission of Behavior (0=No 1=Yes)

Accounts/Justificatory Statements

Any Type of Account Offered (0=No 1=Yes)

Condemnation of Condemners (0=No 1=Yes)

Claim That Pedophiles Are a Persecuted Group Justificatory Statement (0=No 1=Yes)

Appeal to Loyalties (0=No 1=Yes)

Denial of Injury (0=No 1=Yes)

Claim That Sexual Contact with an Adult is Beneficial to Children Justificatory Statement (0=No 1=Yes)

Claim the Children Can Consent to Engaging in Sexual Activity with Adults Justificatory Statement (0=No 1=Yes)

Polythematic Account (0=No 1=Yes)

Other Variables

Seeking Validation (0=No 1=Yes)

Providing Validation (0=No 1=Yes)

Seeking Information (0=No 1=Yes)

Providing Information (0=No 1=Yes)

Seeking Correspondence with Other Pedophiles (0=No 1=Yes)

VITA

Keith F. Durkin was born on July 24, 1967, in Kearny, New Jersey. He attended Marywood College in Scranton, Pennsylvania from 1985-1990. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology, magna cum laude, in May 1990. He began his graduate studies in Sociology at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in August 1990. He received his Masters degree in 1992. Keith's work has been published in *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal* and the *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education*. He is currently employed as an Assistant Professor of Sociology in the Department of Social Sciences at McNeese State University in Lake Charles, Louisiana.



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