Comment

REPLY TO DICKEMANN
The Ethology of Variant Sexology

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This paper is a response to Dickemann’s review of *Pedophilia: Biosocial Dimensions*. Her main criticism of the book is its inappropriate application of ethology to human sexology and its natural variations. She proposes instead the superiority of the "social constructionist" perspective. The "Phylogenetic Fallacy" of which her review speaks results from her erroneously having attributed ethological arguments about the phylogeny of coordinated motor patterns and sensory releasing stimuli to higher levels of behavioral-ecological strategies to which such arguments were never applied. Because no convincingly adaptive function of human pedophilia could be found at this higher level, as a working hypothesis, variant erotic age and gender orientations were both tentatively conceptualized as by-products of Darwinian natural selection for heterosexual "adultophilia." The social and political implications of this perspective, when compared to social constructionism, are discussed.

KEY WORDS: Biosocial; Child sexual abuse; Child molester; Ethology; Evolution; Homosexuality; Natural selection; Pedophilia; Sexology; Social constructionism.

UTILITY OF THE ETHOLOGICAL MODEL

Dickemann’s impassioned review of *Pedophilia: Biosocial Dimensions* has an obvious political as well as scientific agenda. Her overall conclusion of the book is that “Lorenzian ethology can provide no new insights into
the varieties of human sexual behavior” (1992:82) and “can only give comfort to those intent on reimposing sexual fascism” (1992:84). She goes on, “This is no mere scholarly matter. It is from volumes such as this that public policy . . . [is] drawn” (1992:84). Yet, by her own outspoken intolerance of a scientific paradigm different from her own, she is promulgating the very type of fascism about which she warns.

As indicated by its title, “Phylogenetic Fallacies and Sexual Oppression,” and expanded upon within the text, her review is an outright rejection of the very foundations of ethology (Lorenz 1981, 1987). Her argument, however, is built upon a false premise. The ethological chapters in the book describe behavior at the lower level of coordinated motor patterns, such as lordosis in rodents or feminine (effeminate) mannerisms in humans. She argues at the higher level of individual behavioral strategies or repertoires, such as living in single- or multimale groups or in monogamous or polygamous unions. Also at this higher level would be the age and gender attributes of persons with whom one interacts sexually. This higher level of behavioral analysis is used in behavioral ecology and sociobiology. When similarities across species are found in behaviors at this higher level, they are almost always similarities by analogy (common function) rather than by homology (common origin), a distinction very well understood by all ethologists (Lorenz 1974).

Nowhere in the book are behavioral strategies or repertoires at the higher level of the whole individual, including the strategies or repertoires involved in adult males having sexual relations with children, related to phylogeny. It is precisely because no convincingly adaptive function of the human pedophilic repertoire emerged that it was not analyzed at that level. The book’s conclusion is that pedophilia per se had not been selected for by natural selection and that human pedophilia had no phylogeny and was simply a by-product of Darwinian natural selection for heterosexual “adultophilia.” So what is the phylogenetic fallacy of which Dickemann speaks?

Selectionist hypotheses, which are amenable to higher-level behavioral ecology or sociobiological analysis, have in the past been applied by others to variant erotic gender orientations. The two most well known of these hypotheses are that homosexual adults are altruistic “nest helpers” (Wilson 1978) or that they are “non-philanderers” (Weinrich 1987). No one prior to or after the publication of Pedophilia has ever suggested a similar selectionist hypothesis for pedophilia.

In the by-product of selection hypothesis for human pedophilia the assumption is that natural selection, acting on individuals, indirectly configures human populations so the average male is sexually attracted to the attributes of nubile females (see Buss 1989; Symons 1989).