Introduction to “Sex across the Ages: Restoring Intergenerational Dynamics to Queer History”

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Abstract • The introduction situates the historiography on queer intergenerational sex in the realm of scholarship on queer history, the history of childhood, and the literature on the significance of chronological age. It lays out three broad schemas that have organized queer intergenerational sex—looking at it as a phallic economy where boys submitted to older men in ways that were akin to women; as a function of pederastic or pedophilic desires; and as abuse—and also explores the overlap and permutations among these categories. It then introduces the six articles in this forum, elucidating their central arguments and the contributions that they make to this dynamic field.

Keywords • desire, historiography, history of childhood, history of sexualities, intergenerational sex, queer history, chronological age.

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From the field’s very inception, scholars of the queer past have noted, though sometimes in passing, the centrality of age asymmetry in structuring how same-sex sex has been understood and practiced. In the foundational work of classicist David Halperin, who was building on the work of Michel Foucault, age (as well as class and status) asymmetry was key to how ancient Greeks structured sexual pairings between male citizens and the young men they mentored and penetrated. Some of the earliest accounts of queer life in the United States by George Chauncey and Peter Boag, among others, noted the practice of older “wolves” or “jockers” maintaining sexual and sometimes emotional relationships with “lambs,” “preshuns,” or “punks.” In most of these pairings, youthfulness acted as something of a stand-in for femininity, which had the effect of making it seem as if it was not, in fact, *same-sex* sex at all, because the youthful partner was acted upon in ways that mimicked the role women were expected to play in sexual relations. And yet, despite the key role that age asymmetry has played in structuring historical same-sex sex, as an object of study unto itself it has seen relatively little attention. It is always there, but rarely is it the focus of inquiry.¹

While the foregoing examples all concern sex among men, histories of women's same-sex sex have also demonstrated instances of age asymmetry. Some scholars believe that Archaic Greek poet Sappho, perhaps the original lesbian, and certainly the reason for the name, had one significantly younger lover. The Ladies of Llangollen, the name given to Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, the celebrated Irish couple known for their hospitality and their patronage of the arts, were separated by sixteen years, meeting in 1768 when Ponsonby was only thirteen. They lived together for more than fifty years and are buried together near their home, Plas Newydd, in North Wales. Victorian poets Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, aunt and niece, enjoyed a forty-year romantic and sexual relationship with one another, writing together under the pen name Michael Field, the one name indicating their inseparability. These examples of age asymmetry between women, however, appear perhaps to be incidental to the relationships, unlike the central role that age difference has played in histories of men's same-sex desire and relationships. Indeed, in the six articles collected here on the theme of intergenerational same-sex sex, five concern men, and the sixth, on late twentieth-century US lesbians, demonstrates that some adult women's discomfort about sex with younger women and girls was a reaction to their perceptions of the role of intergenerational sex among gay men.²

Despite the fact that historians clearly have written about the subject, or I would be unable to recount these examples, there has not been, as yet, much attention paid to just how definitional age asymmetry has been in structuring same-sex sex and relationships. In other words, the intergenerational nature of various instances of same-sex sex is certainly noted by the historians who study it, but the theme has never gained traction or centrality within the historiography.³ Part of what accounts for this state of affairs, as Rachel Hope Cleves explores in her article in this forum, is queer historians' well-founded desire to distance current queer people, gay men especially, from the taint of pedophilia. Because connections between pedophilia and homosexuality have loomed large in the popular imagination in recent years, stemming in part from conservative efforts to discredit the gay rights movement, some scholars may be leery of forthright discussions of the role that age difference has played in structuring various forms of queer relations in the past. Fears about the effects of such writings on perceptions of queer people today may also be compounded by worries about the consequences for particular queer researchers if they come to be associated with age-differentiated sex and relationships.⁴

Fear on the part of scholars about being perceived as apologists for pedophilia can certainly be credited with some of the silence on queer age-differentiated sex, especially when related to children specifically (as opposed to intergenerational relationships between two adults). Even in the realm of studies of heterosexuality, however, longstanding patterns of intergenerational sex, relationships, and marriage have seen very little attention. The notable exception to this claim is the study of child marriage, especially in

India.⁵ In part, this may be because the power that inhered in the usual configuration of such relationships—older man with younger woman/girl—was primarily understood as being a difference of gender, not age. A girl's or a woman's youth was part of what defined her as subordinate in her relationship with an older man, but it was trumped by the fact of her femaleness, which would remain constant even as the couple aged. In heterosexual relationships, in other words, gender difference simply had more consequence than age difference. But as I have argued elsewhere, age difference was actually partially responsible for creating the gendered contrast of heterosexuality. Throughout human history, most men have been older than their wives, an age relation that has defined masculinity and femininity in the first place, with wives' femininity enhanced by their youth and men's masculinity by their maturity.⁶

The point remains, however, that even as most historians writing about sexuality or marriage have noted the prevalence of age disparity among their subjects, they have not generally explored the meanings of that disparity, how it is related to gendered expectations for relationships writ large, and the functions both of youth and maturity as stages of life. This may be because, until relatively recently, even historians writing about the social history of gender and the family have not paid enormous attention either to childhood and youth as objects of study, or to chronological age as a category of analysis. Philippe Ariès's *Centuries of Childhood*, published in French in 1960 and translated into English in 1962, is generally credited with being the first study to argue that the very idea of childhood, and hence the historical experience of young people, has changed significantly over time. While later historians have questioned many of Ariès's claims and uses of evidence—specifically his reliance upon portraiture to suggest that children were thought of as smaller versions of adults—the basic observation that childhood is historically constructed still holds, and it indeed now seems so logical as to be beyond dispute. While there now exist societies and journals exclusively dedicated to the study of childhood and youth, most are of relatively recent vintage. The Society for the History of Children and Youth (SHCY), an international organization, was founded only in 2001 and its *Journal for the History of Childhood and Youth* (JHCY) followed in 2008. Historians of childhood themselves have not been especially eager to tackle the subject of children's sexuality, even though fundamental insights from childhood studies tell us that what may seem distasteful or abusive to us might well have been understood as normal to children and to those around them in earlier eras.⁷

Chronological age, as either a subject or as a category of analysis, remains even more understudied. Social historians have long relied on age in order to sort their subjects, and have recognized that age's use by governments became more widespread in the later nineteenth century with the rise of state bureaucracies in many places around the world. However, when in 1989 Howard Chudacoff published *How Old Are You?*—on the rise of age

consciousness in American culture—it might have been the only book dedicated to the history of age in and of itself. Other scholars were slow to follow Chudacoff's lead. It was not until the twenty-first century that many Anglophone scholars began to engage the history of age grading and age consciousness in meaningful ways. Among the more important works was Holly Brewer's *By Birth or Consent*, which argues that age came to have greater import in statutory law as a result of lawmakers' desire to differentiate children from adults, which itself was a function of early modern understandings of the necessity of consent for governance, the kind of consent that only an adult was presumed to possess. As a result, primarily during the eighteenth century age thresholds were both instituted or raised in many facets of Anglo-American law as a way to protect minors from the responsibilities of adulthood. In most cases, however, scholars have ignored the importance of chronological age, and its malleability, to understanding when subjects in the past have been perceived as capable of consent.⁸

In the history of male same-sex sex, we can see from the extant historiography that age has been a central organizing principle in three primary ways. (As yet, the literature does not indicate that age has been an organizing principle among same-sex desiring women.) First, until the early twentieth century among men who did not identify as homosexual, being an older partner in sex and assuming the penetrative position was a way to maintain one's masculinity and avoid compromising one's identity as a man. This was a schema dominated by sexual *act*, not object choice, and so long as boys and male youth performed as women, their anatomical maleness was beside the point. Age difference worked as something of a script for sexual relations, dictating who assumed which role in sex in ways that were usually analogous to gender: the younger partner was feminized and penetrated either orally, anally, or interfemorally. Of course, some people surely did not always follow the script, but most evidence we have from a variety of locations and periods indicates that this was the expectation for sexual contact between two people who were both biologically male, who were separated by their ages, and who likely did not identify as gay or queer (those identities either not yet in existence or only inchoate). It was an economy governed by older men's pursuit of phallic pleasure and it gradually became less popular as homosexuality, as a discrete identity category defined via object choice, supplanted it.⁹

Second, both before and after the emergence of homosexuality, some men have understood their same-sex desires as being specifically geared toward male youth or boys. For these men, and unlike those in the first schema, the sexual act and their role within it was often less important than sexual object choice. This meant that some men who desired sex with youth were not necessarily concerned with taking the active or penetrative position. From ancient Greece through the early twentieth century, men who desired boys or male youth have described this orientation and practice as pederasty. In 1896, Richard von Krafft-Ebing coined the terms "pedophilia"

and “ephebophilia” to denote sexual desire for children and for mid-to-late adolescents, respectively. Ephebophilia never gained much traction as a term, and most historians agree that even pedophilia did not enter popular discourse until well into the twentieth century—most identify the late 1970s and 1980s as a key turning point—when it was often used as a catch-all for any desire for minors. Nevertheless, whether or not they were able to identify with a diagnostic category, it is clear that some men have well understood their desires as centering on boys and male youth. Indeed, the newsboy in the United States, the telegraph boy in the United Kingdom, the Sicilian boy made famous in the photographs of Wilhelm von Gloeden, and the boys in so-called “Uranian” poetry were central preoccupations for some same-sex desiring men in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, not just because some such boys were perceived as being amenable to transactional sex, but because of their youthfulness as well.¹⁰

The first two schemas may be seen as *ipso facto* exploitative by contemporary readers, but many of the youth involved at the time might have disagreed, especially those who were involved in commercial sex, an issue that I explore below. The third schema, by contrast, focuses squarely on abuse, on instances where children and youth are literally forced into sex. In this schema, age asymmetry, or more precisely an adult’s power vis-à-vis the relative powerlessness of children, can act primarily as a mechanism for coercing compliance and maintaining silence. This is regardless of what sexual acts are themselves being enacted upon young bodies or extracted from them. In widespread cases of abuse, such as incest or the epidemic abuse of boys and girls by Catholic priests, there may be some overlap between the first and second schemas. That is, some abuse may be circumstantial, with its roots in the fundamental power differentials between adults and minors, as well as in the availability of children. It may also have been structural and therefore based in some adults’ desires for children and youth specifically. While it is unlikely that we will ever know definitively, it seems probable that a combination of the two best explains these widespread tragedies.¹¹

There have been, of course, various overlaps and permutations in these three general schemas. As a number of historians have noted, one instance of overlap was that even under systems of age-asymmetrical sex where boys were treated like women and older “normal” men could have access to both, some men always expressed greater interest in boys than others. Their greater same-sex desires were facilitated by a system of age-asymmetrical sex that did not stigmatize acting on those desires. In another permutation, an older man’s effeminacy or fixation on a same-sex object might make him the more likely to be penetrated, or a younger man’s working-class status as “trade” might make him more likely to be felled during oral sex. Finally, what looks like abuse to an observer—especially an observer affiliated with the law or the police—may not have been experienced that way by the child or youth involved, as a number of the contributors to this forum make clear.¹²

Most agree that the period of the greatest flux in the meanings attached to age, sexual identity, and sexual role, certainly in the United States, was the early twentieth century precisely because homosexuality itself was becoming solidified as an identity centered on object choice, not sexual act or gender presentation. This had obvious consequences for the role of age asymmetry in sexual relations. As Kate Fisher and Jana Funke have recently shown, sexologists in the early twentieth century argued that what constituted homosexuality as a sexual orientation in the first place was an attraction to *adults* of the same sex, not underage youth. If homosexuality could be cordoned off from what is now seen by many as the sexual exploitation of children, perhaps those so named by the category could avoid persecution. While sexologists might have early on elaborated a definition for homosexuality that excluded attraction to youth, people on the ground (including self-protective formulators of these ideals like John Addington Symonds) were not always so easily and quickly persuaded. Celebration of pederasty has enjoyed a long afterlife, as is evidenced by the existence of the North American Man Boy Love Association, among other groups. Indeed, inclusion or exclusion of pederasts under the umbrella of gay rights organizing has led to some notable public squabbles.¹³

The schemas above primarily focus on the desires and actions of the older partners, as does much of what little historiography exists on intergenerational same-sex sex. Partially this is because the sources for evaluating children's and youth's sexual desires are harder to come by, but it also clearly relates to the tendency by many to view all childhood and youth sexual activity with older people as inherently abusive. Sometimes, of course, it is, as children themselves have made clear. But some scholars have noted a number of reasons that youthful people have quite willingly engaged in intergenerational sex: love, desire, commerce, confirmation of their own gender or sexual identity, and lack of access to same-aged sexual partners (of either sex). Of course, these reasons overlap significantly with the reasons that any person might search out sex; it thus bears remembering that, in some intergenerational sex between same-sex partners, age difference has largely been incidental.¹⁴

The articles collected here explore many of the permutations discussed above and focus both on why some people sought out intergenerational sex and on how that sex was understood by the societies around them. Using the most capacious definition of inter- or cross-generational sex among the articles assembled here, Zeb Tortorici's article explores Catholic priests' abuse of a multiracial group of parishioners in a variety of Spanish colonies in present-day Latin America and the Philippines. Tortorici argues that, regardless of chronological age difference, sexual relations between priests and parishioners were structured as intergenerational because of priests' role as fathers to their congregants, or spiritual children. He also demonstrates that printed confessional manuals were one form of staging this cross-generational abuse, these manuals exhorting priests to solicit ever more specific

details about sexual sins, the description of which sometimes led to them committing sexual abuse itself. The manuals, written in the past and used by priests in the future, actually encouraged an intergenerational chain of abuse. Tortorici's article especially encourages historians to think about the manifold ways that "generation" itself might structure sexual acts—in this case abusive ones—outside of the parameters of difference in chronological age.

Also examining intergenerational sex in the context of abuse by an adult in a position of power, Tuğçe Kayaal's article focuses on the Ottoman Empire in the era of World War I. Kayaal examines records pertaining to accounts of abuse of a girl and multiple boys by a headmaster of a home for orphan boys, Münir Bey, in the town of Konya in present-day Turkey. Kayaal's argument focuses not so much on what Bey actually did, which most agreed constituted some form of abuse, but rather on a change in perception, by the Ministries of War and Interior and other officials, of Bey's behavior in light of new understandings of manhood and citizenship in the late Ottoman Empire. Kayaal shows that officials knew that Bey had earlier raped an Armenian girl and yet appointed him to the headmastership nonetheless. Only when they found out that he had "broken" the manhood of boys in his care did they step in, the same-sex intergenerational coercion having crossed a line now seen as incompatible with the gendered order during wartime. Kayaal points to the ways that dual axes of gender and age structured how similar acts were perceived by officials, and links them to concerns about the nation-state and the constitution of citizenship.

On its face, Rachel Hope Cleves's article for this forum might seem to share much in common with Tuğçe Kayaal's—an older man has transactional sex with younger boys—but there are also numerous differences, primarily in the understanding of the sex by the boys and by the men's peers. Cleves's article is both an exploration of one notorious pederast, Norman Douglas, and a meditation on why historians have been reluctant to fully explore the dynamics of intergenerational sex that they find in their sources. Cleves echoes some of what I briefly sketched out here, expanding on earlier work that explored the same questions and locating the birth of the field of the history of sexuality at precisely the moment that Americans first became panicked about child sexual abuse, which likely accounts for the reluctance of historians of sexuality to fully explore this aspect of the queer past.¹⁵ Norman Douglas proves an especially productive site for historicizing pederasty, partially because he so meticulously documented his desire for children (usually those between the ages of ten and fourteen) and because he was never secretive about it. Indeed, his flouting of social convention via pederasty was a large part of his appeal, as Cleves notes, even as it also led to his arrest on numerous occasions. Cleves's article is especially provocative in documenting two related phenomena. First, while many of Douglas's sexual relations were brief and transactional, he also had numerous longer-term relationships, many of them arranged with his sexual partners' parents, in-

dicating that pederasty enjoyed acceptance not just for Douglas's literary fans, but also in many European cultures that did not see children's sex with adults as particularly problematic. Second, he went on to have decades-long nonsexual epistolary relationships with these former child-lovers, complicating contemporary psychologists' claims that adult-child sex is inherently abusive. Cleves's article leads us to consider whether intergenerational sex is perhaps only traumatic when it is perceived that way *at the time*.

The next two articles, by Alessio Ponzio and Averill Earls, also consider cases of intergenerational transactional sex, though with older youth. Ponzio focuses on 1950s Italy, a period in which same-sex sex was not legally proscribed; nevertheless cultural, religious, and political condemnation of men perceived to be homosexual was harsh. That said, a vibrant culture of men having sex with men flourished in Italy, particularly in its large cities but elsewhere as well. Relying on accounts from the popular press as well as the writings of American sexologist Alfred Kinsey and British journalist Michael Davidson, Ponzio demonstrates that intergenerational sex between men and Italian youth was rampant during the period. He shows also that popular condemnation of that sex was reserved for the older men who alone were perceived to be homosexual. Little consternation was expressed about Italian youth who provided the transactional sex, which is precisely what allowed for the subculture to flourish in the first place, the youth seeing their engagement with older men as a phase through which they might pass, but certainly not determinative of any kind of sexual identity. Precisely because the sex was intergenerational *and* transactional, Italian authorities expressed little worry about the youth involved. While the animus directed at their paying patrons is surely familiar to us today, that so little concern was expressed about those they paid indicates that Italians at midcentury were living under a different set of cultural values from our own.

In her article on Dublin in the era of World War II, Averill Earls offers us a different scenario with some similar contours. Using criminal records for gross indecency, Earls investigates one particularly rich set of records, that for forty-one-year-old State Solicitor Ronald Brown and his seventeen-year-old lover, Leslie Price. Like the players in the articles by Cleves and Ponzio, this relationship was somewhat transactional: Brown was able to offer material comfort and goods to Price, partially in exchange for Price's body and affections. But Earls argues that the records in this case show that what Brown and Price shared was likely more than that, and that both recognized it as such, Price by his own telling when interrogated by police and Brown through the way he spoke about Price with others and his introduction of Price to friends. While this is just one case, the fact that its record is so rich leads to Earls's larger point, which is that seeing all intergenerational same-sex sex as inherently exploitative or as merely transactional misses out on what it might also be: affectionate and loving, even if also marked by fundamental inequalities, those inequalities presumably growing with the size of the age asymmetry.¹⁶

Amanda Littauer's article covers the most recent period of all six articles and partially because of that also includes the most voices by young people who were themselves involved in intergenerational same-sex relationships, some of them interviewed by oral historians. It also focuses on women, the only one of the six contributions to focus on female same-sex sex and desire. Littauer's findings are striking. First, her sources very clearly indicate that youthful lesbians both desired and undertook relationships with older women during the 1970s and 1980s era of lesbian feminism. Sometimes queer girls sought out older lesbians because they could not find any other same-sex desiring girls their own age, but others looked to particular women simply because they were desirable in and of themselves. They looked for mentorship as well as love and sex. Littauer also offers powerful evidence that many of the adult lesbians in these relationships, or those who were merely approached by queer girls, were very much influenced by discourses of pedophilia that circulated about queer men, and many were made nervous by them. The adult lesbians in Littauer's article, because it is set in the most recent past of all six articles, in some way encapsulate the feelings that contemporary historians also have about investigating the intergenerational same-sex past: some degree of interest, but also a generalized queasy nervousness.

The articles collected here demonstrate that historians of sexuality need to move beyond that queasy nervousness, precisely because the payoff is so rich in understanding how sexuality has responded to various cultural factors in any given environment. Beyond this foundational insight, it is also the case that focusing on the intergenerational nature of some sexual interactions elucidates how homosexuality has come to have the particular parameters it does in the modern world. And many of these articles show us the moments of transition where age played a significant factor in determining whether a sexual interaction was permissible or not, and for whom. In sum, paying careful attention to the dynamics of intergenerational sex can only enrich the history of sexuality more broadly.

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Notes

1. David M. Halperin, "Is There a History of Sexuality," in *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, and David M. Halperin (New York: Routledge, 1993), 416–431; Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, vol. 2 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990); George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York: Basic, 1994), 65–98; Peter Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 15–88.
2. Judith P. Hallett, "Beloved Cleis," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica*, New Series, 10 (1982): 21–31, doi:10.2307/20538708; Fiona Brideoake, *The Ladies of Llangollen: Desire, Indeterminacy, and the Legacies of Criticism* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2017); Emma Donoghue, *We Are Michael Field* (London: Bello, 2014); Martha Vicinus, "The Adolescent Boy: Fin De Siècle Femme Fatale?" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, no. 1 (1994): 90–114, here 94, 103, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3704081>. See Vicinus, "Adolescent Boy," also on the eroticization of the adolescent boy in *fin-de-siècle* lesbian fiction.
3. There are certainly exceptions to this rule. See Steven Maynard, "Horrible Temptations': Sex, Men, and Working-Class Male Youth in Urban Ontario," *Canadian Historical Review* 78, no. 2 (1997): 191–235, doi:10.3138/CHR.78.2.191; Kate Fisher and Jana Funke, "The Age of Attraction: Age, Gender, and the History of Modern Male Homosexuality," *Gender & History* 31, no. 2 (2019): 266–283, doi:10.1111/1468-0424.12437; Don Romesburg, "'Wouldn't a Boy Do?' Placing Early-Twentieth-Century Male Youth Sex Work into Histories of Sexuality," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18, no. 3 (2009): 367–392, doi:10.1353/sex.0.0061; Stephen Robertson, "'Boys, of Course, Cannot be Raped': Age, Homosexuality, and the Redefinition of Sexual Violence in New York City, 1880–1955," *Gender & History* 18, no. 2 (2006): 357–379, doi:10.1111/j.1468-0424.2006.00433.x; Elise Chenier, "The Natural Order of Disorder: Pedophilia, Stranger Danger and the Normalising Family," *Sexuality & Culture* 16 (2012): 172–186, doi:10.1007/s12119-011-9116-z; Steven Angelides, "Historicizing Affect, Psychoanalyzing History: Pedophilia and the Discourse of Child Sexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* 46, no. 1–2 (2003): 79–109, doi:10.1300/J082v46n01_02.
4. See also Rachel Hope Cleves, "From Pederasty to Pedophilia: Sex between Children or Youth and Adults in U.S. History," *History Compass* 16, no. 1 (2018): e12345, doi:10.1111/hic3.12435; and Angelides, "Historicizing Affect," 79–85. In one particularly high-profile case, students have protested outside the home of University of Texas Classics Professor Thomas Hubbard; see María Méndez, "UT Students Protest at Professor's House over his Writings on Sexual Relations between Men and Boys," *The Dallas Morning News*, 17 December 2019, <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2019/12/17/ut-students-protest-professors-house-over-his-writings-on-sexual-relations-between-men-and-boys/>.
5. Among many others, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Ishita Pande, *Sex, Law, and the Politics of Age: Child Marriage in India, 1891–1937* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2020); and Ashwini Tambe, *Defining Girlhood in India: A Transnational History of Sexual Maturity Laws* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019).

6. Nicholas L. Syrett, "Age Disparity, Marriage, and the Gendering of Heterosexuality," in *Heterosexual Histories: Identity and Desire in North America across Four Centuries*, ed. Rebecca L. Davis and Michele Mitchell (New York: New York University Press, forthcoming).
7. Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, trans. Robert Baldick (London: Cape, 1962); Colin Heywood, "Centuries of Childhood: An Anniversary—And an Epitaph?" *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 3, no. 3 (2010): 341–365, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/421950>; SHCY website: <https://www.shcy.org/about/mission-bylaws/>; JHCY website: <https://www.press.jhu.edu/journals/journal-history-childhood-and-youth>. Outside of children's history, some scholars, particularly in the realm of psychology and cultural studies, have tackled children's sexuality. See, for instance, R. Danielle Egan, *Becoming Sexual: A Critical Reappraisal of the Sexualization of Girls* (London: Polity, 2013); R. Danielle Egan and Gail Hawkes, *Theorizing the Sexual Child in Modernity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); and James Kincaid, *Erotic Innocence: The Culture of Child Molesting* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998). And scholars have written much about adolescent sexuality. See, for instance, Amanda Littauer, *Bad Girls: Young Women, Sex, and Rebellion before the Sixties* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); John C. Spurlock, *Youth and Sexuality in the Twentieth-Century United States* (New York: Routledge, 2016); and Mary E. Odem, *Delinquent Daughters: Protecting and Policing Adolescent Female Sexuality in the United States, 1885–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).
8. Howard P. Chudacoff, *How Old Are You? Age Consciousness in American Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, and the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For a summary of the historiography on age, see Corinne T. Field and Nicholas L. Syrett, "Introduction" to "AHR Roundtable on Chronological Age: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *American Historical Review* 125, no. 2 (2020): 370–384, doi:10.1093/ahr/rhaa184. For those scholars who have looked at the construction of age itself in relation to sexuality, see Stephen Robertson, "Age of Consent Law and the Making of Modern Childhood in New York City, 1886–1921," *Journal of Social History* 35, no. 4 (2002): 781–798, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3790611>; Ishita Pande, "Sorting Boys and Men: Unlawful Intercourse, Boy-Protection, and the Child Marriage Restraint Act in Colonial India," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 6, no. 3 (2013): 332–358, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/509027>; Nicholas L. Syrett, *American Child Bride: A History of Minors and Marriage in the United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 15–38, 118–141, 142–164; Tambe, *Defining Girlhood in India*; and Joseph J. Fischel, *Sex and Harm in the Age of Consent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).
9. See, among others, Halperin, "Is There a History of Sexuality?"; Richard Godbeer, "The Cry of Sodom: Discourse, Intercourse, and Desire in Colonial New England," *William and Mary Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (1995): 259–286, doi:10.2307/2946975; Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*, 15–88; Chauncey, *Gay New York*, 65–98; Colin R. Johnson, "Casual Sex: Towards a 'Prehistory' of Gay Life in Bohemian America," *interventions* 10, no. 3 (2008): 303–320, doi:10.1080/13698010802444728; Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations,'" and Romesburg, "'Wouldn't A Boy Do?'" 376.
10. Fisher and Funke, "The Age of Attraction," 271–272; Angelides, "Historicizing Affect"; Paul M. Renfro, *Stranger Danger: Family Values, Childhood, and the Amer-*

- ican *Carceral State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020). For examples of men seeking out boys and youth, see David D. Doyle, Jr., "'A Very Proper Bostonian': Rediscovering Ogden Codman and His Late-Nineteenth-Century Queer World," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13, no. 4 (2004): 446–476, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3704534>; Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations,'" 212–214; Katie Hindmarch-Watson, "Male Prostitution and the GPO: Telegraph Boys' 'Immorality' from Nationalization to the Cleveland Street Scandal," *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (2012): 594–617, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23265596>; Vicinus, "Adolescent Boy," 95–99; Rachel Hope Cleves, *Unspeakable: A Life beyond Sexual Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020); Robert Aldrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 173–175; Thomas K. Hubbard, "Ned Warren's Passion: The Life and Work of a Uranian Connoisseur," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 22, no. 3 (2015): 145–170.
11. Stephen Robertson, "Shifting the Scene of the Crime: Sodomy and the American History of Sexual Violence," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 19, no. 2 (2010): 223–242, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40663407>; Robertson, "'Boys, of Course, Cannot be Raped'; Nicholas L. Syrett, 'Age' in *The Routledge History of American Sexuality*, ed. Kevin Murphy, Jason Ruiz, and David Serlin (New York: Routledge, 2020), 21–31, here 28.
 12. On the various overlaps and permutations, see Romesburg, "'Wouldn't a Boy Do?"; Chauncey, *Gay New York*; and Boag, *Same-Sex Affairs*. On disagreements about abuse, see Carolyn Cocca, *Jailbait: The Politics of Statutory Rape Laws in the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004); Odem, *Delinquent Daughters*; and Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations,'" 204.
 13. Fisher and Funke, "The Age of Attraction"; Jonathan Ned Katz, *Love Stories: Sex between Men before Homosexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 257–287. On debates about pederasty in the gay rights movement, see Jim Downs, *Stand By Me: The Forgotten History of Gay Liberation* (New York: Basic, 2016), 129–132; and Joshua Gamson, "Messages of Exclusion: Gender, Movements, and Social Boundaries," *Gender and Society* 11, no. 2 (1997): 178–199, esp. 183–187.
 14. On young people's motivations, see, for instance, Romesburg, "'Wouldn't a Boy Do?"; Maynard, "'Horrible Temptations,'" 196; Syrett, *American Child Bride*; and the articles collected in this forum.
 15. Cleves, "From Pederasty to Pedophilia."
 16. Steven Maynard makes a similar point about older, wealthier men and their working-class companions in "'Horrible Temptations,'" 209.