You be the Judge...

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Female Predators and Boys - Is Sexual Assault... right?

We continue to be disturbed by the strange cases of predatory older women who begin affairs with young boys 12-15. Even when these women know that sex between an adult and a child is a crime in the State of Florida.

When the adult is a female experts believe that the affairs between grown women and teenage boys are less likely to be reported than those involving men who have sex with boys or girls -- and that the women are likely to be treated more gently by the legal system.

Let's face it we view male and female sex offenders differently.

When the offender is a male, the boy has been violated -- typically sodomized -- which people view as a brutal assault. When the offender is a female some people consider this the sexual initiation of the boy.

Cases of older women and boy invite more snickering than serious legal discourse about improving the system to identify these crimes. People don't look at the male child as being a victim. They look at him as being indoctrinated into manhood- or lucky.

This societal ambivalence affects how these cases are investigated and prosecuted. Males don't report abuse: sexual assaults are much less likely to be reported when the victims are boys.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics' National Crime Victimization Survey shows:

Overall, one out of 10 reported victims of rape or sexual assault are male. There was one reported rape or sexual assault for every 5,000 boys age 12 or older in 1994; for girls, there was one per every 270. Nearly all arrestees for forcible rape in 1995 were male (99 percent), while about 8 percent of those arrested for other sex offenses, such as lewd acts with children, fondling and molestation, were female.

These statistics could be unreliable because most males have secret lives either present or past or don't

want to disclose the abuse. They are the targets of seduction: teenage boys who have been seduced are among the most difficult for investigators.

There is no human being on the face of the earth who is easier to seduce into a sexual activity than a boy, because they are aggressively interested in sex, boys are exploring their sexuality, are easily aroused, and are sexually naive and rebellious.

Boys who might be willing to report a violent assault may also be unwilling to turn in the adult, male or female, who showed interest in them -- even if the interest included sex. When the adult is a woman, the line between experimentation and exploitation is blurred for many -- including the boys themselves.

What makes a situation one of sexual abuse is that its purpose is to make the "predator" feel good, it is accomplished by manipulation, and the adult has some sense of the inappropriateness and impact of the behavior which the child would not have.

Men who are seduced by older women as adolescents may later become sexual predators themselves, and may even victimizing animals. This is their way of gaining sexual control that they may not have had in an encounter with an adult female. There is real trauma whether the perpetrator is male or female. No one can conclude that there's nothing harmful about a boy being in a relationship with an older woman. The sexual initiation by an older woman can be disturbing. Boys may be traumatized as a result of their first sexual experience not being an idealized encounter, and they may regard it as a violation.

State legislators have begun updating child sexual abuse laws that once assumed male offenders and female victims, rewriting them to be gender neutral. But prosecution can still be difficult, with the first obstacle finding a prosecutor willing to prosecute the case. Many people are still influenced by the belief that the "penetrator" -- the male -- is always the aggressor.

Prosecutors and jurors must overcome their prejudices about sex between women and boys. Women jurors would take their roles of caretakers very seriously and when they hear of someone who's taken advantage of a child, they react more strongly than men do.

It is true that little is known about female sex offenders. But these women couldn't be sexually attracted to the boys, they must be emotionally attracted to them. They are in search of intimacy, it's about being wanted, loved, held, and boys can be very greatful for material comforts provided to them. These women are in extremely volatile situations in their lives and have low self-esteem when these events happen. Most female sex offenders must have been victims of abuse and re-enacting their own experience.

They may be psychologically unstable and may have borderline personality disorders -- they are treatable. But, let's not forget that they must be punished to the full extent of the law for the crimes they have committed against the boys and society.

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