



PROSTASIA
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Alisa Pomeroy
Commissioning Editor, Documentaries
Channel 4
124-126 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 2TX

February 8, 2021

Dear Ms Pomeroy,

Hunting Paedophiles

We write as a group of sexuality professionals including clinical psychologists, sex therapists, researchers, journalists, and child sexual abuse prevention practitioners, to express our concern about the forthcoming Channel 4 documentary series, *Hunting Paedophiles*.

In prerelease publicity, the series has been described as a “new series on how police catch paedophiles.” Both the title of the series, and its description, use the word “paedophile” as a synonym for child sex abuser. This is incorrect: paedophilia does not describe an action, but a primary sexual attraction towards prepubescent children. Research shows that a majority of people who commit sexual offenses against children do not have paedophilia, and also that there are many people who do have paedophilia who have no history of sexual offending against children.

Maintaining the difference between paedophilia and child sexual abuse is not mere pedantry, but is important for two reasons:

1. The conflation of the two terms contributes to public misunderstanding about the causes of child sexual abuse, by promoting the false belief that sexual offending against children is always motivated by an abnormal sexual interest on the part of the perpetrator. This is not the case. As many as three-quarters of those who perpetrate sexual offenses against children do not have paedophilia, and about a third of them are

juveniles themselves. Therefore, the conflation of paedophilia with child sexual abuse creates an unjustified and potentially dangerous false sense of security.

2. The incorrect conflation of paedophilia with child sexual abuse creates a stigma against help-seeking by people who do have paedophilia, or who think that they might. This stigma is especially damaging for young people, who are typically in their early teens when they realize their sexual interests. For young people who experience an unchosen and unwanted sexual attraction towards younger children, it is critical that they are able to obtain non-judgmental support that can assist them to remain non-offending as they grow up. The belief that they will be treated as child sexual abusers even if they have not acted on their thoughts impedes them from obtaining this support.

Just as the media has learned to use the term “child sexual abuse material” in place of “child pornography,” it is also time that the use of the term “paedophile” to refer to someone who has committed child sexual abuse was also phased out. We are writing to ask that this error be corrected, either by retitling the series *Hunting Paedophiles*, or by ensuring that it is screened with a disclaimer acknowledging the misuse of the term, and directing viewers who may be concerned about their own or someone else’s sexual thoughts to sources of accurate information.

Yours sincerely,

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