

1-2022

Neo-Emancipatory Sex Education in Germany: Sexual Abuse and Gender Confusion

Bernd Ahrbeck

International Psychoanalytical University, Berlin, Germany, bernd.ahrbeck@ipu-berlin.de

Karla Etschenberg

University of Flensburg, Germany, etschenberg@uni-flensburg.de

Marion Felder

University of Applied Sciences Koblenz, Germany, felder@hs-koblenz.de

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity>



Part of the [Child Psychology Commons](#), [Clinical Psychology Commons](#), [Counseling Psychology Commons](#), [Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons](#), [Early Childhood Education Commons](#), [Educational Psychology Commons](#), [Family, Life Course, and Society Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), [Inequality and Stratification Commons](#), [Other Education Commons](#), [Politics and Social Change Commons](#), [School Psychology Commons](#), [Social Justice Commons](#), and the [Social Policy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ahrbeck, Bernd; Etschenberg, Karla; and Felder, Marion (2022) "Neo-Emancipatory Sex Education in Germany: Sexual Abuse and Gender Confusion," *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*: Vol. 7: Iss. 1, Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2022.07.01.02>

This Research and Scholarly Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu.

Neo-Emancipatory Sex Education in Germany: Sexual Abuse and Gender Confusion

Abstract

This article focuses on two related areas of concern with regard to sex education and implications for children and youth in Germany. The first one is the history of the currently dominant neo-emancipatory sexual education and its implications for today. This direction of sex education is highly influenced by theories of Helmut Kentler who with the help of the German city of Berlin youth protection services department sent homeless and troubled boys to known pedophiles for care. This experiment went on for 30 years, ending in 2001. Only now has the extend of this horrific practice been fully discovered. The authors will outline the fact that Kentler's central ideas are still manifest in neo-emancipatory sex education in Germany today. The second area of concern is the dramatic increase in youth who question their biological sex and seek medical intervention to change it, even though the evidence base for medical intervention is controversial. The deconstruction of biological sex is also actively supported and fostered by neo-emancipatory sexual education. The authors will describe and demonstrate that both directions of neo-emancipatory sex education break down protective spaces for children and youth and make them more vulnerable for abuse and psychological and physical damage. Methodologically this is a literature review. Documents and books by Helmut Kentler himself are quoted and analysed. In addition, relevant, current literature about the topic of gender dysphoria is reviewed.

Keywords

sex education, sexual abuse, gender identity, gender dysphoria

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

Acknowledgements

Dignity thanks the following reviewers for their time and expertise to read and comment on this article: Heather Brunskell-Evans, (retired) Kings College, London, UK and Jody Raphael, (emerita), DePaul University College of Law, USA.

NEO-EMANCIPATORY SEX EDUCATION IN GERMANY: SEXUAL ABUSE AND GENDER CONFUSION

Bernd Ahrbeck 

*International Psychoanalytical University,
Berlin, Germany*

Karla Etschenberg

University of Flensburg, Germany

Marion Felder

*University of Applied Sciences, Koblenz,
Germany*

ABSTRACT

This article focuses on two related areas of concern with regard to sex education and implications for children and youth in Germany. The first one is the history of the currently dominant neo-emancipatory sexual education and its implications for today. This direction of sex education is highly influenced by theories of Helmut Kentler who with the help of the German city of Berlin youth protection services department sent homeless and troubled boys to known pedophiles for care. This experiment went on for 30 years, ending in 2001. Only now has the extend of this horrific practice been fully discovered. The authors will outline the fact that Kentler's central ideas are still manifest in neo-emancipatory sex education in Germany today. The second area of concern is the dramatic increase in youth who question their biological sex and seek medical intervention to change it, even though the evidence base for medical intervention is controversial. The deconstruction of biological sex is also actively supported and fostered by neo-emancipatory sexual education. The authors will describe and demonstrate that both directions of neo-emancipatory sex education break down protective spaces for children and youth and make them more vulnerable for abuse and psychological and physical damage. Methodologically this is a literature review. Documents and books by Helmut Kentler himself are quoted and analysed. In addition, relevant, current literature about the topic of gender dysphoria is reviewed.

KEYWORDS

Germany, sex education, sexual abuse, gender identity, gender dysphoria, neo-emancipatory sex education

IN GERMANY AND ELSEWHERE THE SEXUAL ABUSE occurring in church care has startled the public. But not only there, also in many other areas of life men (and some women) take opportunities to satisfy their sexual needs on children entrusted to them in schools, homes and at recreational events, sometimes with, but mostly without the use of physical violence. The same happens in the family, in the neighborhood, or with other relatives and acquaintances. What is particularly perfidious about this is the abuse of trust. Violent sexual abuse by strangers can be quickly recognized by children as wrongdoing, so that they can inwardly distance themselves. This is more difficult in the case of coerced nonviolent abuse, especially when it appears to be consensual, because children often do not fight back when confidants are present. How children

experience and process nonviolent sexualized assault by adults depends largely on their formative experiences in early childhood.

What is the current state of the research and discussion in sex education in German speaking countries on the issue of sexual abuse? Unfortunately, sex education plays an ambivalent role.

In Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, the so-called *sexual education* (as distinguished from sex or sexuality education) has dominated for some time, an approach to sex education and sexuality education that is also referred to as *neo-emancipatory*. The term *neo-emancipatory* is not sufficiently defined by its proponents. It is based however on a proactive, sexualizing concept of sex education: interest in sexuality is deliberately awakened from infancy onward, and *sexual desire* and *sexual acts* in children are also encouraged by adults without any inclination on the part of the child, because this is seen as advantageous for children as sexual beings. Sexual education teaches children about the diversity of sexual acts and identities and encourages experimentation. Example of self-stimulation: Children are encouraged by adults to self-stimulate their sexual organs or through pictures. With regards to sex and gender, not only role behavior, but also the assignment to one of the two biological sexes is to be questioned. It is particularly this last aspect, which in combination with the adoption of sexual human rights is the basis for the *neo* in emancipatory sexual education (Etschenberg, 2017).

Neo-emancipatory sex education has in practice gained great impact on sex education curricula in schools and pre-schools, which has led to parent protests and much discussion in the previous years (EMMA, 2016; Schmelcher, 2014). Neo-emancipatory sex education is advocated as a paradigm shift by Uwe Sielert (2011) and Karlheinz Valtl (2008) and supported by powerful institutions such as pro familia e. V. (2009) and the Federal Center for Health Education (Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (BZgA). These institutions have great influence on sexuality education in Germany. Particularly the BZgA has developed standards for implementation in pre-schools and schools in conjunction with the WHO Regionalbüro für Europa (2011) (WHO Regional Office for Europe/M.F.) and organizes campaigns which function as an important guideline for educators and administrators (Etschenberg, 2019, 2021). There are also teacher training institutes founded by Uwe Sielert in Germany (in the cities of Koblenz and Dortmund) and by Karlheinz Valtl at the University of Vienna (Etschenberg, 2021).

The core message concerns the physical handling of infantile sexuality, which is supposed to have a beneficial effect on the overall development of a child. This is accompanied by a sharp demarcation from more traditional sexuality education (conservative and affirmative), which is accused of being sexually hostile and seeking to control, inhibit and suppress sexual activity. *Sexual education* also invokes sexual human rights outlined by the International Planned Parenthood Federation/IPPF (pro familia, 2009) and supports the demand that children be educated unconditionally about all adult sexual preferences (oral-anal sex, dildo, pocket pussy, sadomasochism, etc.). This is supposed to promote children's rights to sexual self-determination and, as a *sexual education of diversity*, contribute to the destigmatization of people who do not conform to society's *heteronormative* expectations.

A critical objection is that the (majority-accepted) goal of destigmatising different sexual orientations could be achieved in other ways without introducing children to all kinds of adult sexual practices. Thus, some methods described in *Sexual Pedagogy of Diversity* and the book of the same title (Tuider et al., 2012) caused much irritation

and debate in recent years. The teaching unit *The New Brothel for All*, for example, aims to sensitize 15-year-olds to *marginalized ways of life and sexual preferences* by planning a *brothel of sexual lust* for life down to the smallest detail, including advertising. The goal of the enterprise: to promote the *greatest possible creativity and freedom of thought with regard to sexual preferences*, which is combined with the *personal freedom to use or offer sexual services* (Tuider et al., 2012, p. 76). Whether this is a responsible goal in light of the fate of primarily female (forced) prostitutes may be questioned. Materials of this kind appear as an attempt to *break down the shame barriers of children and adolescents* (Schmelcher, 2014) without proving what advantage children and adolescents can gain from it. This type of sex education threatens to overwhelm children and young people given such contents and methods.

Furthermore, critics take offense at the claim that sexual education contributes significantly to the prevention of sexual abuse. Theoretically convincing reasons for this do not exist and there is no evidence for the practice (Henningsen, 2016, p. 124 and 138). On the contrary, there is some evidence that neo-emancipatory sex education facilitates nonviolent intergenerational sexual assault because children are accustomed from an early age to (nonviolent) sexualized interactions with trusted adults and, at least superficially, are also aware of their sexual preferences (Etschenberg, 2020).

The discussion of neo-emancipatory sex education inevitably leads back to its roots, to emancipatory sex education and its founder Helmut Kentler (1928 - 2008), who is considered Uwe Sielert's *fatherly friend* (Herrath, 2009). Sielert plays a paramount role in today's neo-emancipatory sex education. Kentler was a psychologist who openly admitted his homosexuality, which was not yet a matter of course in his generation. He worked for the Protestant church for several years; there he further developed his ideas on emancipatory youth work. In 1967, Kentler published 10 theses on emancipatory sexual education free of repression. This, together with his book *Eltern lernen Sexualerziehung* 1975) (*Parents Learn Sex Education/translation M.F.*), which was based on his dissertation, won him a large following. Kentler became a sought-after expert on youth welfare, out-of-school youth work, and sex education. He held influential positions: from 1966 to 1974 as department head at the Berlin Pedagogical Center, a government agency, and later as a full professor of social pedagogy at the University of Hanover. His sympathy for children as sexual beings could be seen in the 1974 book *Zeig Mal!* (Fleischhauer-Hardt & McBride, 1974) (*Show Me!/translation M.F.*), in which he had played a decisive role. It shows in close-ups unclothed, partly sexually stimulated children together with adults and describes in the preface benevolently the intimate togetherness of a child with its educator.

Protests against the book were unsuccessful. Helmut Kentler defended numerous men accused of pedosexual acts as an expert opinion in courts. With this argumentation he repeatedly succeeded in invalidating the accusation of criminal sexual abuse. Kentler put his affirmative stance on pedophilia or pedosexuality into practice for years. With the help of the Berlin Senate Administration, a state institution, he placed male psychosocially impaired foster children with pedophilic men starting in 1970, quite deliberately in the expectation that they would develop particularly well there. It is only in recent years that the Kentler experiment has been uncovered and scientifically investigated (among others, Institut für Demokratieforschung Universität Göttingen, 2016; Nentwig, 2019). How large the number of children affected and the circle of confidants, supporters or beneficiaries has not yet been conclusively clarified.

What is certain is that the Kentler experiment failed in a terrifying way. The boys involved suffered terrible consequences with serious, lifelong psychological damage (Bachner, 2021).

Although there were isolated protests even at that time, Kentler escaped prosecution in the 1970s and 1980s, probably also because he could rely on leniency as a highly respected expert. Pedophilia at that time, it should not be overlooked, was met with great tolerance in certain intellectual circles. There were calls for impunity (Altwegg, 2020). Kentler himself publicly acknowledged his experiment without reservation, but only after the associated crimes had become free of prosecution due to statute of time limitations. In 2008, there were numerous favorable obituaries following Helmut Kentler's death, including those that sought to separate his person from his work. It seems as if consciously or unconsciously the eyes were closed here, so that the dark sides of Kentler would not come to light in their full bearing. None of today's leading representatives of neo-emancipatory sex education or sexual education should be accused of approving of the Kentler experiment. Nevertheless, it is striking that Kentler is still accepted and respected, if not revered, as a pioneer and leading figure of contemporary sex education (Ahrbeck, 2020).

KENTLER'S CORE STATEMENTS: THE FOUNDATION OF NEO-EMANCIPATORY SEX EDUCATION

The following core statements represent Kentler's sexual educational ideas, which are currently implemented and continued in sexual education or neo-emancipatory sexuality education. In this respect, they have lost neither theoretical nor practical significance:

Our sexual life began long before we were sexually mature (Kentler, 1975, p. 9).

Kentler speaks of the child's sexual life and sexual behavior, although it is not conclusively clear whether and how children experience and understand certain observable actions (e.g., playing with their genitals) as "sexual" (Quindeau, 2012; Schmidt, 2012). In any case, these are interpretations of sexually experienced adults, which can be tendentious. In sexual education, too, there is often talk of the child's sexuality and sexual behavior, with reference to Freud's phase model. What is overlooked, and this is more than a subtle distinction, is that Sigmund Freud spoke of infantile sexuality and not the sexuality of the child. This distinction from adult sexuality is not really perceived. It seems like mere lip service when (neo)-emancipatory sexuality education points out that the sexuality of the child is different from that of adults.

Likewise, children must be sexually stimulated, sexual communication must be made possible for them, so that sexuality can arise and develop in them (Kentler, 1999, p. 200).

Sexuality can only be learnt if something sexual happens. [The corollary is] learning by doing! (Kentler, 1975, p. 31).

From there, the term sexual education is to be understood: The educational process should be action oriented. Methods initiated by adults that are close to the self and involve the body are used with the goal that emotionalizing, eroticizing, and sexualizing effects occur in the children, which are to be worked through in sexual education. Kentler and representatives of sexual education ignore the fact that people can

learn sexual behavior in other ways than through sexual activity. Otherwise, what would be the point of all the sex education and counseling literature? How else could the behavioral impact of erotic literature and films be explained?

Sexually satisfied children, are best protected against sexual seduction and sexual assault (Kentler, 1975, p. 103).

Parents are encouraged to stimulate children genitally and to promote child self-stimulation. This is said to be the best way for them to avoid sexual assault later. Thirty years later, Sielert (2005, p. 102) takes up this idea again:

Children discover this pleasure in themselves as a matter of course, if they are also previously stroked lustfully by their parents; if they don't even know what pleasure is, sexual playfulness will also be absent. This is—quite contrary to a widespread opinion—a rather bad sign.

The fact that children are thus accustomed to sexual assault and adult instruction in this regard is not reflected.

Real sexual abuse must have harmful consequences - if ... there are no negative consequences, there should be no talk of sexual abuse (Kentler, 1999, p. 217).

Against this background, it is quite problematic that the term sexual abuse is officially used less and less, and that mostly sexualized violence is spoken of. There is a danger that those forces that want to decriminalize non-violent sexualized contact between adults and children will be strengthened or given renewed impetus.

NEW PROBLEMATIC LAWS AND DEVELOPMENTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN GERMANY

At the same time, another problematic development is making its way, impacting children's rights, education, and upbringing.

In May 2021, the Selbstbestimmungsgesetz (Self-determination law) a replacement of the current transsexual law was put to a vote in the German Bundestag (parliament). Advocates, politicians, and others claim that the current law entails elements, such as psychological evaluations and other documentation to complete a transition process, which are dehumanizing and stigmatizing to transgender people.

Thus, two different laws to change this situation were proposed to improve the situation of transsexual people and to counteract discrimination. One proposal was from the Free Democratic Party/FDP (draft of a law to strengthen gender self-determination; printed matter 19/20048), the other from the Greens/Alliance 90 (draft of a law to repeal the Transsexual Act and introduce the Self-Determination Act (SelbstBestG); printed matter 19/19755). The proposal of the Greens was rejected by 454 out of 709 members (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021a). The FDP proposal was rejected by 452 of the 709 members of Parliament (Deutscher Bundestag, 2021b). The proposals did not differ fundamentally. Both proposals specified that each person can officially change his or her gender entry once a year, as a mere speech act, without further verification (Louis, 2021). In addition, children should be able to decide for themselves whether to have surgical changes from the age of 14. In case of conflict, even without the consent of the parents, who in this case are to relinquish their right

to educate their children to state authorities (Ahrbeck & Felder, 2021). Also, any kind of counseling for children dealing with gender dysphoria should preferably be done by someone who has experienced the condition themselves.

The drafts of both parties were rejected by a majority in parliament. Similar laws have now been adopted in some countries, including Malta, Ireland, Norway, and Spain. Other countries such as Sweden and the United Kingdom, rejected them (GSN, 2018). However, it is to be expected that such laws will be proposed again in the future in Germany. Supporting these laws are strong societal forces calling for basic rethinking of biological sex and considering child transition decisions a fundamental human right (Brunskell-Evans, 2021).

Those societal forces are ideologically influenced by Judith Butler, the icon of the gender movement. Butler (born in 1956) is an American philosopher and is considered to be one of the founders of Queer Theory. She teaches at the University of California, Berkeley. The German journalist and feminist Alice Schwarzer who spearheaded the women's movement in Germany from the 1970s onwards has had open and heated debates with Judith Butler in German papers (Schwarzer, 2017). Butler's influence on discussions about sex and gender and sex education in Germany cannot be underestimated. Butler claims that gender is constructed, not only in the social, but all the way into the physical. Accordingly, sex is nothing more than the product of an act of language. It can be deconstructed and rewritten according to personal preference (Butler, 1991). There is then a large, in principle, unlimited number of genders to choose from. The personal spaces of possibility expand almost infinitely. One consequence of this thinking is that children, even in kindergarten and later in school, are encouraged or even asked to think about and question their gender identity, the latter a concept that is highly controversial (Brunskell-Evans, 2021; Perry, 2019). This is not just about such harmless phenomena as gender-typical role behavior that changes according to time and culture. The question of whether the sexes should differ at all in their experience and behavior is also far less elementary than the question of whether someone lives in his or her right body. Interest in trans-identity or transsexuality has now moved to the forefront, whereas in the past it was primarily about equality and recognition of homosexuality. This trend is supported, among others, by a major German welfare association through its *Self-Determination* campaign (Schabram, 2018). Significantly, in Germany sex education classes in schools are also taught by representatives of the LGBTQ+ community, who have come to embrace the social construction of biological sex (Felder & Ahrbeck, forthcoming 2022).

RAPID ONSET GENDER DYSPHORIA: A NEW PHENOMENON

Since 2011, the number of children and adolescents with gender dysphoria has been rising rapidly in many countries, with increasing numbers of girls describing an incongruence between their biological and perceived gender (SEGM, 2020). Given this increase, there is little to suggest that what is now emerging is merely what has always been present at a broad level. Often, the feeling of being in the wrong body presents itself during puberty without any prior evidence of it. Lisa Littman (2019) refers to this phenomenon as *Rapid Onset Gender Dysphoria* (ROGD), as opposed to another form of gender dysphoria that usually occurs in early childhood and primarily in boys. Strikingly, these adolescents have become intensely involved with trans identity through social media, with concomitant alienation from parents unless they receive full affirmation of their chosen gender identity.

The power of media influences should not be underestimated, especially for vulnerable children and adolescents who are going through the developmentally challenging process of puberty. Lisa Littmann (2019) argues that "being trans" is seen in some media as something special and identity-affirming, a desirable state that solves most, if not all, problems. As a result, a trans identity almost takes on a role model character and becomes a way to gain social recognition and belonging. Trans activists contribute significantly to this through the forums they run or support. Likewise, this development is fueled by sensationalist media contributions. One need only recall the attention Jazz Jennings was able to garner in the US (Herthel & Jennings, 2014; Perry, 2019), as well as the recent gender transition of the formerly female actress Ellen Page, now Elliott Page. Both paint a glorified picture of gender transition that does not do justice to the complexity of this phenomenon (Brooks, 2021).

The call for children to decide their own gender, including taking hormone treatments and surgical procedures, neglects important findings in developmental psychology. Many studies show that gender dysphoria in childhood and adolescence by no means necessarily leads to later transition. Over time, the connection proves to be less stable. In most cases, gender dysphoria is a transitional phenomenon that later resolve on its own. According to Korte et al. (2008, p. 834), only 2.5 to 20% of initial manifestations are an expression of irreversible transsexual development. In most cases, a reconciliation with the original sex takes place. It is also quite well documented that early childhood gender irritation is often associated with homosexual development and not with transsexual development later in life (Cantor, 2019). It is undisputed that gender dysphoria leading to a sense of not being able to live in one's innate body can cause a great deal of suffering. Those who wish to follow this path, given appropriate age and sufficiently clarified motivation, should have a right to do so. They deserve recognition and support. However, it should not be overlooked that gender dysphoria is often accompanied by quite significant comorbidities such as depression, anxiety disorders, bi-polar and dissociative disorders, anorexia, autism spectrum disorders or trauma (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 2015). Intensive diagnostic clarifications are essential. Hasty affirmation of perceived gender can lead to irreversible errors.

How great the responsibility is, which must not be shifted onto children, is also shown by the following finding, which urges caution. Children and adolescents with gender dysphoria who receive puberty blockers also take cross-sex hormones in the majority of cases and are then surgically assigned to the other sex. If treatment with puberty blockers is omitted, the majority continue to live in accordance with their biological sex after puberty. Administration of puberty blockers appears to lead directly to a transsexual path instead of giving children time to consider and explore different options (Biggs, 2020; Korte, Beier & Bosinski, 2016).

However, a sex change is simply not possible and it is by no means a liberation from the shackles of biological sex—even if it is experienced as successful and subjectively satisfying. Sterility and loss of libido are among its possible side effects. A life-long dependency on medical treatments remains. Taking testosterone and estrogen leads to irreversible physical changes, and it can lead to health problems. Long-term studies on the consequences of puberty blockers are lacking, so caution is advised here as well (Korte, Beier & Bosinski, 2016).

Little is known about the lasting psychological consequences of gender reassignment, and robust long-term studies are lacking. With targeted indication and cautious approach, positive effects are initially reported (Fahrenkrug & Wüsthof, 2018). How-

ever, those studies were based on an earlier and younger group of children at the onset of gender dysphoria. The dramatic increase of adolescents and the reasons behind this condition and its outcome have not been studied enough. In any case, psychological care has to be assumed after transitioning. Psychological problems linked to transition do not automatically resolve as a result of it (Walter, 2019; SEGM, 2020; NICE, 2021).

Also of concern should be the ever-growing group of detransitioners who want to return to their innate gender after transitioning. They lament having to live with a damaged body for the rest of their lives (Louis, 2020; Vandenbussche, 2021).

THE DISSOLUTION OF PROTECTIVE SPACES FOR CHILDREN

In both sets of issues discussed, protective spaces for children are actively being dissolved in different ways by adults. Neo-emancipatory sex education (sexual education), in the tradition of Helmut Kentler, advocates proactively sexualizing sex education, free of traditional repression, from infancy onward. Parents and others involved in education should specifically activate children's sexuality. Possible problematic consequences, such as legitimizing and facilitating (non-violent) sexual abuse, are not reflected. For example, in the so-called Kentler Experiment, no one protected boys placed in care from sexual abuse. It was even tolerated by a state administration. This can be viewed as a foreseeable logical consequence of Kentler's theories.

Neo-emancipatory sex education has been dedicated to further advance ideas of liberation. In order to prevent discrimination at an early stage and to grant children a maximum of sexual self-determination, it wants to acquaint boys and girls with the different forms and possibilities of adult sexuality, not only by accompanying them linguistically, but also by exercises and practical familiarization. In this way, various barriers are crossed between sexual pedagogical activists and learners. Intimacy barriers and shame barriers, which also have protective functions, dissolve.

In addition, the biological predetermination of two sexes is increasingly questioned. Children are promised free availability over their gender (biological and social), almost as if in an act of self-creation. It is supposed to allow them to choose between a basically unlimited number of genders. The insecurities this creates in children and the harm they may suffer have not been researched nor are they adequately discussed professionally. Draft legislation gives children as young as 14-year-old wide latitude regarding gender reassignment. In the name of self-determination, they are given a responsibility for which they are not yet ready for. Often it is not at all clear to them that there are no real sex changes, but always only approximations to the other sex. This is accompanied by a withdrawal of the adults from the educational responsibility. In case of conflict, parents can even be deprived of their right to educate. In both cases, the adult generation suspends itself from its duty of care. Parents, who are most responsible for their children, are left with little influence on the preservation of possibly indispensable protective spaces.

This development goes far beyond the justified and basically non-controversial social and sexual education demand for sex-friendly sexuality education on the one hand and acceptance of different sexual preferences, gender definitions and ways of life on the other. It is obviously about much more. The aim is an ideological realignment that seeks to break down and shift norms of thought and action between generations and strives for cultural hegemony in Germany, eliminating protective barriers for children and youth in its path.

CONCLUSION

In German-speaking countries it seems that the increasingly dominant neo-emancipatory sexual education based on Helmut Kentler replaces terms such as sexual abuse with sexual violence. At the same time children and youth are being familiarized with sexual preferences of adults from an early age on, thus normalizing such physical contacts. As a consequence, if abuse is not openly violent it may not be recognized as such. In addition, neo-emancipatory sexual education views both sex and gender as socially constructed. This view also impacts curricula in sex education in schools and teacher training, encouraging children to think about their gender identity, again in the name of self determination. This may lead some children to identify as the other sex and seek out hormonal and surgical treatments even though a robust evidence base for such treatments is lacking. Both directions of neo-emancipatory sexuality education put children in a vulnerable position by eliminating protective spaces. Given those concerns, a reevaluation of theory and practice of sexuality education in Germany is necessary.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dignity thanks the following reviewers for their time and expertise to read and comment on this article: Heather Brunskell-Evans, (retired) Kings College, London, UK and Jody Raphael, (emerita), DePaul University College of Law, USA.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Bernd Ahrbeck, Ph.D., Professor for psychoanalytical paedagogy at International Psychoanalytical University, Berlin, Germany; Psychologist, Teaching Analyst; Professor emeritus at Humboldt-University of Berlin, Germany with a focus on children and youth with social-emotional disorders in the department of rehabilitation sciences.

Karla Etschenberg, Ph.D., Professor emeritus for education and didactic of biology, health and sex education; University of Flensburg, Germany; prior to becoming a professor she was a teacher and among other projects instrumental in developing HIV awareness and destigmatization materials for schools while working for government agencies; recipient of the Magnus-Hirschfeld medal 2012 from the German Society of Sexual Research in Social Sciences (DGSS e.V.).

Marion Felder, Ph.D., Professor for inclusion and rehabilitation in the department of social sciences at the University of Applied Sciences Koblenz, Germany. She spent 18 years living and working in the U.S. as a teacher for children and youth with disabilities (special education).

RECOMMENDED CITATION

Ahrbeck, Bernd; Etschenberg, Karla; & Felder, Marion. Neo-emancipatory sex education in Germany: Sexual abuse and gender confusion. *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*. Vol. 7, Issue 1, Article 2. <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2022.07.01.02>
Available at <http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dignity/vol7/iss1/2>.

REFERENCES

- Ahrbeck, B. (2020). *Was Erziehung heute leisten kann*. Kohlhammer: Stuttgart
- Ahrbeck, B., & Felder, M. (2021). Sexualerziehung, Gender, und Transgender. Selbst- und Fremdbestimmung, Meinungsdiktat und Orientierungslosigkeit. *Katholische Bildung*, 122(11-12), 246–254.

- Altwegg, J. (2020, January 16). Er schrieb über seinen Sex mit Kindern. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/debatten/paedophilie-in-frankreich-autor-schreibt-ueber-sex-mit-kindern-16583098/mittlerweile-wurden-16583278.html>
- Bachner, F. (2021, April 27). Missbrauchsoffer des Berliner Kentler-Experiments werden entschädigt. *Der Tagespiegel*. <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/einigung-nach-monatelangen-verhandlungen-missbrauchsoffer-des-berliner-kentler-experiments-werden-entschaedigt/27133286.html>
- Biggs, M. (2020, December 18). The Tavistock's experiment with puberty blockers, part 5: the belated results. *Transgender Trend*. <https://www.transgendertrend.com/the-tavistocks-experiment-with-puberty-blockers-part-5-the-belated-results/>
- Brooks, B. (2021, May 15). Oprah Winfrey's interview with Elliot Page reveals the disturbing reality of the 'trans youth' trend. *Feminist Current*. <https://www.feministcurrent.com/2021/05/15/oprah-winfreys-interview-with-ellen-page-reveals-the-disturbing-reality-of-the-trans-youth-trend/>
- Brunskell-Evans, H. (2021). The violence of postmodern "gender identity" medicine. *Dignity: A Journal of Analysis of Exploitation and Violence*, 6(3), Article 8. <https://doi.org/10.23860/dignity.2021.06.03.08>
- Butler, J. (1991). *Das Unbehagen der Geschlechter*. Suhrkamp: Frankfurt am Main.
- Cantor, J. M. (2019). Transgender and gender diverse children and adolescents: Fact-checking of AAP policy. *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy*, 46(4). <https://doi.org/10.1080/0092623X.2019.1698481>
- Deutscher Bundestag. (2021a). *Aufhebung des Transsexuellengesetzes und Einführung des Selbstbestimmungsgesetzes (B90/Grüne)*. <https://www.bundestag.de/parlament/plenum/abstimmung/abstimmung?id=738>
- Deutscher Bundestag. (2021b). *Geschlechtliche Selbstbestimmung (Gesetzentwurf FDP)*. <https://www.bundestag.de/parlament/plenum/abstimmung/abstimmung?id=737>
- EMMA. (2016, December 6). Kinderfreunde, es geht weiter. *EMMA*. <https://www.emma.de/artikel/kinderfreunde-es-geht-weiter-333657>
- Etschenberg, K. (2021). Sexuelle Bildung – Lernen durch pädagogisch angeleitetes, aufgeklärtes sexuelles Handeln. Ist das ein Präventionskonzept gegen sexuellen Missbrauch? *Katholische Bildung*, 122 (9), 207-220.
- Etschenberg, K. (2020). *Helmut Kentlers Erbe und das besondere sexualpädagogische Konzept gegen den sexuellen Missbrauch von Kindern*. <http://www.k-etschenberg.de/resources/KENTLERS+Erbe.pdf>
- Etschenberg, K. (2019). *Stellungnahme zu den „Standards für die Sexualaufklärung in Europa“ Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (Hrsg.) 2011*. <http://www.k-etschenberg.de/resources/Stellungnahme+zu+den+Standards+f%C3%BCr+die+Sexualaufkl%C3%A4rung+in+Europa.pdf>
- Etschenberg, K. (2017). *Proaktiv sexualisierende Sexualerziehung – cui bono?* <http://www.k-etschenberg.de/resources/Proaktiv+sexualisierende+Sexualerziehung+-+cui+bono.pdf>
- Felder, M., Ahrbeck, B. (forthcoming 2022). Trans- und Genderidentität in Schule und Unterricht. In Schwarzer, A., Louis, Ch. (Eds.), *Transsexualität: Was ist eine Frau? Was ist ein Mann? - Eine Streitschrift*. Kiepenheuer & Witsch: Köln
- Fahrenkrug, S., & Wüsthof, A. (2018). *Endokrinologische Therapien. Geschlechtsdysphorie bei Kindern und Jugendlichen*. MVZ Endoklinologikum Hamburg. https://www.zomacton.de/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Transgender-Druck_2.pdf
- Fleischhauer-Hardt, H., & McBride, W. mit Vorwort von Helmut Kentler (1974). *Zeig Mal!* Jugenddienst: Wuppertal.

- GSN. (2018, October 16). These are the countries that already allow trans people to self identify. *Gaystar News*. <https://www.gaystarnews.com/article/countries-trans-self-identify/>
- Henningsen, A. (2016). Sexuelle Bildung und Gewaltprävention. Eine systematische Reflexion zur Prävention sexualisierter Gewalt in pädagogischen Kontexten. In Henningsen, A., Tuider, E., & Timmermanns, St. (Eds.) (2016). *Sexualpädagogik kontrovers* (pp. 120-142) Beltz Juventa: Weinheim/Basel.
- Herrath, F. (2009). Freundliche Begleitung. Wie man ein Pädagogikfeld bestellt. In Schmidt, R.-B., Tuider, E., & Timmermanns, St. (Eds.), *Vielfalt wagen. Festschrift für Uwe Sielert*, (pp. 1-10). Logos: Berlin.
- Herthel, J., & Jennings, J. (2014). *I am Jazz*. Dial Books: New York.
- Institut für Demokratieforschung Universität Göttingen. (2016). *Die Unterstützung pädosexueller bzw. päderastischer Interessen durch die Berliner Senatsverwaltung. Göttingen*. <http://www.demokratie-goettingen.de/forschung/projekte/berliner-senatsverwaltung-paedosexualitaet>
- Kaltiala-Heino, R., Sumia, M., Työljärvi, M., & Lindberg, N. (2015). Two years of gender identity service for minors: overrepresentation of natal girls with severe problems in adolescent development. *Child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health*, 9(9). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13034-015-0042-y>
- Kentler, H. (1975). *Eltern lernen Sexualerziehung*. Rowohlt: Reinbek.
- Kentler, H. (1999). Täterinnen und Täter beim sexuellen Missbrauch von Jungen. In Ruschky, K. & Wolff, R. (Eds.), *Handbuch Sexueller Mißbrauch* (pp. 199-217). Rowohlt: Reinbek.
- Korte, A., Goecker, D., Krude, H., Lehmkuhl, U., Grueters-Kieslich, A., & Beier, K. (2008). Geschlechtsidentitätsstörungen im Kindes- und Jugendalter. *Deutsches Ärzteblatt*, 105(48), 834-841.
- Korte, A., Beier, K. M. & Bosinski, H.A.G. (2016). Behandlung von Geschlechtsidentitätsstörungen (Geschlechtsdysphorie) im Kindes- und Jugendalter – Ausgangsoffene psychotherapeutische Begleitung oder frühzeitige Festlegung und Weichenstellung durch Einleitung einer hormonellen Therapie? *Sexuologie* 23 (3 – 4), 117 – 132.
- Littmann, L. (2019). Correction: Parent reports of adolescents and young adults perceived to show signs of a rapid onset of gender dysphoria, *Plos One*, 14(3) <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0214157>
- Louis, C. (2020, February 2). Von Frau zu Mann zu Frau. *EMMA*. <https://www.emma.de/artikel/sam-nele-ellie-geboren-als-frauengelebt-als-maenner-heute-wieder-frauen-337551>
- Louis, C. (2021, April 28). Geschlechtswechsel via Sprechakt. *EMMA*. <https://www.emma.de/artikel/im-falschen-koerper-338603>
- Nentwig, T. (2019, September). Bericht zum Forschungsprojekt: Helmut Kentler und die Universität Hannover. https://www.uni-hannover.de/fileadmin/luh/content/webredaktion/universitaet/geschichte/helmut_kentler_und_die_universitaet_hannover.pdf
- NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence). (2021, March 3). *Evidence review: Gonadotrophin releasing hormone analogues for children and adolescents with gender dysphoria*. <https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/document?id=2334888>
- Perry, L. (2019, August 7). Minds Without Bodies: Transgenderism and the Authentic Self. *Areo Magazine*. <https://areomagazine.com/2019/08/07/minds-without-bodies-transgenderism-and-the-authentic-self/>

- pro familia e. V. (2009). *Sexuelle Rechte – eine IPPF-Erklärung*.
https://www.profamilia.de/fileadmin/publikationen/profamilia/IPPF_Deklaration_Sexuelle_Rechte-dt2.pdf
- Quindeau, I. (2012). Die infantile Sexualität. In Quindeau, I. & Brumlik, M. (Eds.), *Kindliche Sexualität*, (pp. 24-44). Beltz Juventa: Weinheim/Basel.
- SEGM (Society for evidence based gender medicine). (2020). Position statement: Our aim is to promote safe, compassionate, ethical and evidence-informed healthcare for children, adolescents, and young adults with gender dysphoria. <https://segm.org/>
- Schabram, G. (2018, July 18). *Geschlechtliche Selbstbestimmung ist ein Menschenrecht*.
<https://www.der-paritaetische.de/alle-meldungen/geschlechtliche-selbstbestimmung-ist-ein-menschenrecht/>.
- Schmelcher, A. (2014, October 12). Unter dem Deckmantel der Vielfalt. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*. <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/inland/experten-warnen-vor-zu-frueher-aufklaerung-von-kindern-13203307.html>
- Schmidt, G. (2012). Kindersexualität – Konturen eines dunklen Kontinents. In Quindeau, I. & Brumlik, M. (Eds.), *Kindliche Sexualität*, (pp. 24-44). Beltz Juventa: Weinheim/Basel.
- Schwarzer, A. (2017, June 28). Weiberzank oder Politik-Kontroverse? *EMMA*.
<https://www.emma.de/artikel/eine-antwort-auf-butler-334719>
- Sielert, U. (2005). *Einführung in die Sexualpädagogik*. Beltz Juventa: Weinheim/Basel.
- Sielert, U. (2011). Paradigmenwechsel der Sexualpädagogik im Kontext gesellschaftlicher Entwicklungen. *Außerschulische Bildung* 41(3), 258-266.
- Tuider, E., Müller, M., Timmermanns, St., Bruns-Bachmann, P. & Koppermann, C. (2012). *Sexualpädagogik der Vielfalt*. 2. Aufl. Beltz Juventa: Weinheim/Basel.
- Valtl, K. (2008). Sexuelle Bildung: Neues Paradigma einer Sexualpädagogik für alle Lebensalter. In Schmidt, R.-B. & Sielert, U. (Eds.), *Handbuch Sexualpädagogik und sexuelle Bildung* (pp. 125-140). Juventa: Weinheim/München.
- Vandenbussche, E. (2021). Detransition-Related Needs and Support: A Cross-Sectional Online Survey. *Journal of Homosexuality*
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2021.1919479>
- Walter, A. (2019). Transsexualität als Weg zu eigenen Entwicklung? Problematiken adoleszenter Entwicklung. In Bouville, V., Brosig, B., Johne, M., Krummacher, M., Rutsch, A.M., Schmidhüsen, G., & Wertmann-Resch, L. (Eds.), *Identität. Zwischen Beständigkeit und Wandel* (pp.83-101). Deutsche Psychoanalytische Vereinigung: Bad Homburg.
- WHO-Regionalbüro für Europa und BZgA. (2011). *Standards für die Sexualaufklärung in Europa*. Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung.
<https://www.bzga.de/infomaterialien/sexualaufklaerung/who-regionalbuero-fuer-europa-und-bzga-standards-fuer-die-sexualaufklaerung-in-europa/>