

Dear Professor Trivers:

I was shocked to read your statement yesterday in *The Guardian* [REDACTED]. The paper reports:

At least two grant recipients in academia are standing by Epstein, saying he remains a friend: Krauss and Robert Trivers, a Rutgers University biologist. Trivers said Epstein is a person of integrity who should be given credit for serving time in prison and for settling civil lawsuits brought by women who said they were abused.

“Did he get an easy deal? Did he buy himself a light sentence? Well, yes, probably, compared to what you or I would get, but he did get locked up,” Trivers said. He said he got about \$40,000 from Epstein to study the relationship between knee symmetry and sprinting ability.

Trivers also said he believes girls mature earlier than in the past. “By the time they’re 14 or 15, they’re like grown women were 60 years ago, so I don’t see these acts as so heinous,” he said.

Is this claim regarding teenage girls your scientific opinion? If so, [REDACTED] like to see the research supporting your idea that a girl of 14 is as mature emotionally and psychologically as an adult woman in the 1950s. The real problem with the statement, though, is the way in which it places blame for child abuse on the child and excuses the criminal actions of an adult sexual predator, a man who was a serial rapist of children.

Your claim about 14- and 15-year-olds is clearly wrong in the legal sense; but it is also wrong, and dangerous, as a claim about maturity. Any parent of a teenager can tell you that teens are not like adults. They have not yet internalized a sense of authority. They still depend largely on the judgment and guidance of adults who praised them for their obedience more than for their independence of mind. This means that they are too easily impressed by and manipulated by adults, especially those whom they view as important and powerful. Teenage girls, no matter how capable of sexual activity they may be, are not yet morally responsible persons. They are a vulnerable class of people that the law rightly protects from potential predators and abusers.

I believe that your affection for Jeffrey Epstein has led you to make light of his heinous crimes. Have you read the report of the original police investigation on him? If not, I urge you to read it before you make further public statements in defense of his reputation. The powerful consistency of the evidence in the Probable Cause Affidavit should give you pause:

[REDACTED]

The police record will reveal to you that Mr. Epstein is not a “person of integrity.” Appearances can be deceiving!

I believe that your statement to the press was harmful. In a news report, once you are identified as a scientist from a prestigious university, people assume that you are speaking with the authority of a scientist and the backing of your institution and not simply as a private citizen. You represent Rutgers University, and also, by extension, academia. People (for instance, the parents of our students) are very sensitive to these issues. As a professor, I also am sensitive to this issue. Your statement, with its suggestion that the girl victims are partly to blame for the abuse they received at the hands of your friend, reflects badly on all of us. I hope you will issue a public apology and retraction.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Joseph R. Chaney
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