

The Secret Victim Population

By Detective Don Howell

Summary:

A lot of misconceptions exist regarding child molesters and what causes them to behave the way they do. Many people believe that a child molester was once *normal* but 'something', like exposure to pornography or a bump on the head, caused the offender to suddenly switch his sexual preference to children. Also, when we think about child molesters we tend to focus on the youngest of children and one gender – pre-puberty girls. Expanding our understanding of child molesters allows us to better protect all of our children.

One of the best kept secrets in American society is the high target value that post-puberty children have for one sub-class of child molesters. These offenders are often divided into those who prefer post-puberty boys and those who prefer post-puberty girls. In my experience, the offenders seeking out boys are very active and will engage with multiple teens at the same time and continue with this high volume activity over an extended length of time. It is this group of men, seeking out post-puberty boys for sex, who are perhaps the most difficult group for most of us to understand.

The terms hebephilia and/or ephebephilia are frequently used to describe anyone with a preference for post-puberty children. Drawing from Greek mythology, Hebe, the daughter of Zeus and Hera, is the goddess of youth, and Ephebe referring to boys of training age, give us terms used for anyone with a preference for post-puberty children. Some use the terms interchangeably and others apply hebephilia only when girls are involved and ephebephilia only when boys are involved. As a detective, I see these as separate terms applied to two distinct types of offenders, those who prefer post-puberty girls and those who prefer post-puberty boys. Labels can be a useful tool but there will always be an offender who will cross over from one victim type to the other.

For a variety of reasons, the group of molesters with a true sexual preference for post-puberty boys can operate for decades without raising suspicion from those around them and hold a high degree of confidence that their victims will never talk.

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This is a true sexual preference. The brain is hard wired with this preference the same as it is for those who are heterosexual, homosexual or bi-sexual. Someone with a sexual preference for post-puberty boys has always had this preference. They don't decide one day to make a change from being heterosexual to an ephebophile. They may have been *in the closet*, carefully concealing their true sexual orientation, but it has been there all along. This preference line can be easily blurred when a 15 year old boy, with a preference for post-puberty boys, starts his sexual activity with his age-mates. Most would see this as homosexual activity. However, when the offender is 25 or 45, and still seeking out 15 year old boys, then he is an ephebophile.

The high number of victims for this group of offenders is relatively easy to understand. Consider the combined sexual drive of a group of hormonally driven 15 year old boys and their new found 21 year old friend/offender. The offender can buy the teens beer, drive them to parties and be that cool guy who never tells them “no”, the result is a target rich environment where the victim count can get quite high very quickly. Now add to this group teenagers who are disconnected from their families, the emotional coin falling out of balance, leaving the teens searching for someone to pal around with, someone who is willing to listen to them, and you have the perfect storm for sexual victimization. Our society tends to protect girls, while pushing boys out into the world. How many times have we heard a dad say, “I'm not going to let my daughter date until she's thirty!” all the while encouraging his son to go out into the world and be a man? The social pressure of pushing boys to be sexually active, combined with their own hormonal drives, creates a large pool of potential victims for someone with a preference for post-puberty boys. The offender is also driven by the same social and hormonal needs. This all makes for a very active offender with a large number of victims to choose from.

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I've investigated several of these offenders. One was in the pornography business who makes videos of naked men wrestling for a niche audience. He had a lot of money, a fancy house, sports cars and a 24 hour a day party going on at his home with an open door policy for any runaway, male or female. Alcohol and marijuana were also provided. He would let the teens drive his Porsche in exchange for sex. He encouraged open sex acts between the teens in every room of the house, as long as he could join in. As with many offenders, he was able to perform sexually with anyone, young or old, male or female, but his preference was for teenage boys.

Another offender was a lifelong con-man, with a lantern jaw and a muscular build, who had been able to con his way onto the cover of a martial arts magazine. He used the magazine as a lure to bring teenage boys over to his

home, where the disconnected ones were quickly identified and molested.

Both of these offenders had been active for many years and had been involved in a variety of criminal activity, from credit card fraud to receiving stolen property. Law enforcement knew them well, but none of these agencies questioned why these adult men had an entourage of specific aged boys around them at all times. Some called them pied-pipers, joking that if you wanted to find one of them all you had to do was look for a group of kids. These good cops didn't know what they were seeing or perhaps they didn't want to know. I would estimate that each of these offenders had over 100 victims.

When one of them began befriending underachieving students at the local middle school in my city, the school was quick to call. This befriending behavior is often referred to as *grooming*. I call it *pipeline*. Whichever term you prefer, the behavior is quite clear and the offender quite bold. I invited him to my office and told him that I knew he was a child molester – I knew what he wanted to do – and not to do *it* in my city. He assured me that he was not a molester. Absent an arrest history for child molestation and no current victims in my city, there was nothing more I could do. By the end of the summer, he had amassed a dozen victims, before any of them or their parents came forward.

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Next, we have to consider the difficulties for one of these victims to come forward. First, some of them will actually be homosexual and may not feel they were victims of a crime or they fear that coming forward will reveal a secret they are not yet ready to make known. Others will be fearful that they will be branded as a homosexual when they are not, and therefore will not come forward. The majority have no support system or anyone they could go to if they wanted to come forward. In my experience, 95% of the teens I've contacted regarding this type of victimization are so disconnected from their families that the odds on them talking to me at all are slim

and the odds on them coming to court, a year or more later, are even less. Add to this the male mantras, “tough it out, suck it up, cowboy up, don't talk about your feelings, stuff it down, forget about it, move on, and just get drunk”, my job becomes very difficult. The offenders know all of this and use it to their advantage.

I've interviewed hundreds of molested boys and I'm lucky if they will tell me 25% of what happened, be it the number of times they were molested and/or the type of sexual acts preformed. When we go to court a year or more later, the boy is likely to testify to a different 25%. The defense attorney is quick to point this out – the legal phrase is *prior inconsistent statements*- which attacks the child's creditability, making him look like a liar. With a jury that doesn't know the difference between this type of offender and homosexuality; a legal system that does not allow the education of the jury about this type of crime, a *not guilty* verdict is right around the corner.

Before the Internet, law enforcement wrote letters to these very active offenders, trying to draw them out into the open. After the Internet, it has been impossible to keep up with the ever increasing number of ways that these offenders attract potential victims. Using the Internet like a road map, the offender will attend every rave, beach party, concert and carnival where teens will congregate. Always willing to offer a ride home, some cash or a place to spend the night, the offender will work the crowd as *that cool guy* who can always be counted on.

Two more factors make defining this group even more difficult. Some offenders have a sexual preference for teenagers in the 16 to 19 year age range, making some of their victims old enough to legally consent. Next, you have the offenders who are attracted to the appearance of age instead of an actual birth date. To these offenders, a very young looking 20 year old fits the bill just fine.

Our teens are more likely to be molested than our pre-teens. A teen who is disconnected from his/her family is the offenders preferred target. Until we understand this, the secret will continue – the offenders will continue to feel safe – and disconnected teens will continue to be our largest victim population.

Refer to “Sexual Abuse – Two Sides of the Same Coin” for more on how being disconnected is the root cause of child molestation. Cancer InCytes – Volume 2, Issue 1, Summer 2013.

URL: <http://www.cancerincytes.org/#!sexual-abuse--two-sides-of-the-same-coin/cyha>

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