

Effects on Boy-Attracted Pedosexual Males of Viewing Boy Erotica

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Editor's note: A longer manuscript version of this letter was peer-reviewed and was not accepted for publication. The reviewers and the Editor did, however, share the view that portions of the manuscript contained data that were of potential interest to the readers of *Archives*. Accordingly, an invitation was made to submit this material as a Letter to the Editor.

Does viewing erotic pictures of boys exacerbate the tendency for pedosexually inclined males to seek out boys for sexual purposes? The commonly perceived wisdom would answer “yes,” but there are little or no credible data to support this position. Howitt (1995), in his in-depth case studies of 11 “paedophilic sex offenders” noted “... no clear-cut causal link has been demonstrated between ... exposure to pornography and sex crime” (p 17). As noted by Green (2000), many issues like this one regarding boy/older male relationships which may have a sexual component, including the subject of this paper, are clouded with questionable data.

In late 2002, an Internet survey using a 101 item questionnaire drew anonymous responses from 290 self-identified “Boy-Attracted Pedosexual Males” (BPM). Respondents, who had to be at least 18 years of age, were solicited by announcements posted on various Internet sites, not by individual contacts. Such data may be more representative than data from prison populations. Prisoners, convicts, and even parolees have a strong incentive to say whatever they think their interviewer wants to hear, whatever will help them obtain release from incarceration, or, at the minimum, whatever they think will improve their situation in some way.

The respondents reported on, among other things, their mental health, relationships with boys, viewing of “Boy Erotica” (BE), and effects of that viewing. Questions about actual sexual encounters with underage males were not asked because of potential self-incrimination; however, a report of the tendency or desire for such sexual encounters can be used as a reasonable proxy for the acts themselves.

The respondents ranged in age from 18 to over 60 years. More than 90% of the respondents were White, and over half were from North America, with significant numbers from the United Kingdom, Europe, and Australia/New Zealand. Over 77% reported at least some college, over 39% an undergraduate degree, and over 14% an advanced degree. Regarding religious affiliation, 25% reported being Protestant, almost 19% Catholic, and over 36% reported no affiliation. Almost 50% reported being mildly to moderately religious, whereas over 40% reported being not at all religious. Of the 290 respondents, 228 (78.6%) reported never having been involved in any way with law enforcement as a result of either true or false accusations of sexual contact with boys, but 18 (6.2%) reported having been incarcerated for such behaviors. None were in prison at the time of the survey.

On a 7-point response scale of self-reported general mental health (1 = *extremely poor* to 7 = *Excellent*), the mean score was 4.79 ($SD = 1.56$). Of those who were employed ($N = 258$), 84.5% reported their self perceived job performance as “moderately successful,” “very successful,” or “outstanding.”

Urges redirected	264	48.5%	25.4%	9.9%	7.9%	3.0%	5.3%
Entertainment only	270	39.3%	28.5%	13.3%	8.5%	7.4%	3.0%
Increased tendency	269	2.2%	1.8%	4.1%	7.4%	24.0%	60.5%

Respondents were asked if, in their case, the viewing of erotica was useful as a substitute for actual sexual contact with boys, in that their urges and drives were redirected and given an outlet that affected no other person, and 83.8% of the respondents reported that this was from “frequently” to “invariably” true (Table II). The question was then rephrased to ask if the use of erotica may have no effect on behavior, but was simply entertainment, and 81.1% reported that this was from “frequently” to “invariably” true. The overlap between these two responses indicates that the respondents see these two aspects as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Then the inverse of the previous two questions asked if the use of erotica might increase the respondents’ tendency to seek out boys for the sole purpose of sexual activity, and 84.5% reported that this was “rarely” or “never” true.

Regarding the use of erotica as an aid to masturbation, of the 280 who responded, 63.9% indicated that they did so “frequently,” 25.0% “occasionally,” 6.1% “rarely,” and 5.0% “never.”

Respondents were asked how they felt after viewing boy erotica. They were specifically requested to report their general sense of well being, as opposed to their state of sexual arousal. Of the 281 who responded, 9.2% said they felt “guilty, unhappy, and frustrated,” 16.4% “somewhat disturbed,” 21.4% “no different,” 27.4% “somewhat better,” and 25.6% “very much relieved and at peace.”

Respondents who wrote comments almost invariably stated that such viewing actually sublimated and redirected their sexual energies away from attempted or actual sexual contact with boys, and, as a result, they felt less rather than more inclined to seek out boys for sexual gratification

It is often claimed that BPM regularly use BE as a way of enticing boys into sexual activities. It was reported by 76.6%, however, that they had “never” shared BE with a boy, another 7.2% that this had occurred “once,” while 10.0% reported “rarely.” Thus, only 6.2% reported “occasional” or greater sharing.

The self-identified BPM from whom the data for this research were obtained constituted a convenience sample (i.e., non-random and self-selected), and the respondents were most likely above average in computer and Internet knowledge. Given these caveats, it must be emphasized that any extrapolations of these findings to the larger population of BPM must take these obvious limitations into consideration. There sometimes is a correlation between males who are in possession of BE and those who also run afoul of the law because of accusations of sexual activities with boys. But correlation must not be confused with causation, and there is very little support within these data for the societal perception that the viewing of BE is a substantive causative factor in actual or potential sexual contacts and activities between BPM and minor males.

This research illustrates the need to inquire into better ways of accessing random and nonself-selected respondents within the greater population of non-prison and non-clinical BPM, as well as the need to design improved and better focused questionnaires. The surface has been

barely scratched on these issues, and much more in-depth and exhaustive research is called for. Still, to the extent that these current respondents may be representative of the larger population of BPM, the insights that are to be found in these data could be very helpful as part of extended discussions among researchers that would eventually lead to a more informed and enlightened societal perception and public policy regarding these issues.

REFERENCES:

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