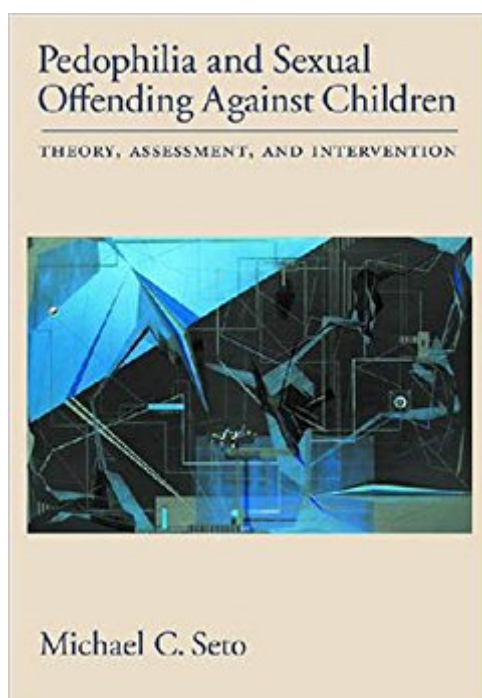


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# Pedophilia And Sexual Offending Against Children: Theory, Assessment, And Intervention



## Synopsis

Contrary to popular belief, not all sex offenders who target children are pedophiles, and not all pedophiles commit sexual offenses. This book addresses key concerns and questions in dealing with these clinical populations: How can pedophilia be detected? What causes pedophilia and sexual offending against children?

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Michael C. Seto is with the University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

This work by Dr. Seto is a unique treatise of the specialized area of treating patients who are driven to or have offended sexually against children. It is written very scientifically and is very thorough. Dr. Seto gives a clear background and clarification of the history of our understanding of pedophilia from a clinical point of view. He clearly presents much of the research findings regarding evaluation and treatment of individuals presenting these symptoms. He was careful to point out that much of what we know is from studying prison populations, which by definition, constitute a captive audience. The vast majority of persons with these urges and conflicts are in society and not in prisons. Many such individuals never offend against children, and suffer from great loneliness. A worthwhile read for professionals working in mental health.

I am writing a thesis on pedophilia and found this book an amazing asset. Although I had already done enough research (by the time I came across this book) that I'd already come across most of

the studies reported in this book, it would be THE pedophilia "bible" and the first source for anyone looking for a solid overview as well as anyone getting ready to do lengthy research on this subject.

In India they say: "It is in the mud that the Lotus Flower has its root." This book is a thought-provoking contribution to understanding relationships between adults and children. The author's dispassionate analyses and courageous observations are invaluable and an inspiring model for any scholar. The author notes that the American Psychiatric Association's "Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders" criteria for diagnosing pedophilia have been challenged (no data on inter-rater and test-retest reliability) (p.44), and offers this very specific definition: "In its strongest form, it reflects an exclusive preference for pre-pubescent children who show no signs of secondary sexual development, and has no interest in sexually mature adults." (p.4); but the author recognizes that there are different (i.e. milder) forms of pedophilia. The book describes how devices like the phallometer are used to measure arousal via increases in the volume of the sex organ (vasocongestion) when looking at photographs and listening to erotic audio narratives. Although many adults experience some arousal when presented with images of children, a few adults exhibit more arousal when looking at images of children than when looking at adults. This minority has been labeled "pedophile." What about the adults who are just barely non-pedophilic, i.e. their arousal to children is equal to their arousal to adults, or is only slightly less than their arousal to adults? The book doesn't address that question, which seems to me to imply that a considerable amount of arousal to children is innocuous or species-typical, and hence no further attention is called for; or perhaps discussion of that part of the findings is subject to censorship. The author mentions that, like the polygraph, the phallometer (and the equivalent device for women) isn't infallible. Such devices may result in false positives as well as false negatives. But other forms of detection, such as self-report and even criminal records, are even less reliable. Just because someone has been convicted of child sexual abuse, that doesn't make him a pedophile. The author courageously observes that not all sex offenders against children are "pedophiles" (estimated at only 50%). Some offenders are psychopaths, for example, who usually prefer adult victims but occasionally choose a child. (Surprisingly, sex offenders with adult victims score higher on psychopathy than offenders with child victims.) Conversely, not all pedophiles are sex criminals. Some adults may experience unusually strong arousal to children but never act on such feelings. Traditionally, the law only prohibits acts, not thoughts or feelings. The author also exhibits admirable humility in stating that there is "uncertainty" about children's competence to consent to sex play (my phrase) with adults. That is a welcome contrast to Finkelhor's presumptuous claim 30 years ago that children are

"never" competent to consent, which was merely politically correct rhetoric - not an empirical finding. (Finkelhor did concede that sex play among same-age peers is morally acceptable.) The author also has the courage to mention more than once: there is some evidence that sexual contacts between adults and children aren't usually seriously harmful. The book describes how the U.S. Congress voted to censure the American Psychological Association for publishing that study, and the mass media's eagerness to sensationalize rare cases of sexual violence against children have a chilling effect on academic freedom and scientific research. As far as protecting children from injury, which should be everyone's primary concern: "...aggregate crime data suggest that cases of child sexual abuse have declined dramatically since the early 1990s." (p.60) That's good news but it's unclear why that has happened or what we could do to reduce that number even further. (The book offers some hopeful suggestions.) Although wide-ranging in its scope, one thing this book lacks is any mention of the Bonobo, a well-known species of ape in the Congo region. Adult Bonobos are regularly observed engaging in sex play with juvenile members of their species, and yet Bonobos are less violent than other apes and don't commit infanticide like the non-pedophilic chimpanzees (and humans) do. I don't agree with everything the author says, and I found at least one of the author's ideas a bit bizarre, but in general this book is the best treatment of the subject I've ever read. The book also features a long list of references that should persuade humble readers how much we have to learn. Now what we need is a book like this about pedophobia: how to protect children from the far greater number of deaths and serious injuries covered-up as "accidents" (choking, falling down stairs, drowning, car crashes, etc.), tragedies that have nothing to do with excessive arousal but are actually the result of parental neglect (insufficient arousal?); or the cruelty of traditional practices specifically intended to "inhibit" children's sexuality, such as female genital mutilation.

very informative

I thought this book would be informational but all it gives is data from studies. I wasted \$35 and it caused a huge setback in recovery.

The author certainly posits some recent theoretical materials in this subject area. Recidivism statistics are cited directly from the U.S. Department of Justice -- criminal statistics. After perusing the statistics, I was somewhat surprised to discover that contrary to political and public perceptions regarding pedophiles, there is a significantly lower recidivism rate than commonly believed. For

example, one of the rationales for sex offender registries is the common belief and perception that there is an very high recidivism rate among these offenders. Various treatment modalities are discussed by the author and some decent comparisons made. Pedophilia is unequivocally defined by the author and differentiated from other paraphilias. Some laypersons and professionals might even be mildly surprised to learn that not all offenses perpetrated against prepubertal children are pedophilic in nature. The DSM-IV-TR diagnostic nomenclature is very specific and clearly delineates the criteria for pedophilia. I would recommend this textbook for any MHP whose practice encompasses the treatment of sexual deviance, including but not limited to pedophilia.

The scope of this book is far greater than the differences between pedophilia and children molesters without pedophilia. Unfortunately, adequate researches on pedophilia have been harmed by prejudice and misunderstandings, but Dr. Seto has demonstrated that science combined with justice may succeed. The author includes in his chapters detailed discussions of differential diagnosis that go well beyond the descriptive characteristics on which most discussions are based. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in understanding this complex psychiatric disorder known as pedophilia and treating this problem adequately.

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