

Seto, M. C. (2008). *Pedophilia and sexual offending against children*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association. \$59.95.

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The title of this book gives something away immediately: This will be a book of fine distinctions. Seto notes, accurately, that many people inaccurately conflate pedophilia with sex offending against children. In this book, Seto discusses the distinctions between the two, delineating the potential causes of sex offending against children. These causes may well include pedophilia—that is, an actual sexual attraction to prepubertal children of some persistence and strength—but may in some cases be limited to other factors, especially those associated with antisociality. Seto notes the following distinction (p. 63):

There is a critical distinction between pedophilic and nonpedophilic sex offenders. These two groups differ in the characteristics of the sexual offenses and the likelihood that they will reoffend.... Pedophilic offenders are more likely to have boy victims, multiple victims, prepubescent victims, and unrelated victims. Concomitantly, nonpedophilic offenders are more likely to have only girl victims, single victims, pubescent or postpubescent victims, and related victims.

In *Pedophilia*, Seto thoroughly reviews theories of causation for sex offending against children, both historical theories (such as Finklehor's four factor theory) and more current theories (such as Ward and Siegert's pathways model). He then goes further, reviewing the empirical evidence from both individual studies and meta-analyses that has accumulated over the years for these theories. He comes to an interesting and, at least to me, intuitive conclusion: the various factors of the different models can be collapsed into the two broad factors of pedophilia and antisociality. He suggests that many factors from these theories could be considered aspects of an antisocial personality, including emotional dysregulation, disinhibition, and self-regulation problems.

In addition to coverage of expected areas, such as various assessment and treatment methods, the reader of *Pedophilia* gets the two unexpected bonuses of detailed discussions of areas not adequately covered in other books—adolescent offenders and child-pornography offenders. Seto reviews meta-analytic studies of adolescents, noting reliable differences between those adolescents who molest children (increased frequency of their own sexual victimization, higher levels of sexual arousal to children) and those adolescents who sexually offend against peers (higher levels of antisociality). He also places sexual offenders generally and adolescent offenders particularly in the context of Moffit's well-accepted developmental theory of delinquency (with a modification proposed by Quinsey to add a subtype of life-course-persistent offenders, that being psychopaths, to Moffit's original taxonomy). He notes that life-course-persistent sexual offenders are likely to have a range of persistent antisocial behaviors, well beyond the

sexual. The psychopathic individuals within this life-course-persistent group are less likely to have child victims and more likely to have adolescent victims. Adolescence-limited sexual offenders will cease sexually offending as they age and obtain access to appropriate sexual outlets, unless they (for not fully understood reasons) are pedophiles; if pedophiles, then their sexual focus on prepubertal children will increase the likelihood that they will continue to molest children, even if other forms of antisocial behavior cease as they age.

In Seto's discussion of incest offenders, he notes that incest offenders are atypical, generally being both less antisocial and less pedophilic than other sexual offenders. He then explores the obvious question: Why would an individual sexually molest a relative, given all the potential negative consequences, if that individual is not either antisocial or pedophilic? He approaches this puzzle from an evolutionary perspective, exploring, among other things, differences on a number of dimensions between genetically related and sociolegal fathers (i.e., stepfathers) who molest their children. He suggests a number of relevant factors: opportunity, lack of access to appropriate sexual outlets, degree of genetic relatedness, age of victim (with incest offenders mainly victimizing adolescent girls).

Seto is also one of the foremost researchers on child-pornography offenders, so in this book, the reader receives the benefit of his grasp of this area. He notes that the literature on child-pornography offenders is in its relative infancy, and results from this research have not been entirely consistent in characterizing these offenders. Nonetheless, he draws what conclusions he can from the existing literature. He suggests, for example, that those child-pornography offenders having an organized, extensive collection of child pornography (say, greater than 1000 child-pornographic images) and being involved in distributing child pornography are more likely to be pedophilic. He also notes that at the time he wrote the book, little research had been conducted "to determine what effect child pornography use might have on the likelihood of subsequently having sexual contact with a child" (p. 59), although Seto himself has begun to address this gap in the research and subsequent studies. He reports findings from his recent research, indicating (p. 160) that child-pornography offenders with prior criminal history of contact sex offenses are, perhaps not surprisingly, the most likely to commit future contact child sex offenses, and those child-pornography offenders with no history of contact sex offenses were relatively unlikely to commit future contact child sex offenses.

Seto notes that there has been considerable research on typologies of pedophiles, but relatively little research on the actual causes of pedophilia. He considers what might lead to pedophilia, given the presumed evolutionary selection pressures against it. First, he suggests that "pedophilia is a disorder of male-typical tendencies to attend to cues of youthfulness such as smooth skin, hairlessness, and large eyes" (p. 118). He also suggests that at least in some cases, "it may eventually be discovered that pedophilia is linked to pathogen exposure" (p. 119).

One can scarcely read any literature on sex offenders nowadays without a discussion of risk assessment. Risk assessment of sexual offenders is relevant in a variety of impor-

tant public-policy contexts, such as community notification and sexually violent predator civil commitment. Seto's book includes a nice overview of the primary subareas of risk assessment, including identification of risk factors, types of risk-assessment measures, and a comparison of static and dynamic risk factors. He has at least a brief discussion of two common (but not yet well researched) practices in risk assessment, those being the clinical adjustment of actuarial risk-assessment measures and the combination of more than one actuarial risk-assessment measure. He suggests that at least the preliminary research evidence does not support the use of clinical adjustment to actuarial scales or combining multiple actuarial scales.

Seto concludes his book with a discussion of intervention methods for sex offenders against children. He reviews the controversy regarding the large-scale studies and meta-analyses of sex offender psychological treatments, concluding that the effectiveness of such treatments has not yet been convincingly established. Consistent with what is now commonly called a containment approach, he suggests that external controls and prevention approaches are essential parts of managing the problem of child sexual abuse. He recommends that sex-offender intervention research be conceptualized within the broader context of offender treatment research, such as the well-known line of research by Andrews and Bonta, which indicates that when offender treatments are matched to risk, criminogenic needs, and an individual's learning style and capacity, treatment is much more likely to be effective.

In sum, Seto's book is an excellent, nuanced review of the current state of the literature. The book shows excellent breadth and depth in its coverage and analysis. Those working in this specialty, even those with considerable experience, would gain much from a careful reading of *Pedophilia*.