

## Jackson 'teeters on a fine line' in spite of acquittal

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Even though a California jury acquitted singer Michael Jackson of all charges in his child molestation case, an Alfred University professor who has studied pedophiles says Jackson has "teetered on a fine line that separates adoration from abuse." Dr. Pamela D. Schultz, associate professor of Communication Studies at Alfred University and author of *Not Monsters: Analyzing the Stories of Child Molesters*, said she was not surprised by the verdict. "But I am intimately familiar with the devastating effects of child molestation on victims and, as a survivor of sexual abuse, I would never presume that the victim(s) in this case were lying," said Schultz. For *Not Monsters*, Schultz interviewed nine convicted child molesters who were serving time in state prisons. "I have spent years trying to understand what motivates child molesters, including working with incarcerated offenders, and I've met men who remind me of Michael Jackson," said Schultz Monday, immediately after the Jackson verdict was announced. "These men were adolescents in adult bodies, who viewed children as peers. They surrounded themselves with children, vowing that they would never hurt them." Yet, Schultz said, "These men put themselves and the children they loved at risk by sometimes unconsciously creating environments that offered opportunities for stepping over the fine line that separates adoration from abuse. I believe that Michael Jackson has teetered on this line for quite awhile. His family, friends, and sycophants have sheltered him from recognizing the truth." In her book, Schultz argues that empathy for the abusers as well as the victims is the way to combat child sexual abuse. "There is no excuse for molesting children, but there are reasons for it," she said. Oftentimes, abusers were themselves abused. Society, though, "insists on painting all child molesters as monsters." Schultz finds that problematic because it leads to the perception that "all child molesters are completely irredeemable," an assumption that "undermines our ability to fight against the crime because we don't understand the dynamics." Hopefully, Jackson can learn a valuable lesson from his trial and very public humiliation and realize that, although his overt desire might be to indulge the adolescent fantasy of being a young boy, this desire runs the risk of expressing itself sexually. For a man obsessed with appearance, Michael Jackson seems oblivious to how obsessive his attachment to children can appear to be," said Schultz.