

'Not Monsters' AU professor explores why men molest children

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On the surface, they seem like everyday, ordinary men, people you'd know from work, or your neighborhood. But the nine men profiled in *Not Monsters: Analyzing the Stories of Child Molesters*, a new book by an Alfred University faculty member, are all convicted child molesters who were serving time in prison for their crimes at the time they were interviewed. The book by Dr. Pamela D. Schultz, associate professor of communication studies at Alfred University, will be released next month by Rowman and Littlefield. In it, Schultz explores what motivated each of the nine. "Not Monsters documents the stories of nine convicted child molesters through one-on-one interviews, listening to what offenders have to say about their crimes and exploring the roots of these behaviors from a social constructionist perspective," according to the publisher. "Their words paint a compelling and frightening portrait of how sexual abuse works in Western culture to perpetuate a political and social system of dominance and control." Schultz said the nine men volunteered to be interviewed. All were inmates in a correctional facility and members of a sex offender group. Schultz met them when she co-facilitated some of the group meetings with corrections counselors. There are no women profiled for two reasons, Schultz explained. "First, the vast majority of convicted child molesters are male. Although we do know there are women who molest children (e.g, Mary Kay LeTourneau) - possibly up to 20 percent of all offenders are female - they are harder to find for a variety of reasons," she said. Fewer victims are likely to come forward to accuse women of child molestation. If the victims are male, there's that old stereotype that says every boy fantasizes about having sex with an older woman," Schultz said. Additionally, "Our society seems to vilify men who molest kids, while obliquely excusing women for the same crime. It's horrifying when a 35-year-old man has sex with a 12-year-old girl, but somehow we don't think that a 35-year-old woman who has sex with a 12-year-old boy is as bad." The other reason Schultz focuses on men's stories is personal. "I was molested as a child by a man, so underlying my research was the desire to learn what motivated my own abuser," she explained. Schultz chose the title - *Not Monsters* - because she believes empathy for offenders as well as their victims is the key to combating the crime. "There is no excuse for molesting children, but there are reasons for it," Schultz said. "After all, once upon a time, these perpetrators were children themselves, often abused, neglected kids with no resources and no way to make sense of their own victimization, so they grew up to externalize their problems and use children as conduits for their own inadequacies as men." She said the "way in which society insists on painting all child molesters as 'monsters' is problematic. Because we consider them to be subhuman, we don't care to know anything about what might motivate their actions. Thus, the assumption that all child molesters are completely irredeemable undermines our ability to fight against the crime because we don't understand the dynamics." Sooner or later, most of these perpetrators will leave prison, and a great number of them will have received no in-prison counseling or therapy. Then, they are out on the streets again, on their own, isolated (which is often one of the factors that lead to their impulse to molest in the first place), and - subsequently - more kids are put at risk." Robert E. Longo, an independent consultant and trainer for Sexual Abuse Prevention & Education Resources International, wrote, "Not Monsters is a valuable book that is both well written and highly informative. Pamela Schultz has done an excellent job in providing straightforward information about the impact of sexual abuse on victims as well as on men who sexually abuse children, looking critically at the motivation behind their behavior... Not Monsters provides a daring look into child sexual abuse and furthers our understanding of this public health problem, lending support to the national efforts to prevent child sexual abuse." And Dr. Douglas Pryor, author of *Unspeakable Acts: Why Men Sexually Abuse Children*, called *Not Monsters* "A courageous book that involves a look into the mirror of the author's own experience as a victim of sexual abuse to answer the question why. Interestingly, despite being a survivor herself, the writer focuses on this distressing and unsettling crime from the inside or the perpetrator's way of seeing. This research provides some of the more revealing accounts of child sexual offending and the life histories of offenders to date. A narrative study that brings us a step closer to deciphering the reasons men violate unspeakable sexual boundaries. Professionals addressing the issues of perpetrators and victims should read this book."