

Book review: The Socially Skilled Child Molester

Contributed by Marian L. Swindell, Ph.D., MSW

Book review of *The Socially Skilled Child Molester: Differentiating the Guilty from the Falsely Accused*. van Dam, C. (2006). *The Socially Skilled Child Molester: Differentiating the Guilty from the Falsely Accused*. New York: Haworth Press. 149 pages, \$24.95.

This book should be required reading for every social work student who wants a career working with children and families in any capacity. Not only is this an excellent book for social work students, social work educators, and all those in the helping professions, but it is also an excellent resource for parents. The book provides a thorough description of the sexual predator who lives right next door—the person we would never suspect of being a molester and would even invite over for dinner or coffee or say “hi” to as we greet them in church on Sunday morning. This is an eye-opening book that educates social work educators, students, researchers, and practitioners to the realistic, true-to-life, wake-up-and-smell-the-coffee problem of increasing child molestation.

Dr. van Dam takes the reader into the mind and thought processes of the offender. We learn their thought processes, modus operandi, personality types, and methods they employ to hone their predation skills. Chapters introduce the reader to the problem, the child molesters’ natural habitat, current practices with children and offenders, the different types of molesters, common misperceptions, differentiating dangers, understanding the problem, interviewing, predicting risk, and incorporating evidence.

Several examples are provided throughout the book to assist the reader in understanding the different types of molesters and their behavioral patterns. The book also provides strong examples of methods to distinguish between the falsely accused and the molester.

Social work students should be required to read this book, as it explains human behaviors and the theory driving such behaviors. Students also will benefit from this book because it provides an inside look into the mind and mannerisms of the pedophile.

This book is helpful for practitioners and others currently working with molesters or their victims. Community social workers will benefit from this book by learning the predictor behaviors of molesters and then educating communities they serve.

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