

interests are highly mutable, provided the treatment approach is adequate and appropriate. He most directly addresses this topic in the chapter on pedophilic disorder. He starts by describing a 2014 retrospective penile plethysmography (PPG) study that demonstrated a change in arousal in 20 men who previously had PPG results consistent with pedophilic interest. He notes that this research generated considerable controversy and argues that its critics discount other sources of information regarding the mutability of pedophilic interests, including those men who self-report a change in their pedophilic interests and behaviors, as well as the reports of their adult sexual partners. Unfortunately, he does not cite any studies to support his claims for the reader to review.

Another memorable discussion occurs in the chapter on sexual masochism and sexual sadism disorder. Dr. Fedoroff discusses the elements of BDSM (bondage/discipline, dominance/submission, and sadism/masochism) and their relationship to problematic sexual behaviors. He notes that sadism and masochism, commonly thought to be opposite sexual interests, exist on a continuum and that individuals who identify as sadists or masochists may have a mix of sadistic and masochistic intentions for their behavior. Further, instead of viewing sadism and masochism as categorically abnormal, he suggests that they exist along a continuum from extreme sadism and masochism to so-called “vanilla” sex. Finally, he indicates that there may be nothing pathological about those who engage in acts of BDSM, unless they force others to participate in nonconsensual sexual acts.

The greatest contribution of the book to the fields of forensic psychiatry and sexology is its unique perspective of sexual interest as a highly mutable characteristic of human sexuality. It is clear from Dr. Fedoroff’s writing that this belief undergirds the treatment paradigm at the SBC and that it reinforces the principles of collaboration and voluntariness and the expectation that its clients immediately stop criminal sexual behavior that the SBC advocates. In addition to providing a review of paraphilic disorders specified in the DSM-5, *The Paraphilias* raises important questions about human sexual behavior about which we have yet to find satisfactory answers. Dr. Fedoroff’s views may inspire some controversy, but one hopes they will also promote

further study to guide assessment and treatment paradigms for paraphilic disorders in years to come.

Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.

## ***The Creation of Dangerous Violent Criminals, Second Edition***

By Lonnie H. Athens. New York: Transaction Publishers, 2017. 160 pp. \$23.00.

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DOI:10.29158/JAAPL.200095-20

**Key words:** violentization process; criminal; dangerous

*The Creation of Dangerous Violent Criminals, Second Edition*, is an introduction to the violentization process, a term coined by Dr. Athens, a professor of criminal justice who witnessed violence in his own childhood and adolescence.<sup>1</sup> In describing the violentization process, he offers a framework to explain how a person in a highly civilized society becomes a dangerous violent criminal through the completion of four social experiential stages that begin in the early stages of life. The author describes how this violentization process gradually transforms a frightened and angry child, more deserving of sympathy than antipathy, into one who commits heinous acts.

The book begins with several cases of monstrous acts by dangerous violent criminals, quickly raising questions of how people can commit such crimes. The author sets out to answer these questions by conducting in-depth interviews of incarcerated dangerous violent criminals, defined as those who committed heinous acts with little or no provocation. Dr. Athens approached this study with three assumptions. First, people are what they are as a result of social experiences. Second, significant experiences that create dangerous violent criminals occur gradually. Third, it is better to conduct an in-depth study of 50 people than to study 5,000 superficially. In applying this strategy, he focused on the common yet significant social experiences of confirmed and

incipient violent criminals. In doing so, the author provides a solid case for his theory that it was these social experiences, rather than social environments or biophysiology, that best explain how benign individuals were transformed to dangerous violent criminals.

The majority of the book focuses on describing and providing case examples of four stages of significant experiences common to dangerous violent criminals. The first stage, brutalization, requires three elemental experiences: violent subjugation, personal horrification, and violent coaching, most of which occur in the home environment. Each experience involves a person undergoing coarse and cruel treatment from others, which results in a lasting and dramatic impact on the remainder of that person's life. According to the violentization process theory, one must undergo all three experiences to complete the brutalization stage, which usually happens by early adolescence.

The author describes the second stage of the violentization process as belligerency, which occurs when individuals consider what they must do to prevent themselves from experiencing additional brutalization. They conclude that they must begin taking violent action against others who unduly provoke them. The belligerency stage ends when the subject firmly resolves to resort to violence when necessary.

Violent performance constitutes the third stage of the violentization process. At the end of the belligerent stage, the subject awaits circumstances to test the newly developed resolve to physically attack provokers with the intention of causing serious injury. The provocation must be at least moderate for this person to attack. If the violent performer succeeds in the performance of violence, the resolution to take violent action then deepens.

Of particular value in understanding this violentization process is the fourth state, virulency, when subjects become aware that others' opinions have suddenly and drastically changed as a result of their violent performance. Subjects experience notoriety, and people act cautiously around them. The subject often feels invincible and decides to perform even more impressive violent acts. This individual is now a dangerous violent criminal who has resolved to grievously harm others, even with little or no provocation. Once an individual has completed all four stages, the likelihood of reformation is minimal.

Finally, this book discusses theoretical and policy implications of this framework, focusing on efforts

that could halt the violentization process and prevent the creation of dangerous violent criminals. The author suggests that if society fails to aid in thwarting such transformations, it tacitly serves as an accomplice in creating them. Although the task of developing policy and strategies to prevent the creation of dangerous violent criminals is fraught with challenges, the discussion provided in this book serves as a springboard for additional forums on specific interventions that could prevent the violentization process.

Prior to chapter one, the author provides an "Introduction to the Transaction Edition" in which he reveals that he has added a fifth stage to his violentization process theory, violent predation, and has also renamed other stages of the violentization process and added elemental experiences. While none of these developments are covered in the chapters of the book, the author describes violent predation here as a stage when "the subject's violence level becomes totally unbounded, exceeding the outer limits of humanity" (Ref. 2, p xv). It is unfortunate for the reader that the author's refinements to his theory are not incorporated into the chapters of his book.

This book provides a framework to view some forensic psychiatric patients and may be helpful in formulating concerns related to ongoing violence risk. Forensic psychiatrists would find the book a valuable read. It provides a well-written explanation of the violentization process, which has been referenced and studied extensively. In general, this book is an easy read, with the chapters describing theory and policy implications being more tedious. Strengths of the book include its detailed case examples and in-depth explanations of each violentization stage. Critics have proposed weaknesses in the violentization process theory, claiming that it does not account for all dangerous violent criminals.<sup>2</sup> Regardless, Dr. Athens' work constitutes an important contribution to the field of criminology.

## References

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Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.