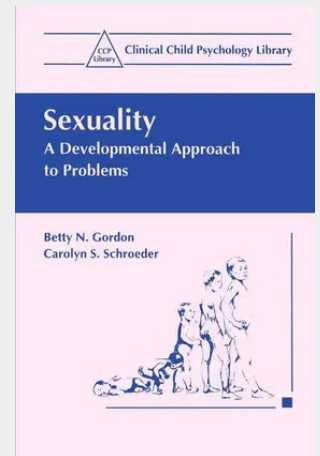


Sexuality

A Developmental Approach to Problems

There are few things that stir up our culture more than sex, particularly sex and children. Sexual behavior in children represents, to far too many people, further proof of the moral decay of our society. Any issue that provokes as strong an emotional reaction as childhood sexuality is obviously in need of a rational discussion. The best features of thought and reason include their moderating influence on overheated and reaction emotions. Consequently, this book by Betty Gordon and Carolyn Schroeder represents a very important, and even brave, counter to irrationality. When the Surgeon General of the United States is forced to resign because the words "children" and "masturbation" appear in the same sentence, you know that there is a great deal of misunderstanding about sexuality. My own evolution as a researcher in the area of child sexual abuse is a model of how naivete can be corrected by knowledge. Some of my early research in sexual abuse of children led me to realize that sexual behavior was a reliable marker of victimization in a relatively large percentage of children (Friedrich, Urquiza, & Beilke, 1986). My blinders to sexuality were evident in that I had not even hypothesized that to be the case in this early, exploratory research. When I realized how important sexual behavior was, several colleagues and I set out to interview parents and foster parents of sexually abused children more specifically. These adults were routinely quite reactive to our queries.

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