

Webber, Julie A. (2003). *Failure to Hold: The Politics of School Violence*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, (Softcover), 220 pp.

Many educators have remarked upon the scarcity of literature related to the politics of school violence in the United States. With this in mind, Julie Webber's book, *Failure to Hold: The Politics of School Violence* can be viewed as a successful attempt to overcome this problem.

The book is divided into two parts. Part one provides cases regarding the motivation of school shootings from the perspective of public opinion. The first three chapters describe the three incidents between 1997 and 1999 in West Paducah, Kentucky; Jonesboro, Arkansas; and Springfield, Oregon and demonstrate the succession of events leading to the shootings. Part two is a review of theories of violence in politics and society. In addition to Marx, Foucault, and Dewey; Webber uses ideas presented by Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean Baudrillard, and others, to create what she calls "a mishmash of theories pulled together to explain a very complex social problem" (p. 10). The question is whether Webber's plurality of theories is adequate to support her ideas presented in her book. Webber supplements this review of theories with her conclusion on "Post-Columbine – Reflections on Youth Violence as a National Movement" (p. 189).

I applaud Webber's attempt to define the various concepts commonly used in the examination of the politics of school violence such as "hidden curriculum." Unfortunately, Webber is just barely able to unravel the sociological definition from a political definition. This book does not exclusively focus upon the political aspects of school violence, as indicated by the subtitle "the politics of school violence." It also deals with subjects such as anxiety, child aggression, and sexual abuse which are primarily sociological, rather than political.

When young men and women are committed to a particular institution, be it political, religious, or any other educational or cultural institution, they are less likely to become involved in deviant behavior and to commit crimes. Webber convincingly argues that American society does not allow for effective social, political, and economic organizations for young men and women. Exploitation of labor, production for profit, and accumulation of wealth are the dominant goals of American society. As Webber explains, this does not allow for participation by young men and women in their society. While the

conditions above continue to grow and become widespread, despair and hopelessness develops among the parents experiencing poverty, which is then perpetuated in their children. Psychologically, when a child grows up, he or she will find it difficult to adapt, and therefore improve his or her condition, as well as to recognize opportunities throughout a lifetime. This can lead to violence and societal breakdown as discussed in the book.

The media in the United States reflects the interests of corporate America, and therefore, exploits violence in order to gain more profit. As Webber correctly points out, violent media are motivating factors in the shooting incidents. According to Webber, "the culture of violence we witness in the media is anticipated by a population literally jacked into the technological performance of cruelty [as in video games]" (p. 22). This further demonstrates her point that media violence is a national problem that is affecting young Americans.

Webber states, "education today teaches only abstract knowledge, knowledge that is 'detached' from any experience, history, or emotional understanding" (p. 29). The purpose of education should be to make available knowledge that is concrete and therefore useful. Our main aim should be to help education do more to develop creative ability. As Webber argues, "the disappointment that comes from failing to reproduce ... ideas, grades, behaviors, [and] styles ... may be increasingly interpreted as the worst crime in American society" (p. 28). The challenge, which confronts us as educators, is to develop ingenuity and initiative. We should help to bring about a more creative style of teaching in all subjects – teaching which will combine thinking effort with learning effort, and thus develop thinking ability while implanting knowledge.

As Webber explains environment is a contributing factor to certain behaviors such as road rage. She states, "road rage, while certainly a behavior found in individuals, is not necessarily the result of their self-contained pathology and the inability to restrain themselves associated with pathology, but a result of their real lack of control over their environment" (p. 83). We assume everyone is born good; however, the environment can affect children positively or negatively. The environment plays a very important role in the intellectual development and creativity of a child.

This book adds a great deal to our knowledge about the politics of school violence. Despite the lack of focus on the political aspect of school violence, the book is an indispensable source for students in politics of

education and sociology of education. Scholars of politics and sociology in education will find the book to be of definite interest, though the non-specialist may wish to pass it by for something lighter. One can say honestly that the book is a proof of scholarship. The work is historical and thoughtful, and should be widely read and discussed. Chapters are supported by notes at the end, and good use has been made of American sources. The result is a valuable contribution to our understanding of the problem of school violence.

Vahid Motamed
Kharazmi University
Tehran
IRAN

Shuttleworth, D. (2003). *School Management in Transition: Schooling on the Edge*. New York: Routledge/Falmer, (Hardcover), 169 pp.

School Management in Transition: Schooling on the Edge by Dale E. Shuttleworth spends most of its 15 chapters describing how schools and school managers are facing a crisis. According to the author, the crisis has been created by a neoconservative agenda forcing top-down, quantitative, and scientific management theories and techniques on school management that are ill-equipped to deal with these forces.

Shuttleworth was a consultant and author for a study of innovation in school management. The study involved nine countries and was conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) at the organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2001c). Shuttleworth believes that an overly-politicized and business-sector driven environment has created education systems too focused on standards and testing, outsourcing, and accountability.

Decentralization, deregulation, school reform (versus renewal), and wrongly motivated use of technologies are further problems created by neoconservatism and scientific management, according to Shuttleworth. This has resulted in a "dysfunctional state striving to satisfy the diverse needs of an ever-changing social, political and economic milieu" (p. vii). Shuttleworth states that teacher and principal training is needed to