

*Systemic Violence in Education: Promise Broken.* Juanita Epp and Ailsa Watkinson (Editors). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997, 220 pages.

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Naming an experience is central to understanding, analyzing, and deconstructing it. "Systemic violence is any institutionalized practice or procedure that adversely impacts on disadvantaged individuals or groups by burdening them psychologically, culturally, spiritually, economically or physically. It includes practices and procedures that prevent students from learning, thus harming them" (p. 190). The editors of this collection have not only named systemic violence for us, they have presented the many faces of this penetratingly pervasive phenomenon and practice. They have engaged the reader in an exploration of the violence in our educational experiences, the gendered, racist and classist nature of this violence, and the relations of power that perpetuate these practices. The four parts of this book help us to conceptualize the sites of violence, the nature of their construction, and what they mean to us as teachers, teacher educators and feminists.

Opening Part I, "Systemic Violence in Administration Practices," Watkinson's chapter provides an explicit analysis of the levels of systemic violence, sexism, racism, and classism and elucidates these with concrete examples. As an alternative she provides suggestions for creating classrooms and schools that are inhabited by a feminized ethic. Watkinson's analysis makes the implicit explicit.

Epp's chapter on authority gives the reader a way to think about how authority is realized in schools as "power over" children by teachers and administrators. She suggests that "violence is a subtext of traditional authoritarian structures and traditional pedagogical methods" (p. 25). She presents an argument for a revision of the interpretation of authority in schools and posits the feminization of school administration as an important step in reversing the inequities. She suggests that the inherently sexist and violent practices in our schools be replaced with more inclusive pedagogies and practices.

Tite, in her chapter called "Who Knows? Who Cares? Schools and Coordinated Action on Child Abuse," describes the results of a study done with 336 teachers examining what they believe constitutes child abuse and what abuse is worth reporting. She discusses the embedded gendered stratification of schools, with women teachers primarily in elementary classrooms, and the implications of these gendered perspectives on what is recognized as abuse and what is done about it. She problematizes the systemic practices of response and intervention.

In Part II, "Systemic Violence in Pedagogical Practice," Whitty introduces the gendered nature of space in a kindergarten classroom. Her article "Opening Spaces: Examining the Blocks" provides an analysis of the "no girls in the

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blocks rule." This illuminating example of the genderedness of rules that are established by children in classrooms, often invisible to teachers, shows how classroom inequities and access to opportunities with boys in a privileged position can originate. Whitty raises many questions, challenges teachers to take on these issues in their own classrooms, and suggests that "equity pedagogy" is central to turning the gendered tables. This chapter reminds the reader of the inherently sexist foundations of coeducation, which without radical changes in classroom and school practice will perpetuate the existing societal power relations.

Wason-Ellam explores how violent and aggressive play of video game heroes is simulated by a young boy through his classroom discourse. She uncovers the multiple connections between the violent forms of this popular media genre and this child's talk and text and then asks what we can do as teachers. "Do we teach children to question the prevailing social practices of the video games in a sustained critical manner or do we preserve the hegemony of the consumer market?" (p. 89). She challenges teachers to take that step and to engage in dialogue recognizing these texts as sites of violence. Wason-Ellam's explicit methodological discussion is extremely helpful to the reader in understanding the complexity of the intersections between literacy and the violence in popular media.

Ndunda's chapter "Discourses and Silences in Classroom Space" presents a personal narrative account of her experience in Canada as a black woman, parent, and international graduate student. She warns us that underlying multicultural and even some emancipatory educational practices are inherently racist and classist ideologies. She discusses the tension invoked by any attempt to move from "a site of silence to a site of intervention." Many issues are raised in this chapter that deserve serious consideration if we are to eliminate the stigma of *other* from the practices in our classrooms and find ways to address the social, political, economic, and historical dimensions that constitute the construction of *other* inside the walls of our educational institutions.

The final chapter of Part II consists of paired papers. Monteath and Cooper's "Lethal Labels: Miseducative Discourse about Educative Experiences" provides examples of how the practices of identifying and labelling students is stigmatizing and discusses the construction of a stigma as violating the individual. Rossler's "The Other Side of Labelling" presents a parent's perspective on the usefulness of labels. She delineates for us the criteria for labelling to avoid violating the individual. The dilemma of these dichotomies is further evidence of the patriarchal practices inherent in schooling.

In Part III, "Systemic Violence, Women, and Teachers," the discussion is opened by an extremely thought-provoking piece by Lisa Jadwin. This chapter resonated powerfully with me as a new academic in an extremely patriarchal educational institution. Jadwin discusses the profound dilemma we are faced with as feminists when our feminist pedagogies are limited by the patriarchal positivistic evaluation and assessment practices of our institutions and by the economic powers that make authority as obvious to her students in the rural Maritimes as it is to mine in rural Alberta. In "The Family Romance and the Student-Centered Classroom" she describes how her relationship with students falls to discord when her students realize the contractions of authority.

Her practice of feminist pedagogy is brought into question, and her authority is undermined in relation to the institutional practices of grading and assessment. She delineates for the reader her own experience and the psychological burden of the gendered nature of authority.

Sexual harassment permeates our schools and involves students, teachers, administrators, and staff. The gendered nature of the harassment, including the gendered harassment of gay and lesbian youth, go unnoticed for the most part by school administrations. Richardson's chapter contributes to this discussion by explicating how female teachers are harassed by students and then not supported by their administrations. Richardson articulates how little is done other than minimal lip service to address the boys-will-be-boys perspective prevalent in schools and argues that the inequities will remain unless serious attention is paid to changing the policies and practices of school administration. Her chapter is concerned with "how power is exercised through the institutionalized effects of particular discourses that work to displace certain experiences of female teachers in the schools, so it is necessary to examine those discursive fields which are specific to that context" (pp. 141-142). The framework for harassment used in her analysis provides both depth and breadth to understanding the intricacies and systemic nature of these forms of violence.

Warren, in her chapter "Learning from the Learning Place," presents two case studies where sexual harassment concerns voiced by female students and faculty fall on deaf ears. Warren questions the leadership in institutions of higher learning when women are silenced and the discourse is virtually turned around on the victims. Sadly she laments that it appears that "systemic violence thus successfully inoculates psyches for another generation of acceptance of harassment" (p. 158). This chapter leaves the reader wondering if the "chilly climate" in Canadian postsecondary institutions can and will ever be thawed?

Ho, Webb, and Hughson, in their chapter "Systemic Violence: Linking Women's Stories, Education and Abuse," suggest that as curriculum stands today the knowledge of some is privileged over others and in that denial of personal experience many are denied an education. They ask for curriculum that is inclusive and politicized. They suggest that "education could be used to problematize patriarchal relations of power and authority" (p. 175).

In Part IV, "Keeping Promise," Yuzicapi's article "Personal Reconstruction: When Systemic Violence Stops" describes her experiences as a child, student, educator, and educational leader and how institutionalized racism and sexism affected her life. In her journey as an Aboriginal woman into first the processes of learning in the traditional and contemporary Aboriginal world and then as a graduate student studying liberation pedagogies in a race and gender course, Yuzicapi found new lenses with which to look at racism and sexism. Her pragmatic take on ways to address these issues is thoughtful and refreshing.

Watkinson and Epp, in the final chapter "Addressing Systemic Violence in Education," remind us that the promises of equity in Canadian society and schools have not been kept; rather, they have been insidiously eroded. In this final chapter Watkinson and Epp discuss the kinds of practices and policies that result in systemic violence. They draw on many examples from this collec-

tion to support their claims and challenge teachers and administrators to take on these issues.

This collection is a worthwhile read. It fits a niche in the literature in the field as it reflects the Canadian context. The diversity of voice among the authors and the candidacy and directness reflected in their encounters contributes to the strength of the book. This wide range of perspectives challenges any superficialities of discussion of violence and forces the reader to think through the complexities and many intersections of the ideologies undergirding Canadian schools and society.

Although there is some unevenness among the chapters, the editors have crafted a space to bring the pieces together and highlight the common threads. They contend that "all students are affected by systemic violence but it is more prevalent in the lives of females, gay and lesbian students, students who are racialized, have a disability or who are economically disadvantaged" (p. 192) as demonstrated throughout the texts. There are many important insights and reminders in this collection, and I believe it would be a valuable resource for any graduate class or research project team pursuing questions of violence, race, class, and gender in education.