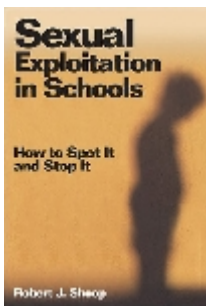


## Teacher Sexual Misconduct

A review of



### **Sexual Exploitation in Schools: How to Spot It and Stop It**

by Robert J. Shoop

Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2004, 138 pp. ISBN 0-7619-3844-3

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Reviewed by

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*Sexual Exploitation in Schools*, by Robert J. Shoop, is a book that discusses the timely topic of sexual exploitation in public schools. Justice Sydney L. Robins (2002) wrote:

While we do not have precise statistics on the extent of teacher sexual misconduct, a review of the reported criminal cases, the disciplinary and labor arbitration board decisions and media accounts makes [sic] it abundantly clear that a significant number of teachers have engaged in sexual misconduct in one form or another. Moreover, it can be concluded beyond question that many other incidents of teacher sexual misconduct have occurred.

Shoop's work is based on his consulting work with school districts on the topics of risk management and exploitation, spanning 25 years. The book focuses on how to recognize sexual exploitation and how to prevent it, which is a basic overview of a complex problem of student sexual exploitation. The book is intended more for individuals who do not have much knowledge on the topic rather than for the professional or expert. Rather than

providing an in-depth analysis, the book provides a basic overview of the legal ramifications, rights of school districts and employees, process of conducting an investigation, and proactive approaches to preventing the problem.

Generally, sexual exploitation involves sexual misconduct or unwanted and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature; in this case, sexual misconduct by teachers, administrators, and other employees (Brad, 2000). Shoop describes sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and child molestation as forms of sexual exploitation, or the range of inappropriate activity between school employees and students. Additionally, Shoop describes modalities of exploitation from intimate to coercive. Sexual exploitation is a problem of sufficient magnitude to warrant attention by school boards and school officials, thus the thrust of Shoop's work.

Shoop provides a basic discussion of the different types of sexual exploitation. For instance, Shoop distinguishes between pedophilia and child molestation: "Whereas pedophilia is a medical condition, child molestation, regardless of the motivation, is a criminal act" (p. 15). Shoop states that many psychologists do not believe people choose to be pedophiles. My question as a reader is: Who are these psychologists? What source was used to make this statement? Shoop also states that child sexual abuse is not a cause of pedophilia but is a risk factor. Once again, sources were not used to support this statement, which is a common issue throughout the book. Although Shoop cites the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed., text rev.; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) in his description of pedophilia, this was a basic description only and did not consider the specific evaluative criteria of the disorder such as being at least 16 years of age, having persistent sexual urges/behaviors toward children 13 years or younger, and having such urges or behaviors for at least 6 months. More detail on the different definitions would have been beneficial in addition to citing more sources to back some of the statements made in the chapter defining sexual exploitation terms.

One of the valuable parts of the book is the use of case scenarios. Although some may consider the cases contrived and simplistic, they do stimulate critical thinking and in essence can be used proactively to prevent sexual exploitation in schools. This approach has been shown in the literature as an effective strategy for deepening and solidifying the understanding of facts and concepts (Cliff & Curtin, 2000). Each chapter ends with a case scenario designed to cover the objectives of the chapter. For those schools unfamiliar with the topic of sexual exploitation, this case approach is an effective way to increase awareness and promote problem solving.

Shoop devotes one chapter to the legal issues associated with sexual exploitation in schools. The definition of legal terms is helpful. Shoop notes that the law recognizes two types of sexual misconduct: quid pro quo and hostile environment. Quid pro quo occurs when a school employee explicitly or implicitly grants a student a favor in exchange for sexual gratification. Hostile environment means unwanted and unwelcome verbal or

physical contact of a sexual nature that is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive to limit a student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity.

Shoop does discuss actual court cases that are pertinent to the questions he considers in the chapter on legal issues. It seems that his three-paragraph discussion of recovered memories is too brief and ends abruptly with the discussion of the False Memory Foundation, a foundation that lacks credibility (Brooke, 1997; D. Spring, personal communication, 1996). Enns, McNeilly, Corkery, and Gilbert (1995) and colleagues noted that the term *false memory syndrome* was created for advocacy purposes, as a backlash against sexual abuse survivors, and does not represent a scientific endorsement. Furthermore, if Shoop was going to touch on the topic of recovered memories and false memories, it would have served the reader well to be informed of related legal cases and issues. Murphy (1997), an attorney with the Boston law firm Brody, Hardoon, Perkins & Kesten and a senior legal analyst with MSNBC, provided additional information on the legal aspects of the recovered memory debate, citing cases on the topic as well as studies that provide support for recovered memories.

One problem that Shoop addresses is the lack of disclosure of the sexual misconduct of school employees, particularly the “mobile molester.” This was one of the most interesting chapters in the book. Here, Shoop provides a detailed description of the “passing the trash” problem and legal cases that have resulted. Fortunately, the House recently unanimously voted to approve a bill that would establish new provisions for disclosure of sexual misconduct by applicants for school district employment (Washington State Department of Information Services, 2004). Under the bill, school districts would be required to exchange information regarding sexual misconduct, if any, about prospective, former, or current employees. The measure also would prohibit a school district from hiring an applicant who does not authorize a release of records.


Shoop's work is timely and attempts to address the psychological and legal ramifications of sexual exploitation in schools. In 1998 alone, 244 cases of sexual misconduct, ranging from unwanted touching to “years-long sexual relationships and serial rape” were reported (Brad, 2000). Particularly when schools can be considered an accomplice (Dougherty, 2002), it is important that they take proactive approaches to problem prevention. Shoop's work can help schools identify ways to address this serious problem.

The book skips around, provides only basic discussions and definitions, and often fails to fully support the statements being made. Although the book is not comprehensive, it is helpful in providing tools to help spot and prevent sexual exploitation in schools. For instance, the case approach was a useful aspect and can be used as a training tool by school districts. Shoop advises on specific ways school officials can recognize misconduct, such as paying attention to whispers and rumors of students. Because socializing with students may be an appropriate method for establishing rapport, it is important to have administrative

policies in place that ensure prompt, professional investigation of complaints and incidents to determine their merit.

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