



Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings

By Katherine S. Newman, Cybelle Fox, Wendy Roth, Jal Mehta, David Harding

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In the last decade, school shootings have decimated communities and terrified parents, teachers, and children in even the most “family friendly” American towns and suburbs. These tragedies appear to be the spontaneous acts of disconnected teens, but this important book argues that the roots of violence are deeply entwined in the communities themselves. *Rampage* challenges the “loner theory” of school violence and shows why so many adults and students miss the warning signs that could prevent it.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Despite the rarity of school shootings, a point carefully reiterated by the authors-anthropologist Newman (*No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*) and four students in a doctoral program she directs at Harvard University-it continues to be a topic that both repels and fascinates. Through an in-depth study of two pre-Columbine shootings, one at Heath High School in Kentucky, the other at Westside Middle School in Arkansas, the authors attempt to answer two troubling questions: "How could these low-crime, family-centered, white communities have spawned such murderous violence? How did these particular families, known and respected by neighbors, teachers and preachers, produce rampage killers?" Because the book grew out of research the five contributed to a congressionally mandated study, the authors had extraordinary access to residents in both communities and are donating their royalties to the two schools. They interviewed 163 people whose lives were touched by the violent acts of 11-year-old Andrew Golden and 13-year-old Mitchell Johnson, who shot four students and one teacher at Westside, and 14-year-old Michael Carneal, who killed three students at Heath. Although many of the factors the authors address (e.g., bullying, media images of masculinity, teenage depression, access to guns) have already received extensive coverage, the authors' sociological approach highlights how these problems can ignite in a young child given suitable circumstances. Unfortunately, the book is marred by repetition and excessive charts, tables and footnotes; at times, it reads more like a joint doctoral dissertation than a study aimed at parents and school administrators. Photos.

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From [Booklist](#)

Newman, Harvard professor and author of several books on urban issues, spent two years researching the eruption of violence in recent years in suburban America. She focuses on Heath, Kentucky, and Westside, Arkansas, about three years after those small towns suffered the widely publicized ordeals of shooting rampages at local high schools. Newman draws on interviews with 163 people in both communities, including friends and families of the victims and shooters, students at the schools, teachers, lawyers, reporters, and psychologists. Laws protecting juveniles precluded interviews with the shooters (aged 11 to 14 at the time of the shootings), although Newman includes an epilogue detailing their lives since conviction and incarceration. She also examines studies of similar rampage shootings in the last 30 years and offers theories about what pushes youth into such violence. Detailed research includes a social pyramid of one of the schools, a paper written by one of the shooters, and a table recalling conversations between students before the shooting. This is a heavily researched but highly accessible look at a troubling social issue.

Vanessa Bush

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Review

"With some sophistication, Rampage contends that there is no single reason that boys go on shooting sprees."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christine Kaufman:

Nowadays reading books be than want or need but also get a life style. This reading behavior give you lot of advantages. Advantages you got of course the knowledge even the information inside the book that will improve your knowledge and information. The knowledge you get based on what kind of book you read, if you want have more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want really feel happy read one having theme for entertaining for instance comic or novel. Often the Rampage: The Social Roots of School Shootings is kind of publication which is giving the reader capricious experience.

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