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Contents

Factors Impeding the Social and Academic Progress of African American Males in Foster Care

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Abstract: The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify and analyze factors that impede the social and academic achievement of African American males in foster care. The aim was to gain a clearer understanding of the challenges these male African American students face and identify the barriers preventing them from achieving a comparable level of social and academic success as their counterparts from traditional homes. The research also sought to identify potential remedies for these challenges. Critical Race Theory was used as the theoretical framework for the study. Findings showed that African American males in foster care face a number of challenges to their success, including racism, low expectations, and a lack of social/family support. The findings also revealed several interventions, such as mentoring, extracurricular activities, and increased interaction with biological family members that can promote resiliency in these African American males and assist them in addressing barriers to success.

Keywords: African American males, foster care youth & academic success.

African American males in foster care encounter many dire issues that inhibit their social and academic progress, such as problems within the child welfare system, high suspension rates, and low graduation rates, which plague them not only during their school age years, but into adulthood as well. While academic woes are not unique to African American males in foster care, in conjunction with the myriad other issues facing them, academic challenges further exacerbate the difficulties they face. Additionally, African American males in foster care are even more at risk for academic failure than the general population of foster youth (Ryan, Testa, & Zhai, 2008). African American males are the exclusive focus of this research because of the gloomy outcomes and overall challenges faced by this population.

Specifically, African American males are overrepresented in foster care when compared to their non-black counterparts. As of 2012, African American males were more than twice as likely to be placed in foster care than males from other ethnic groups, with African American males making up 10.71 out of every 1,000 entrants into foster care, compared to 5.24 for all male children (Miller, Farrow, Meltzer, & Notkin, 2014). Because of the circumstances involved in placing children in foster care, resiliency, self-efficacy and scholastic aptitude begin to suffer (Lyman & Bird, 1996). According to Lyman and Bird (1996), the preponderance of these children entered

foster care due to a considerable increase in parental methamphetamine use. Relatedly, an estimated 80 to 90% of foster care placements are attributable to some kind of substance abuse (Lyman & Bird, 1996). Further, placement in permanent homes is less likely for African American males than for their non-black peers, leading to substantially longer stays in foster care (Miller, Farrow, Meltzer, & Notkin, 2014). Placement and prolonged tenure in foster care can have a causal impact on school performance, as academic achievement is positively correlated with self-efficacy in children (Savin-Williams & Demo, 1984).

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify and analyze factors that impede the successful social and academic achievement of African American males in foster care. Social achievement is defined as progress towards acquisition of prosocial skills that aim towards African American males in foster care becoming productive members of society. Academic achievement is defined as progress towards completion of high school. The study was designed to answer the following two research questions: What are the factors affecting social and academic achievement of African American males in foster care? What specific practices and strategies positively influence the academic achievement of African American males while in foster care? This research explored societal and academic challenges of African American males in foster care and examined potential remedies to those challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) provided this study with a lens for analyzing societal and academic challenges faced by African American foster children. CRT is a theoretical view that posits race as the nexus of life in America (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Furthermore, CRT is an academic perspective that implores readers to consider the existing relationships between race, the justice system, and society. CRT is used in many well- established academic fields including anthropology, sociology, history, philosophy, law, politics, and education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In particular, the findings for this study were evaluated by applying the CRT tenets of *ordinariness* and *differential racialization* for the purposes of critiquing why social and academic difficulties exist and how they can effectively be addressed.

CRT asserts that *ordinariness*, which means that racism is difficult to cure or address, is pernicious to people of color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Color-blind or formal conceptions of equality, expressed in rules that insist only on treatment that is the same across the board, can thus remedy only the most blatant forms of discrimination, such as the refusal to hire a qualified person of color rather than hire a white high school dropout. *Differential racialization* is an aspect of CRT contending that no person exists as a single, unitary identity, and that individuals often have conflicting, overlapping identities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). For example, according to Delgado and Stefancic (2001), an individual can be an African American, a feminist, a mother, a democrat and a student. This feature of CRT debunks the notion that minorities are one, singular identity and, therefore, easy to identify and typecast (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Literature Review

While African American males in foster care are not qualitatively different from their peers in traditional homes, the levels of social and academic achievement between the groups are important enough to merit explication and examination. According to Park and Ryan (2009), African-American males in the child welfare system are more likely than their peers to have mental health and other emotional challenges, compounded with low academic achievement, delinquency, alcohol abuse, and drug abuse. Additionally, perhaps due to their experiences in foster care,

African American males in foster care are more likely to be incarcerated for violent and criminal behavior as juveniles and adults.

Moreover, African American males are more likely to be retained a grade in school and are more likely to drop out of school than their white peers (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz & Casserly, 2010). Adding to these difficulties, African American males are imprisoned at rates greater than their nonblack peers. These factors create a framework for the problems that await African American males in the foster care system.

According to Jones (2012), the two primary factors that converge to inhibit the progress of African American males in foster care are (a) maltreatment of foster youth and (b) the length of stay in care. These challenges create an unusually difficult dynamic for African American males that not only leads to turbulence in their social environments, but also inhibits African American males' ability to effectively interact with their teachers and peer group in school settings (Jones, 2012).

Maltreatment

Children who are maltreated have a greater propensity than their peers to demonstrate an inability to focus and, consequently, have more problems in school (Wolfe, 1987). According to Eckenrode (1993), maltreatment can take the form of physical or emotional trauma to the child; this treatment can create conditions that lead to a disproportionate number of foster students being suspended from school and may also result in grade retention and placement in low level classes (Eckenrode, 1993). Miller, Farrow, Meltzer, and Notkin (2014) reported that for most African American males in foster care, neglect-related experiences account for the preponderance of the maltreatment, with sexual abuse, physical abuse, medical neglect, and abandonment chief among the problems. They further reported that neglect is the most prevalent form of maltreatment for African American males until age three, while physical abuse is employed more often for older youth, especially between the ages of 8-15. An example of this can be found in Los Angeles County, where many of the annual average of 350-400 deaths are connected to suspected child abuse; approximately 20-25 percent of the decedents are African American, with more than 60 percent of those children being males (Miller, Farrow, Meltzer, & Notkin, 2014). To further illustrate this point, Ryan, Testa and Zhai (2008) conducted a research project in which they studied more than 1,500 African American males in foster care between the ages of 8-20 to determine the effectiveness of foster care guardianship. Of the more than 1,500 youth surveyed, all children had at least one instance of substantiated maltreatment or abuse at the hands of a guardian. Abuse in this study ranged from neglect to sexual abuse.

Length of Stay in Care

African American male children are confronted with numerous tribulations that lead to lengthier and even permanent stays in out-of-home care, in comparison to their counterparts (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, 2007; Jones, 2012). According to Needell, Barbara, Brookhart, and Lee (2004), the length of stay for African American males in foster care is substantially longer than that of their peers. As of 2012, African American males had a 28-month average length of stay in out-of-home care, while the average length of stay for all children is 22 months (Department of Health and Human Services, 2013). In 2000, 44% of the African American males who entered foster care left within one year, compared to 52% in 2007 (Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System, 2007). The length of time African American males spend in foster care is important because children who are placed for long periods

of time are at considerable risk of developing behavioral and psychological issues (Marinkovic & Backovic, 2007). According to Conger and Rebeck (2001), foster youth with longer lengths of stay are likely to experience a greater number of school transfers. Conger and Rebeck's (2001) study essentially found that transient behavior had a variegated impact on scholastic aptitude. The study showed that school transfers were not significantly linked to reading achievement, but had a minute, depressing effect on mathematics achievement. Conger and Rebeck (2001) also found that a stronger forecaster of school achievement was school attendance, which is adversely impacted by multiple placements.

Furthermore, Conger and Rebeck (2001) also reported that youth with shorter stays in foster care are twice as likely to re-enter foster care than those who stay longer their first time in care. In 1997, the Adoption and Safe Families Act was established to accelerate the permanent placement of children in foster care (O'Flynn, 1999). This edict also required states to "initiate termination of parental rights proceedings after the child has been in foster care 15 of the previous 22 months, except if not in the best interest of the child, or if the child is in the care of a relative" (Vesneski, 2011, p. 17). Many critics of the Adoption and Safe Families Act cite the establishment of this law as particularly injurious to African American males, many of whom have been permanently separated from their biological family members as a direct consequence of this act.

Methods

The data were gathered over a five-month period using two different methods: (a) in-person one-hour focus groups and (b) an online questionnaire. First, a qualitative instrument was created to glean information about the experiences of African American males in foster care. This instrument, used as a protocol for conducting the focus groups, began with five closed-ended, demographic questions. The subsequent nine open-ended questions were designed to elicit participants' beliefs about the foster care system, ideas about the relationships with family, and perspectives regarding those most supportive of the participant.

The online survey also posed 14 questions. The first five demographic questions were identical to the focus group protocol; however, the next seven questions were changed to a 5-point Likert scale orientation, and the final two were open-ended questions. Examples of the Likert scale questions are: (a) My educational experiences were different because I was in foster care, and (b) My educational experiences were different because I am African American.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected from contacts made with Independent Living Skills Programs (ILSP). These programs assist foster youth with transitioning between foster care and adulthood. Specifically, these programs assist former foster youth with securing housing, procuring life skills, enrollment into college, and support with employment opportunities. After contacting all 56 ILSP's in California, agreement to support the study was received from representatives in San Francisco and Kern Counties. Purposive, criterion-based sampling was used to select participants for this study. According to Patton and Patton (1990), when a population is selected for research based upon specific characteristics they share, the researcher has used purposive sampling. The criteria for participant selection were (a) African American, (b) males, and (c) had spent at least one year in foster care between the ages of 9 and 18. Attempts were made to contact 100 potential participants, and of this number, 38 former foster youth agreed to participate in the study. The online survey was paired with the focus group option to provide convenience for subjects unable to attend the focus groups sessions. In all, 26 participants

responded to the online instrument, and 12 participated in the two focus groups (seven and five participants respectively).

Findings and Discussion

In answering the research questions for this study, the researcher found that some of the focus group and online survey questions generated profound answers towards the end goal. The three most beneficial questions were: In what ways were your teachers, social workers, biological and or foster family supportive to you in reaching your educational goals? Was your experience or relationships with your teachers, counselors or coaches positive or negative? How do you feel your educational experience was different because you were African American? These questions were also reflected in the responses to the online survey. These three questions are used to frame the report of findings and are referred to as Question 1, 2, and 3.

Question 1. There were several telling and poignant responses to Question 1: In what ways were your teachers, social workers, biological and or foster family supportive to you in reaching your educational goals? A parallel question asked on the online survey was: My teachers, social workers, biological and or foster family were supportive of my education. On the Likert scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the strongly agree and 1 completely disagree, 6 marked 1 (strongly disagree), 2 two marked 3 (somewhat agree), and 19 marked 5 (strongly disagree). The primary theme that emerged from the data was *lack of social/biological support,* which generally meant that African American males in foster care had a lack of support and required more support to aid them in their educational endeavors. Many of the responses to this question helped supply texture and context for better understanding the importance of role models in the lives of African American males in foster care. One participant stated:

> I never got visits. When I got taken out of my house, my grandmother would never come and visit me with my brothers and sisters. This made me real pissed. I started smokin' weed one time when my grandmother was supposed to show up. I was freakin' mad, man.

This participant then provided additional context for the influence of family members as well as his teachers.

> I used to see my friends smoking and hanging out and I used to think they were dumb. I really appreciate my grandmother for how she always collected my brothers and sisters and me after we were taken away. She kept us together when my mom couldn't. I also had some great teachers who used to encourage me to do the right things and to stay out of trouble. My favorite teachers were the ones who used to be a little mean to me because they showed me that they cared about me and my progress.

Another participant, a longtime foster care resident, described his unfavorable experiences with a foster family.

> It was obvious they didn't trust me. They would always lock up the cabinets whenever they left the house. Plus, they never helped me with homework or anything. To this day, I hate math because it was too hard for me when I was in 7th grade in foster care. I used to be good at it, too!

Nearly all participants expressed displeasure and lack of support. One participant elucidated a perceived lack of support: "My social worker was racist. She always called me by my last name and never looked me in the face. I hated her." This quote and the previous two illustrate the importance of support structures for African American males in foster care.

The representative quotes responding to Question 1 also demonstrate the aspect of CRT entitled *differential racialization*, which means that each of these individuals are distinct and have their own identities. Although the young men in this study had similar circumstances, they interpreted and internalized their experiences in different ways.

Question 2. Question 2 asked: Was your experience or relationships with your teachers, counselors or coaches positive or negative? A parallel question from the online survey was in the form of a statement as follows: I had positive experiences with my school counselors, teachers and coaches. The data showed that the respondents, overall, felt a lack of positive relationships with their teachers and adult supporters. As stated by one participant, "I don't think teachers expected that much out of me." One participant expressed similar sentiments but also suggested something more ominous.

My teachers never really thought I was as smart as the other kids, my White ones anyway. Now, though, I wish I had more Black teachers. Back then, there were so many White people that I started to wish I was White, too.

This participant alluded to a prejudice harbored by White teachers, in addition to a desire on the part of the participant to become White. While some respondents mentioned favorable relations with family and school staff members, the overarching theme was a lack of positivity in their interactions with their support network. This perceived lack of positivity is likely a consequence of the CRT facet known as *ordinariness*, which means that racism is difficult to cure. The embedded and protracted normalcy of strained relations between African Americans and school personnel, in particular, is in accordance with *ordinariness*. This aspect of CRT asserts that brand of racism or mistreatment towards African Americans is normal and a regular feature in society.

Question 3. Question 3 asked: How do you feel your educational experience was different because you were African American? A parallel statement from the online survey stated: My educational experiences were different because I am African American. The data from Question 3 revealed that many participants observed subtle and conspicuous examples of racism; thus, racism emerged as a theme. The participants suggested that teachers, social workers and others were guilty of perpetrating racism. The data also revealed that participants were keenly aware of the expectation that they were expected to drop out of school, have wayward social behavior, and end up incarcerated because of their conduct. As another example of institutional racism, CRT would also characterize this thinking as difficult to cure and deeply embedded in society's psyche because it is a long standing practice in American society to vilify and scapegoat African American males (Patton & Snyder-Yuly, 2007). One participant noted, "It's kind of like, a lot of times, you go from this system and into the prison system." Another participant stated, "I think my experiences were different because of how people looked at me and because of how I started to look at myself." He goes on to say, "Some people, like my teachers, would only choose other students for special projects and assignments. I always felt like the outsider." Comments such as the foregoing provide insight into the thinking African American males in foster care concerning their self-concept while within foster care.

After carefully scrutinizing the responses to each focus group and online survey question, the researcher grouped responses into categories and labeled them with the following emergent themes: *lack of support* and *racism*. Many of the respondents indicated a perceived lack of support from teachers, social workers, and family, making this theme consistent throughout the responses.

Additionally, the theme of racism was explicitly stated in several instances. There were also implicit references to institutional racism; however, in some instances, the respondents made allusions to the phenomenon, rather than clearly expressing the term. In those instances, respondents would make comments such as, "I went to a White school," which led this researcher to infer an overarching belief in institutional/structural racism.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Each of the three key focus group questions culled from the research data provided a glimpse into the issues hindering African American males in foster care and provides insight into potential remedies to those issues. Question 1 asked: In what ways were your teachers, social workers, biological and or foster family supportive to you in reaching your educational goals? Overall, the respondents stated they felt unsupported by teachers, social workers, and family members. Respondents who cited support reported telephone calls, visits and letters from family members and positive interactions with school staff members as the most powerful forms of support in furthering their educational pursuits.

Question 2 asked: Was your experience or relationships with your teachers, counselors or coaches positive or negative? Some participants remarked their experiences were favorable due to a nurturing and supportive coach or teacher, while others stated that supportive school staff members, such as lunch ladies, were important in helping them to have positive experiences. Conversely, some stated they had negative experiences with school staff, namely teachers. Overall, the data show negative relationships with support networks.

Question 3 asked: How do you feel your educational experience was different because you were African American? Several participants cited incidents of racism in response to this question. Many respondents also commented there was a lack of demonstrable concern shown toward them, which, if present, could have helped them to develop a greater sense of resilience. Overall, respondents expressed immense racism directed towards them and felt undervalued primarily because of their race.

Research question 1: What are the factors affecting social and academic achievement of African American males in foster care? In response to research question one, the data reveal the primary factors affecting African American males in foster care are a severe lack of familial, school and foster care support and institutional racism.

Research question 2: What specific practices and strategies positively influence the academic achievement African American males while in foster care?

One strategy for positively influencing African American males in foster care to achieve academically is to have a mentor or resource to help them successfully maneuver educational terrain. Given the discrimination and racism many participants described, a mentor who could supply academic and social advice would arguably prove beneficial. Students at local high schools or colleges could be recruited to mentor African American male foster youth. Often these high school and college students are seeking extra credit or community service hours that can be met by providing tutoring/mentoring foster youth.

A second suggested practice is for all African American male foster youth to be involved in some extracurricular activity, such as sports, music or academic pursuits (e.g. academic pentathlons or spelling bees), with the primary goal of being the promotion of resilience. According to Goldstein and Huff (1993), extracurricular activities serve as a significant deterrent to wayward activities and promote self-awareness and resiliency. Further, adults should also become well acquainted with research detailing the potential benefits of participation in

extracurricular activities. In this way, adults can have meaningful, honest discussions with foster youth concerning extracurricular involvement.

Third, African American males in foster care should be afforded weekly access to a child welfare employee of color who would make regular inquiries into the foster youth's academic and social progress. Specifically, a culturally sensitive, culturally responsive employee devoted to assisting children should be provided. Several respondents stated their case worker was racist or insensitive, so this intervention could mitigate those complaints. This child welfare employee should also make regular, earnest attempts to facilitate communication between the child and their biological family, to the extent that it is possible and legal. Collectively, these recommendations would help promote success and engender social and academic resilience in African American males in foster care.

Recommendations for future research are to continue focusing on the challenges faced by African American males in foster care. Extensive studies in this area will bring greater attention to the challenges these students face, as well as recommendations for improving their plight. Further, future studies also should target the needs of the biological family members of African American males in foster care, such as providing counseling to families or otherwise helping to facilitate family reunification and prevent permanent loss of a child from the familial structure. This research could help to inform educational and social services professionals about effective techniques for assisting this population. Further, this researcher also recommends using CRT as a lens through which to evaluate any progress made by potential reforms to the foster care system. Through feedback from former foster youth and with critical analysis of newfound data, incrementally, insensitive practices and structural racism can be eradicated from the system.

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The Supervision and Mentoring of Science teachers: Building Capacity in the Absence of Expertise in Classroom Science Supervisors

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Abstract: The teaching of science to each new generation of children is critical to our society; and the quality and level of teaching and "science supervision" are too. We as a society and school system must move to prepare and support both the teachers of science – and the critical leaders who supervise and evaluate these teachers. This paper examines the problems and futures of quality of the following: (a) science teaching and teachers; (b) the importance of high-quality instruction and supervision in the sciences; and (c) what need to be done NOW to maintain and improve both the teaching of sciences in K-12 education, and (d) how to do it all now. It's now or never!

Introduction

This article explores and explains the perils and challenges arising as science teachers are supervised, evaluated, and even fired by administrators (e.g., assistant principals and principles) who may lack the experience, skills, degrees, and training in any science subject (e.g., general science, physics, chemistry, earth science, and biology). We seek to assist both the science supervisor and the teacher in grasping the importance of improved science instruction and outcomes in the classroom by providing practical and useful recommendations for both non-science trained administrators and the science teachers whom they oversee.

Defining the Problem

The current lack of certified, highly qualified teachers of science in K-12 schools has been well documented for the past several decades. However, another, equally troubling shortage has not received nearly as much attention – that of the shortage of supervisors and administrators who must do the following:

(1) Be directly responsible for supervising, mentoring, evaluating and improving science teaching in schools and classrooms; and (2) Be trained and experienced in science education; and (3) Be often in control of hiring, supervising, mentoring, and evaluating (and firing) science teachers in their schools and departments.

The problem started and has continued with an overall shortage of trained science teachers, as Shymansky and Aldridge (1982) explain: "Our nation faces unprecedented problems in science education, the severity of which is the critical shortage of qualified science teachers and

supervisors at the secondary school level" (Shymansky & Aldridge, 1982, p. 1).

And school districts also recognize the problem, including, - for example, the New Haven, CT, public school leaders noted (Bass, 2012):

> This year, 18 of 120 science teachers are new to the district—the highest number in five years, according to Therrien [the science supervisor]. Teacher turnover among science teachers has remained high in New Haven, reflecting a national challenge that's particularly acute in more urban districts. New Haven is beginning to examine the problem and look for solutions as part of a $53 million federally-backed effort to improve the way it develops and retains teachers. (p. 1)

Schools should anticipate the increasing need to establish responsive administrative preparation and training systems designed to support the next wave of quality new science teachers -- and their supervisors. The failure to address the need for better training of administrators in the supervision of science teachers may indeed exacerbate the problems already connected to improvement, retention and turnover of science teachers in the field in U.S. public and private schools.

The problem may be made worse if and when the needs of science teachers are ignored -- and thus teachers do not receive the important feedback and support for greater professional growth, and improvement of their teaching. The New York City public schools recently published a list of teacher shortages in these science subjects:

- **General Science** - Junior High Schools
- **Chemistry and General Science** - High Schools
- **Earth Science and General Science** - High Schools
- **Biology and General Science** - High Schools
- **Physics and General Science** - High Schools

And the shortage of science teachers often starts in colleges, where fewer students are being credentialed in teaching the sciences. For example, as Mark Johnston (2015) explained as occurring in the state of Virginia:

> Yet, of the 27 Virginia state colleges and universities reporting, only 13 candidates completed teacher preparation programs in Earth Science in the 1999-2000 school year. This is out of a total of nearly 2,400 candidates completing programs in "high-need" areas, such as special education, English-as-a-second-language, physics, and chemistry. (Johnston, 2015, p. 2)

Background Information

This issue is critical as we may also face a serious shortage of science teachers who start and persevere in the foreseeable future. Contributing factors to the low numbers of science teachers (and science supervisors) now include the following: high teacher turnover; the impact of high stakes accountability systems as connected to questionable methods of teachers' evaluation; poor teacher-administrator relations and interactions; and the overall lose of positive self-efficacy and persistence in the teaching of the sciences.

Next, we discuss some possible new remedies, including positive actions to recruit and retain more science teachers. Most recently, the severity of the shortage has led President Obama to call for the preparation of one-hundred thousand new, highly-qualified classroom teachers in the areas of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics). This Presidential initiative is called in short, 100K-*in-10* -- meaning *100,oo new teachers of science in the next decade.*

The process calls upon the nation's top academic institutions, nonprofits, foundations, companies, and governmental agencies to train, support, and retain 100,000 excellent new STEM teachers to educate the next generation of science innovators and problem solvers within the next

10 years.

Together, this timing and planning represent a tremendous private and governmental monetary investment in K-12 education . . . but who else is trained to supervise, support, and evaluate all these science professionals in classrooms and in training?

Improved Supervision and Evaluation

Supervisory and evaluative decisions thus influence choices regarding hiring, tenure, professional mobility decisions, and continuous progress towards expertise in the classrooms. Given the rising science teacher turnover rates, a significant loss occurs when those moving and advancing upward through the ranks within schools in becoming more senior, getting tenure, being influential, and holding supervisory positions, and quit; thus, more and more administrators may find themselves charged with the responsibility of supervising and mentoring science teachers, even though these leaders themselves may have neither training nor experience in science teaching and science supervision.

Yet, the roles of supervision -- and the importance of feedback to science teachers -- are truly necessary for improving teachers' skills in instruction and facilitating progress from novice to expert classroom practitioners. This process involves supporters and supervisors who can provided accurate, helpful feedback, good examples of outstanding lessons, and the current "best practices" -- as envisioned by the "next generation of science education standards." Thus, these practices are critical in both the teaching and learning of science for the next generations of students -- and future scientists.

We suggest addressing three domains of practice including: (a) *content* knowledge of the sciences; (b) *methods* for teaching the sciences; and (c) the *goals* of the next generation of science education. Thus, a skilled supervisor in the science classroom must, first of all, be equipped with the knowledge in the content area. That content knowledge enables the expert observer to know when and where students are given misinformation in the content area, for science teachers may not always have a strong command of the knowledge in their discipline.

Expert science educators also use their knowledge both to anticipate and to address common student misconceptions (or naïve conceptions) in sciences. Expert science teachers can also draw upon their schema of content knowledge at times when "teachable moments" occur in the class. That is, they can go beyond the learning targets of a given lesson at times where students either raise important questions or reveal gaps or strengths in their understanding.

Supervisors of science teachers should also be keenly observant of the safety and welfare of students in the classroom. Imagine watching a science teacher about to pour one beaker of clear water into another beaker of clear liquid. This wouldn't be a problem unless the water is being added to a container of acid. As Antoine Frostburg (2015) warns:

> A large amount of heat is released when strong acids are mixed with water. Adding more acid releases more heat. If you add water to acid, you form an extremely concentrated solution of acid initially. So much heat is released that the solution may boil very violently, splashing concentrated acid out of the container! If you add acid to water, the solution that forms is very dilute and the small amount of heat released is not enough to vaporize and spatter it. So *Always Add Acid to Water*, and never the reverse. (Frostburg, 2015, p. 5)

Thus, supervisors of science teachers should understand the Next Generation of Science Education Standards' as well as safety in the labs and classrooms. These expectations focus instructional practices that help their students to understand "how we know," rather than simply "what we know".

Supervisors of science teachers should also support teachers with resources and ideas. The

loss of expertise and institutional memory is a significant problem facing many science teachers in the profession. A skilled and knowledgeable supervisor should be equipped with a repertoire of teaching strategies and resources that can be recommended to science teachers. Indeed, the "brain drain," results from attrition rates of teachers who take with them the knowledge and skills associated with operating equipment in the laboratory.

Thus, supervisors and administrators must have sufficient training and experience in the discipline to provide teachers with the depth and breadth of feedback needed by the practitioner who, in turn, will need to reflect upon and deliberately practice these techniques to improve.

Given the lack of sufficient training and experience in the sciences, the approaches to both the supervision and evaluation of teachers should be reconsidered. First, we must acknowledge that we do not expect all administrative staff to have or gain expertise in all the areas they supervise. However, it should be acknowledged that many schools, particularly in high needs communities, often lack enough seasoned science teachers or science department chairs who can be used to evaluate – and support -- science teachers in their classrooms. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that more, and more often, the supervision and mentoring of (particularly) new teachers in those schools fall upon the shoulders of principals and their assistants who often do not have training in the sciences.

Thus, if the points of concern raised in the paper are valid, then we should consider alternative and/or supplementary approaches to the supervision and mentoring of science teachers. After all, if the United States government -- and its citizens -- are now prepared to invest large sums of money and effort into recruiting and mentoring of quality science teachers into the classrooms, then we need to be better prepared to develop both the support and supervision mechanisms to keep them there.

So What Can Be Done, Now and in the Future? Administrators and their representatives -- charged with supervising science teachers -- can conduct pre- and post-observation debriefings and ask the science teachers the following:

- What misconceptions do they intend or intended to address during instruction?
- What are made and taken for the precautions and plans to ensure the safety and welfare of students?
- How might supervisors help embed more opportunities for joint classroom observations. That is, supervisors should have practicing science teachers to work cooperatively within their schools and district administrators, during supervisory processes that are designed to provide meaningful feedback to teachers for growth and improvement in the classroom.
- How could supervisors adopt (or adapt) specific observation *rubrics* for science instruction (see Cooper, 2004, *Kappan*). Many readily available rubrics can provide domain-specific criteria not found in more general tools, such as the Danielson Framework.
- And leaders should support their science teachers (Redish, 2003) by providing financial support to send their science teachers to regional, state and national conventions and programs, such as those offered by the National Science Teachers Association (See FLINN SCIENTIFIC INC, Material Safety Data Sheet, MSDS).

WHO Should Be Served Safely? All teachers, including particularly teachers of science, should receive basic training in "classroom safety". Free, online classes are available to anyone interested in providing safety in classes, particularly in chemistry and biology classes (see Flinn Scientific; Materials Safety Data Sheets).

-- Identify, encourage and incentivize promising science teacher(s) to seek National Board

Certification. The administrators can follow the development of the portfolio and other requirements in a collaborative effort to improve science instruction in their schools.

-- Select and read one key section from the Next Generation Science Education Standards (see below; they will include MSDS). Then ask their science teacher(s) to explain that section, and ask how he/she will address these component during an observed lesson:

- Science Practices
- Core Disciplinary Ideas
- Progressions
- Science and Engineering Practices
- Cross-cutting Concepts
- Nature of the Sciences

Positive, Practical Suggestions

Finally, what practical suggestions can be made to improve science supervision?

1. Support strongly (financially, professionally, and in other ways) the training of more new science teachers and supervisors: The improvement process begins with the education and preparation of new science teachers, and their supervisors. We might even conceive of a national Science Teachers Program, for preparing both supervisors and teachers. Time is now.

2. Encourage skilled, outstanding science TEACHERS to demonstrate, supervise, mentor, and advise newer staff in their fields. Why not consider freeing and helping quality and qualified science teachers to work with newer, less qualified, and less skilled teachers of science as part of their jobs? Mentoring is critical, teacher-to-teacher, and between supervisors, each other, and their teachers (see Cooper & McCray, 20015; McCray & Cooper, 2015).

3. Encourage teams of science teachers and supervisors to collaborate and share outstanding lessons, materials, and methods in their classes. Like doctors and lawyers, why not place each science teacher into a team with colleagues, to learn and support one another's science information, methods, lessons, and teaching skills? Teaming is key. As one observer found:

> All experiments involve collecting observations or observing actions to try to answer a question or solve a problem. However, there are differences between technical and teaching experiments. Classroom experiments do this as part of a class to help students learn more about the material they are studying. In this case, the hypothesis to be tested will generally be derived from material contained in a textbook or other course materials. Research experiments generally involve both control and treatment groups to facilitate comparison. In the classroom, an observational experiment where students "see what happens" can also be useful.

4. Build and share software demonstrations and physical methods to enhance classroom and laboratory learning — and outcomes. Teaching science to students, using technology in the classroom and at the students' homes, should be both interesting and technological. Bergstrom and Miller (1999) explain one approach to good classroom demonstrations:

> We got tired of it. Lecturing to sleepy students who want to "go over" material that they have already highlighted in their textbooks so that they can remember the "key ideas" until the midterm. We wanted to engage our students in *active learning*, to exploit their natural curiosity about economic affairs, and to get them to ponder the questions before we tried to give them answers. We found that conducting experiments in class, with discussions before, during, and after the experiments, is an effective and enjoyable way of moving from passive to active learning. (Bergstrom & Miller, 1999, p. 11)

5. Promote and recognize high quality and outstanding science teachers -- sharing lessons and techniques -- across the fields of science (life science, physical sciences, and physics). Finally, it is critical to praise, revere, and recognize the nation's outstanding science teachers and supervisors, soon! Thus, promote, recognize, and reward the best in the field of science teaching – and related supervision -- to do three things: (a) Give impetus to outstanding teaching/supervision in the nation's science classes; (b) Build a stockpile of quality, successful teaching methods and outcomes; and (c) Raise the standards for instruction and the education of all the nation's children. And produce a generation of children who think and act like scientists and engineers. We need them.

For as Carl E. Weiman (2013), a Nobel Prize laureate in physics, and a former White House director of technology, explained in the *New York Times*,

> The good news is that we know how to make introductory science courses engaging and effective. If we have classes where students get to think like scientists, discuss topics with each other and get frequent, targeted feedback, they do better. A key element involves instructors designing tasks where students witness real-world examples of how science works. (p. 2)

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Addressing Appropriate and Inappropriate Teacher-Student Relationships: A Secondary Education Professional Development Model

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Abstract: Schools and colleges of education spend very little time on teacher ethics and morality, defaulting to mentor teachers in the hopes that candidates garner what is necessary from them, in order to be successful in the real-world classroom. At a time when the nation is reeling from teacher shortages, vigilance—not expediency—must be maintained as adults are placed into very challenging circumstances with teenagers. However, districts are resorting to creative credentialing, often relying only on state data-bank background checks, thereby placing students at risk. The facts are that lines are blurred today for a variety of reasons between teachers, students, and also coaches and athletes. Sometimes inappropriate behaviors emerge that lead to arrest and imprisonment for teachers, regardless the type of school. Specifically, secondary educators need professional development to assist them in their decision-making, so as to avoid career-ending and life-altering criminal, career, and even emotional and moral mistakes in their relationships with students.

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to provide a practical professional development tool to assist district and site level administrators, teachers, and coaches in providing a safer educational environment, by way of addressing appropriate and inappropriate teacher-student relationships. This professional development is less about analytical research and more about solutions to implement to provide a safer and more richly secure environment for schools.

The past few years have seen a sharp rise in both the number of reports and arrests at education establishments, in terms of inappropriate relationships both at school and also continuing while at home (Walters 2016).

Presently, there is a dearth of professional discussions addressing the lines of authority that must be maintained by classroom teachers today. There are few credential classes on the ethics and morals of teaching, or how to draw and maintain boundaries of authority and morality. In the 1990s, there was a glimmer of hope, as it appeared that moral and ethical issues slowly became parts of teacher training programs. Also during that time, college administrators and public schools were envisioning the value of programs for teachers that accentuated things like character education and classroom ethics (Benninga 2003). This interest has dropped off significantly. As

a result, therein lies some of the fertile ground for the formation of gray areas that have enabled the formation of some inappropriate teacher-student relationships (Laliberte 2013; Doerschner 2011).

The time spent by teachers with students is increasing each year. Secondary teachers add coaching responsibilities in athletics. Added to the fixed academics, and spending time with students both at school and after school has increased. This reality places teachers with students for additional hours throughout the day. Comparatively, this equates to more time than teachers spend with their families each night. The rise of social media and instant communications, along with a hyper-sexual American culture, tend to exacerbate the balance of moral boundaries between teachers and their charges (Lavoie 2012).

Surveys of schools and colleges of education yield few programs that incorporate training in the establishment of boundaries that naturally exist between generations (Zarra 2013). There is often a rush to press student-teachers into action, due to teacher allocation shortages. Who can resist opportunities to grow into the education profession, sooner, rather than later? (Darling-Hammond 2001; Voke 2002) This is especially problematic for younger and newer teachers and coaches. These classroom "professional novices" are expected to teach students which are quite close to them in age.

Whether or not teachers and students realize it, there has been a rise in predation across American cultural landscape (Wolak, Finkellhor, Ybarra, & Mitchel 2008). Along with this rise, sexual identity rights been litigated, resulting in cultural changes—especially in the areas of sexuality and gender. Predators come in all shapes and sizes, and can be found among adults and students in schools from elementary through high school. Likewise, predators are smart and are savvy in their uses of social media (Hlavaty 2016; Alford 2012). This combination has added much pressure to the American classroom. Then there is social media.

Generally speaking, those which act impulsively in an age of social media are often ensnared in a "gotcha world," and often cannot seem to find a way out. This is problematic for children and teenagers, since their developing brains are highly vulnerable (Barry & Murphy 2014). Teachers are also caught up in their own vulnerability. This fact is one basic reason for this article. Professional development that tackles such issues informationally and strategically—and before they occur—is most necessary in secondary schools today.

The Problems of Inappropriate Teacher-Student Relationships

Inappropriate teacher-student relationships occur when certain boundaries are crossed by teachers, administrators, coaches, and their students and athletes. Given that, there are three basic types of teacher-student relationships that develop, each with its own set of characteristics and boundary considerations. These are categorized in the following, and include: (1) Intra-school academic relationships (Stipek 2006, (2) Intra-school extracurricular relationships (Stipek 2006), and (3) Interpersonal non-school related relationships (Stipek 2006; Zarra 2013; Noddings 2005).

Intra-school academic relationships. Common characteristics of these academic relationships between teachers and students include, among others: Class-time discussions, group work, small-talk, directions, and even jesting. They also include the serious questions and answers given within the context of class time, or another structured session of time within the school day. Essentially, the daily routines and regimens expected both formally and informally within the context of the classes in question, can fall into the academic relationship category.

Intra-school extra-curricular relationships. The characteristics of school extra-curricular relationships include those school-related responsibilities and roles usually outside of

the regular classroom teaching requirements. Coaching athletics is the first thing on everyone's list. Working with competitive academic and extra-curricular teams are also examples of activity-based extensions of the school, or regular classrooms. In addition to athletic coaching, there are other responsibilities such as mentoring, character-building, teamwork, student council, leadership classes, and many others. Parents often play a role in these activities, as well.

Interpersonal and non-school-related relationships. Interpersonal relationships away from school are usually what hit the media, when any such relationships become inappropriate. These types of relationships typically do not involve academics or school competitions. However, private tutoring can be included. The difference between academic and extra-curricular teacher-student relationships and interpersonal teacher-student relationships, is the absence of professional responsibilities and activities. Moral and legal considerations come into play at this juncture. However, not all interpersonal relationships that develop between teachers and students cross-the-lines professionally.

Blurred Boundaries

Educational expectations change annually. Teachers cannot be expected to be all things to all students professionally, or personally. Adults should never be expected to cross over from the professional into personal relationships with students (Richter 2011). "The system thrusts human with raging hormones closely together in work environments. Competitions and 'play' conditions force proximities and are sometimes abrasive to moral boundaries." (Zarra 2013, p. 18) Some of this friction comes by way of technology and the privilege granted to students to occupy their time with it in class.

Technology and ubiquitous access. Today the common understanding of new communication technologies is that they bring with them new ways to stay in touch with people (Prensky 2005). Relationships can develop faster and broaden more quickly with access between people that literally spans the 24-hour-a-day cycle. The media is saturated with cases of inappropriate relationships and even arrests, whereby some technology medium was used to enhance and deepen emotional ties. (Zarra 2013, pp. 41-42) "The online world is full of emotions and imaginations—a world where many cyberspace answers are multiple choice. In this world there are few incorrect responses" (Zarra, 2013, p. 103). Marano (2004) explains how this technological world can easily "ensnare the unaware."

> An extraordinary number of people spend an extraordinary amount of time online connecting with other people. The reveal their deepest darkest secrets to folks who may be strangers, and they often find these relationships so compelling they seem more emotionally real and alive than the marriage they are actually in. Indeed, online relationships can be unusually seductive. They are readily accessible, they move very quickly, and under the cloak of anonymity they make it easy for people to reveal a great deal about themselves. Putting themselves into words, getting replies while they're still in the emotional state of the original message, relying heavily on imagination to fill in the blanks about the recipient, people communicating online are drawn into such rapid self-disclosure that attachments form quite literally with the speed of light.

The establishment of boundaries is critical for success in today's classrooms. These boundaries must also include considerations and policies regarding communications' technologies, and participation of teachers and students on social media as friends. In an effort to establish and maintain boundaries, the following professional development model is suggested for schools and districts. Moving expeditiously toward a sensible and workable set of boundaries for the sake of protection of students, families, and careers is the only sensible choice to make. For many school districts it equates to the more sensible legal choice, as well.

A Professional Development Training Model

Schools, whether public or private, must begin to provide teachers, coaches, and administrators the types of professional development necessary to prepare teachers for their careers, with very serious attention paid to appropriate and inappropriate relationships with students. However, defining these relationships is not enough. This professional development must reach into the elementary grades and ascend through high school levels and into teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities. This professional development must be considered as important as those that emphasize drug and tobacco awareness and school safety.

Byer and Salcedo (2007) contend that schools should adopt policies that put into practice training of all education stakeholders. This should be implemented sooner, rather than later. Accordingly, this training, in order to be effective, should include the following considerations:

- summarize the conduct that school administrators expect of all school personnel and the actions to be taken is suspicious behaviors are observed;
- identify the behavioral signs that indicate a child is uncomfortable with a school employee's conduct;
- characterize four types of behavioral triggers that create risks for school employees;
- list general rules of behavior that help avoid claims of misconduct;
- recognize personality traits and motivating factors that lead to inappropriate relationships;
- analyze actions by asking peer-observation and self-policing questions that help to detect potentially inappropriate behaviors; and
- describe the criminal, civil, and ethical consequences of inappropriate behavior.

In efforts to inform teachers, some states have come up with specific codes of professional conduct, while others use general goal statements. In fact, an analysis of several states revealed there is no one code and not one set of laws that acts as an umbrella of protection for teachers and students. In fact, even state criminal and civil codes approach the issue differently.

For example, states developed codes of conduct that are specific to their states, usually arising from current problems faced. Codes either relate state expectations for positive professional conduct, while at the same time others list the actions that are forbidden by teachers toward students. Some state codes of professional conduct have stronger language than others, but that is changing. Due to changing definitions of sexual abuse, bullying, and an overall increase of both incidents occurring and being reported, states are taking the time to rewrite, or revise, their education professional codes of conduct and sexual abuse laws. In some cases, the laws pertaining to adult relationships between professors and their students, are also being examined. The only question is, are teachers and teachers-in-training even hearing about these changes?

An analysis of several state's policies and codes of conduct yields three summary points. These states include California (CTC 2009), Florida (Florida 2012), Illinois (ISBE 2012), New York (New York 2012), and Texas (Coldiron 2012; Smith 2007). *First*, common to the sample of states codes of conduct was the emphasis on professionalism and the expectations to remain distinct, as such, in training and in action. *Second*, states focus on general aspects relating to respect of colleagues, students, and their families. *Third*, states codes emphasize that teachers must be about intellectual pursuits in their academic pursuits in the classroom. (Zarra 2013; Chen 2012)

States have reported increases in arrests of teachers having sexual relations with their students, from elementary levels to high school levels. This is true for both male and female teachers (Oliver 2011; Zarra 2013). The sexual "relationships" that occur in college, between

professors and their students are less reported (Gattis 2016). Education professionals must question why these relationships develop, as well as the reasons teachers are willing to risk their families, careers, and their freedom to engage in emotional and sexual relationships with their students. Interestingly, more women than men seem to be making headlines for arrests these days for engaging in inappropriate and illegal behaviors with their students. Sexual expression seems to have gone wild in our culture.

Murray and Murray (2004) exhort to teachers to remember who the adults are in the classroom, and not to either blur or cross this line of authority, with which they are entrusted. The authors also recommend that teachers continue to remind themselves that (1) less touching is better, (2) teachers invited to off-campus student-only gatherings should politely decline most of them, (3) when there is an anticipation of being alone with a student on campus, find other students or ask another adult to be in the area, and (4) teachers should be careful not to share too much of their private life at school or on social media sites where students can use the photos or information against them. Setting and keeping boundaries has now become a full-time consideration. Therefore, teachers should be aware that students are watching and listening at all times. Consequently, interacting with colleagues socially, and with students in front of other students, should be done with great caution.

Schools and districts must get serious about protecting their teachers. No one can guarantee a perfectly safe school, neither from bullying, nor from potential violence, and certainly not from emotional connections occurring between humans. However, there has to be a shared responsibility between the colleges and universities training teachers, the schools in which student teachers are placed for practicum, and the districts that eventually hire these teacher-candidates.

When it comes to hiring practices, potential problems can be thwarted at the point of interview. Good professional development is key for principals and administrators, at the school sites and district level. Training administrative personnel brings with it the responsibility of knowledge of current law, in terms of which questions are allowed under the law when a person is in the interview stage, versus those questions that can be asked of a tenured teacher switching schools, or even changing positions between districts.

The following questions and rationale are results, partly from asking recently hired teachers to share on social media pages. Other sources are from personal communications with administrators. The bottom line is that the suggested professional and categorical interview questions are meant to be comprehensive and reflective, and in some cases expanded to meet this goal. Diminishing the risks associated with hiring teachers means better safety measures for all involved.

The Twenty-First Century Teacher Candidate:
Seven-Question Interview Framework

The following seven questions are intended to be included during interviews with prospective new hires. Some of the questions are uncomfortable to ask and to answer. The goal in asking these questions is the possibility of a safer environment for students. Hopefully, the respondents will be honest in their responses.

There is always a chance that one or more of the questions either has been legislated and currently incorporated in interviews, or eventually be legislated as out-of-bounds in the initial phase of hiring interviews. State legislatures are always revising their hiring policies (Darling-Hammond & Ducommun 2011; Walker 2016). However, make no mistake about it. Culture has shifted and hiring new teachers today must come with more difficult questions for the candidates

than in the past. Districts must decide for themselves the appropriate questions to ask new teachers and which levels of risk they are comfortable in assuming.

The object of each questions is not to pry into a candidate's personal business. It is every education stakeholder's responsibility to make certain that the people placed in charge of classrooms are not bringing their excess baggage into the classrooms. These issues, when addressed on the front end of hiring save much heartache and legal ramifications later.

Question #1: Divorce. "We understand that you checked the "divorced" box. Would you mind providing a few details as to whether there any form of abuse involved?" Under the circumstances in which teachers find themselves with students, asking about divorce is appropriate, especially if recent relationships with adults have proven to be violent, abusive, or both. "Divorce is commonplace today, but the reasons for the divorce could limit the classroom adversely, as well as the relationships with the faculty" (Zarra 2013, p. 159), particularly among close friends, or if an ex-spouse works on the same campus for which the job is available. Divorce does not rule out someone for a teaching position. However, there may be extenuating circumstances or serious victimization involved, in which case could carry over into the daily lives of students in class.

Question #2: Drugs. "What are your views of the recreational use of drugs and the legalization of illicit drugs, such as marijuana?" The mood is shifting among some Americans about the recreational use of certain drugs, yet the research is becoming clearer with each study about the overall effects upon brain development and efficiency (Barry & Murphy 2014). Teacher's views about certain cultural and moral issues affect young minds, especially teenagers, seeking support for their own personal experimentation. Arrest records nationally for teachers having inappropriate relationships with students show high rates of substance abuse, including alcohol and recreational drugs (Wolak, Finkelhor, et al. 2008; Hamilton 2015).

Question #3: Tattoos and Piercings. "Do you have any body art, or tattoos that, if left uncovered throughout the course of the day, would be deemed offensive to one or more students, parents, or faculty members?" (Zarra 2013, p. 160) Tattoos and piercings are not an automatic disqualification. However, districts must be careful not to be seen as silently supporting something offensive, or condoning an edginess in culture which may be out of the mainstream of the community which is served by the school, by not addressing the issue in advance.   Identifying with contemporary culture is one thing and may enhance a teacher's "cool factor," in his or her relationships with students, but school image in the community is much more important than any one self-expression, or at least it should be.

Question #4: Adult Sex Industry. "Is there anything in your past or present that connects you to (1) the adult film industry, (2) the adult sex-toy industry, (3) online pornography (either by appearance in, or purchase of these materials), (4) hosting or maintaining and adult or erotic website, or (5) the signing of any past or present contract that associates you in any way with the adult sex industry, whether online or in real time?" (Zarra 2013, p. 160)

The general axiom still applies to teachers that what is done on one's own private time is their own business. However, this philosophy no longer holds the same privacy assurances as in the recent past. The onset of social media, personal websites, video channels, adult dating and sex procurement sites, and immediate online posting brings that philosophical axiom to a new level of consideration. The seizure of computers and phones demonstrates that what is past is still present.

Older children's and teenagers' minds are quite fragile, because of their heightened emotional states (Barry & Murphy 2014). One's sexuality is to remain deeply personal and any teacher that leads a double life does little to cause teenagers to focus on academics while they are

passing around videos and texts in class about the teacher standing directly in front of them (Caulfield 2012; Rubinkam 2008).

Students need good role models as they prepare for relationships of their own. They need exposure to healthy and good choices. They are bombarded with so many different distractions and temptations. Truthfully, they do not need their teachers to be part of these distractions.

Question #5: Sexual Abuse. "What is your personal opinion about the (1) impacts of child sexual abuse committed by adults who were abused as children, and (2) Would you speak to the effectiveness and professional ability of these adults to teach students effectively?" (Zarra 2013, p. 160)

Adults who perpetrate sexual abuse upon children are usually victims, themselves. Teachers which form inappropriate relationships with their students, and who come from a past which contains sexual abuse victimization, are greater risks (Barry & Murphy 2014). Arrest records indicate that many teachers arrested for sex crimes with teenagers claim sexual abuse in their past. School district administrators must consider their own boundaries, in terms of rights, responsibilities, opportunities, taking of risk and student safety. The best advice would be to steer clear of placing any teacher in with children, or teenagers—which was sexually abused as a child (Hensley 2016). This is not a hard-fast rule, but it is common sense. If there are any questions as to the psychological health of the candidate-in-question on this issue, the risks increase. Again, this is sensible.

Question #6: Addictions. "Are you aware of any addictions you have to legal or illegal substances, the Internet, or behaviors, and are you aware of any predispositions or moral weakness you might have toward addictions?" (Zarra 2013, p. 161)

Smoking cigarettes is no longer allowed on public school campuses. Schools are tobacco and alcohol-free zones. This does not mean that teachers do not have struggles with these elements, which remain prevalent in every day culture. Teachers must refrain from the use or possession of any of these on school grounds. District administrators must be aware that someone has a past history of alcoholism.

All persons on school campuses understand that extinguishing smoking materials is the expectation, before coming to campus. It is fair to ask whether such an addiction would get in the way of a teacher doing his or her job. Whether it is pain medication, certain opioids, e-cigarettes and/or tobacco-less cigarettes, alcohol, pornography, chewing tobacco, or any other addictive element, administrators take major risk by placing those who are addicts in positions of authority with students. With each passing day the addict runs the possibly of falling into usage on campus, or around students, parents, or fellow faculty members. Thus, legal, professional and personal boundaries would be crossed.

Question #7: Online Social Media. "What is your current use of online social media sites, and what are some examples of private sites to which you subscribe? Would you have any problem disabling or deleting sites before any offer to hire you, or allow a neutral party to view your page(s) as a prerequisite to this hiring?" (Zarra 2013, p. 161)

Teachers must be careful what they post online and the sites they subscribe to as members, whether paying or not (Barry & Murphy 2014). "However, being careful and being accountable are somewhat different expectations. The former relies on the honor system, where the district would accept the word of the teacher. The latter would be more along the lines of the example provided by many law-enforcement agencies and political agencies that vet those whom they hire." (Zarra 2013, p. 161) A bottom line is about how concerned districts are about protecting students,

balancing the teacher candidates and their privacy rights, within the context of and increasingly sexual and addictive American culture.

Getting Serious About Teacher-Student Relationships and Safety

If school districts are serious about protecting teenage students and saving teachers' careers—as well as avoiding the damage done to families when inappropriate relationships occur—setting aside one day at the beginning or middle of the school year to address questions in small groups seems most reasonable. These can be addressed by department, or groups arranged by on-site administrators.

At a time when WASC accreditation is paramount, the addition of such an intervention program would do wonders for a school. There is always discussion about intervening with students. Taking time out to do the same for faculty would be of great benefit.

Colleges and universities that train teachers, would do well to take a class session or two and address the concerns of inappropriate teacher-student relationships. The following eight topical categories of questions are meant to provide assistance for teachers-in-training, for those in district professional development, and colleagues seeking answers for safer classroom environments for their students. These questions, and subsequent recommendations, are generated from a review of the literature, a comprehensive comparative study of teacher arrest records and convictions nationally, discussions with administrators within this author's professional network, and personal conversations with parents and students affected by inappropriate teacher-student relationships.

The eight sets of questions provided are not meant to be exhaustive. Rather, the questions are topical and serve as launching points for additional professional development for teachers, administrators and even coaches, as districts deem necessary. The questions are categorized by topic for the sake of organization and efficiency, and are presented with secondary education in mind. The questions also align with the basic framework of this article.

As districts attempt to utilize the questions, they should consider the best format, in terms of scheduling. Often, what works the best is to bring in someone who has studied the issues and has no personal stake, other than the safety of the students and the protection of the reputation of education community.

Professional Development Topic 1:
Boundaries and Barriers to Teacher-Student Relationships

There must exist boundaries between teachers and students. Some of these boundaries are natural, due to age, gender, or interest. Others are established as policies and adherence to them is a form of social contract between teachers and students. Consider the following questions, as the administrators and faculty explore what boundaries are best, and how to establish these at your school.

- Are there any boundaries and barriers that should exist between teachers and students?
- What are some "natural" and "created" boundaries? Explain the differences.
- Do you think today's teenage students are more or less apathetic about education and their future? Explain.
- In what ways are today's technologies problematic, in terms of relationships between teachers and students, and between parents and teachers?
- What are two cultural changes brought about by newer communication technologies?

- To what extent has modern technology detracted from the importance of face-to-face relationships? Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

Professional Development Topic 2:
Technology, Temptation, and Students

The ubiquity of technology and the apparent addictions of students to their smart phones have added extra pressure upon schools. The explosiveness of social media, coupled with the teenage penchant for attention, are bringing new temptations to teenagers. Often these temptations play out in the classroom, with online posts, resulting either for the need for new school and classroom technology policies, or resulting in disciplinary actions.

As a school's faculty and staff discuss the following questions, they should consider what solutions can be reached to ensure educational use of technology, and what issues may arise between teachers and students, with inappropriate uses, especially with smart phones.

- Why do you think more teachers are risking careers and freedom to have sexual relationships with their teenage students?
- Does your district or school have a sensible acceptable-use technology policy for its teachers and students, for both on-school and off-school hours?
- How would you approach your own teenager in the family if you were to discover that he or she has been viewing a great deal of pornography as well as sexting older friends, or a teacher?
- How would you define *teenage maturity*, providing three examples of behaviors to illustrate the definition?
- What causes teenagers to be impulsive in their actions? What is taking place in their brains to prompt such impulsiveness?

Professional Development Topic 3:
Teenage Brains, Maturity, and Emotions

Anyone working in education understands well that students and their biology are different each day. This is especially true in secondary education. The following questions regarding the teenage brain and emotional development are likely to elicit humorous anecdotes. As educators consider the following questions, the readers are asked to consider that there are students making choices to become involved with teachers. Students make these decisions while they are still in the midst of sorting out their individuality. They often lack the knowledge that their emotions are hyper-intense, and that their brains are often not wired up to understand unintended consequences and extenuating implications of their actions.

- What are the roles of the chemicals in the teenage brain, and how does each affect behaviors?
- In what ways are emotions unreliable as the foundation of knowledge and truth in the lives of teenagers? What is your role as teacher in assisting toward a better understanding of these emotions?
- How has modern technology assisted in expanding and retracting social interactions in human relationships?
- Considering the average teenage male and female, how would you describe the teenager's ideas about these love?

Professional Development Topic 4:
Relationships between Teachers and Teenage Students

At this juncture, some very difficult issues may arise when discussing the questions in topic four. For example, a school may have just experienced a horrible situation that has affected the confidence and morale of the school. The community may still be dealing with legal and emotional fallout from an inappropriate relationship between a teacher and student, or a coach and an athlete. Whatever the case, being able to have an open and honest conversation about all that had happened, as well as establishing a proactive approach to safeguarding is beneficial in the long-run. Educators should keep these things in mind when addressing the following questions.

- What are three factors you would use in determining whether certain teacher-student relationships are appropriate or not?
- Can you recall any incidents on a local or national level that illustrate the need for a serious discussion and policy revisions regarding teachers and their relationships with teenage students?
- Why do you think there are more problems being reported, and more arrests being made, that involve teachers and teenage students having sexual relationships?
- How important are moral compasses for teachers and students, and what roles do parents play in helping to develop these?
- What personal and professional factors would lead a teacher to risk everything for a romantic connection and sexual relationship with a teenage student?
- What are some factors that are always present when teachers and students engage in inappropriate relationships?
- If your principal asked you to give a two-minute speech making a case for your faculty and staff to discuss appropriate and inappropriate relationships on campus and off, what would you say?

Professional Development Topic 5:
Social Networking and Relationships in a Digital World

Most newly-hired faculty come from the millennial generation and understand the importance of technology and its involvement in the daily lives of their students. However, the issues of social media and networking take on a different aspects for the teacher used to posting online as a student. As teachers, the shift must be made toward understanding the different roles of social media, and develop methods to use classroom technology for educational purposes. The reality is that the emerging Z Generation is wired differently that the Millennial Generation.

Relationships on social media, forged before being hired, may have to be reconsidered. The fact is that involvement in social media may be based on different criteria for the new teacher. As faculty discuss the questions in this category, they should keep in mind their social media routines may have to change, in order to work and live above reproach, as well as grow into new boundaries in the profession as educators.

- How are social networking, a social network, and social technologies different?
- What are five ways that social networking can positively enhance relationships between teachers and teenage students?
- Why are teenagers in schools so attached to their cell phones?
- Considering the power of information and connection possibilities that exist with smartphones today, what are four ways teachers can harness this power for use in the classroom?

- How social is too social for teachers, in relation to students and parents?
- Are there any restrictions on communication between teachers and students during off hours?
- What are some principles for appropriate after-hours communications and between students and teachers, and are these principles practical for your campus? Why, or why not?

Professional Development Topic 6:
School Culture and Relationships

The wider purpose of a school often encompasses added social dimensions, for the sake of meeting the needs of students and their families. Exploring the various dimensions that comprise good relationships between students and teachers, between schools and families, and across the community are beneficial to the larger purposes of the school. Faculty should consider what comprises good relationships between colleagues, as well as additional intra-school relationships. This type of discussion not only provides clarity of purposes, but also may prove to be a worthy endeavor for school accreditation visitations.

- How does a school's culture and daily schedule assist in the development of relationships between teachers, students, and parents?
- Why is it important that people and relationships be given a high priority in secondary schools?
- What are some of positive ways teachers can build and maintain relationships with their students in the classroom?
- What do you think are some the differences between student-centered and student-focused philosophies of education?
- What is a "good" teacher, in terms of both classroom interactions and outside-of-class interactions with students?
- Do you agree or disagree with the social roles taken on by schools today, in terms of caring for the needs of students and families?
- What are some reasons that teachers might give for not developing relationships with students outside the secondary school classroom?

Professional Development Topic 7:
Education Policy: Morality, Purpose, and Common Sense

Why do teachers choose their careers? What factors drive teachers toward excellence? What is compromised in both character and ethics when teachers choose to engage in inappropriate relationships with their students? How would such choices hurt the community-at-large? Is it ever the place of a school administrator to share with his or her faculty that he perceives the development of inappropriate relationships? These are all excellent beginning questions, in-and-of-themselves.

Teachers, for the most part, take their craft very seriously. Teachers and administrators should keep this seriousness in focus, as they delve into greater detail, in examining their individual and corporate moral purposes. There is much to lose by one poor choice and much to gain by affirming and practicing good choices.

- As an educator, how would you define *moral purpose*? Explain the extent to which it is important in education, using both general and specific terms.
- Are you aware of your state's professional teacher's code of conduct?

- Should administrators have more latitude to ask personal, probing questions at teacher candidate interviews? Why, or why not?
- Do you see any reason to change veteran teacher evaluation processes? In light of the arrests of teachers accused of sex crimes with teenage students, would you add anything to the interviewing or evaluative process for the sake of student security and teacher protection?
- How much responsibility do you think seventeen-or eighteen-year-old students should bear if they become involved in sexual relationships with any of their teachers?
- Is there a need for professional development for teachers or a need for parent-information evenings for families in order to review laws and policies such as (1) general communication technologies, (2) district and school communications acceptable-use policies, and (3) the appropriate boundaries between teachers and students?

Professional Development Topic 8:
Technology: Tools and Tactics

Changes in the cultural climate regarding sex have more than seeped into secondary classrooms. It is more like a deluge. A major concern is that sexual predators are fully aware of the utilities of technology and methods in accessing potential victims. However, along with this very serious issue, there is also the issue of how easy it is today to accuse someone of something completely false. False allegations are devastating and can ruin lives. Take care when posting personal items online. Online statements and images can be manipulated and crafted to allege something that is not at all taking place outside the digital realm.

Part of the proactivity required today for teacher vigilance is to consider what to do if a colleague is falsely accused of something that could result in a loss of career, destruction of one's family, or the ruination of a career and community reputation. What should be done if a colleague discovers another faculty member is involved in an emotional, physical, or sexual relationship with one or more students? To whom should this be reported, even if it is alleged? Many states have *mandatory reporting*, which empowers people and holds them legally responsible for not reporting, at the same time.

- How have communication technologies, and the environments of teenagers, enhanced sexual predators' accessibility to today's teenagers?
- What are your feelings about changes in states' laws that decriminalize sexual relationships between teachers and students at, or above, the state age of consent?
- Why do you think so many female teachers are having sexual relationships with their teenage students?
- What signs exist that indicate a teacher is getting too close to a student?
- What would happen if false accusations were made against a teacher, coach, administrator, or counselor?
- How would you handle allegations that a colleague allegedly had an inappropriate relationship with a student?
- Would things change if the colleague were eventually arrested for a sex crime though maintaining all while that maintaining nothing inappropriate had occurred?

Conclusion

Professional development today should be more than planning curriculum and discussions of pacing calendars. The implications for lacking proactivity on appropriate and inappropriate teacher-student relationships are greater than ever, should even an allegation come to light. Whether districts use the suggested professional development offered in this article, there is no escaping the fact that something has to be done for administrators, and for faculty to address the issues presented.

While asking questions and beginning dialogue about teacher-student relationships are essential elements for essential professional development, most are equally aware that such topics are provocative, as well. However, schools must go much farther than discussion, if they plan to minimize the legal risks, while endeavoring to affect twenty-first century teacher-training, and teacher retention (Scherer 2003). Teachers stepping in front of classrooms and assuming the professional title without proper training is becoming a regular occurrence in American cities. Such practices bring with it very definite concerns and implications, and also place the reputations of veteran faculty at greater risk.

The reality is that teachers and students are spending inordinate amounts of time thrust together for academics, competitions, athletics, and even choosing to give up free time, to spend lunches together for intervention and remediation. This is not a bad thing. To be sure, the natural inclination for most teachers is to sacrifice for their students. However, far too often, the ubiquity of communications' technologies enables relationships, which begin at school, to extend into the homes of both teachers and students. Teachers must beware the hazards of getting "too close" to their students, and therefore guard against any appearance or development of inappropriate relationships.

Districts and schools that take time to address what is proper and educational between teachers and students, indeed are thinking proactively and headed in the right direction. This is equally as true for colleges and universities whose mission is to train teachers for the twenty-first century. Classes must be offered to that include the questions and issues raised in this article.

Boundaries are good things for students. Boundaries are equally as good for teachers and anyone who works with students. Teachers who know how set and reinforce boundaries, in so doing, seek higher levels of professionalism and respect. Thus, a teacher should never enter an emotional, physical, or sexual relationship with a student for any reason. Such a mistake is not only illegal, but ruins families. It is a career-stopper, and an abuse that should never find its way into America's schools.

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Book Review

Rita Csulak-Gomez

Suleiman, M., & Abu-Lughod, R. **(2014***). **In spite of being white: The plight of Arab Americans.** **Natural Sciences Publishing Corporation. ISBN: 978-0-692-21426-8**

In Spite of Being White: The Plight of Arab Americans is timely in its delivery, and is a must read by scholars and laymen to understand the historical background of today's global events that are occurring in our cities, towns, and communities in the United States, and abroad on the continent of Europe and the Middle East. Suleiman and Abu-Lughod, through the context of social justice, take us on a journey through the lives of Arab and Muslim Americans, and their difficulties with the complex issues of race, religion, philosophies, ethnicity, culture, customs, sexism, and the sociopolitical perspective that have shaped our views in the United States. Additionally for further in-depth study, authors Suleiman and Abu-Lughod have given the educator rich internet resources, interactive videos, and learning tasks at the end of each chapter. It is an excellent long overdue multicultural text that is in an easily to understand format which brings the reader closer to understanding the Arab and Muslim community.

More importantly, this literary journey is a rich tapestry of major historic events of a world civilization, often considered to be the "cradle of civilization," that places Arabs and Muslims in the center, socio-politically, geo-politically, and religious-doctrinally. The Arab World is cradled between two continents Africa and Asia, and its sphere of influence extends west to the continents of Europe and North America. This tumultuous but beautiful region is the birthplace of three major religions Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, that intersect, overlap and influence one another with differences and similarities in practices, customs, religious and philosophical beliefs, principles and views. We are reminded of the important and significant contributions that Arabs and Muslims have made to the world as a people and as individuals in astrology, mathematics, medicine, art, architecture, music, literature, linguistics and philosophy.

The authors eloquently discuss the unfair treatment of Arab and Muslim Americans that are often depicted in the movies and entertainment, the mainstream news media outlets, print and social media and the socio-cultural symbols such as the headdress of the hijab and burqa. It would be naïve of us to think that only Arabs and Muslims live in the Arab world, and here we find many other ethnic, racial, religious, and linguistic minorities that include, but are not limited to the Kurds, Druze, Copts, Assyrians, Armenians, Blacks, Berbers, Kildanis, Bedouin, Yazidis, Jews, and Christians that are discriminated against because of the color of their skin.

In the United States, Arab and Muslim Americans struggle to break free of the stereotypical views of their communities, and have been consistently discriminated against over decades as they immigrated here for a better life; prejudices against their communities have been incredibly intense after the tragic events of September 11, 2001. Arab American children in the United States public schools have, in particular, bared the brunt of prejudice and discrimination as they attempt to assimilate and acculturate themselves into the American way of life. Educators need to have a strong background in history, cultures, customs, language and religion to understand fully how to instruct Arab American students, and how to be sensitive to their needs as world events unravel causing increased bullying and discrimination against them. Educators should embrace multicultural and intercultural communication with Arab and Muslim children and their parents not only for their professional growth and knowledge but also to promote greater understanding between the students in their classrooms. Educators must understand the linguistic differences of Arab children and how it can be a barrier to learning English. Educators must understand that it will take time for Arab children to simultaneously learn both a second language and content subject material. Unfortunately, many times these children are recommended for special education if they are not learning quickly enough to our pace of the curriculum, standards, and content. Educators must understand why Muslim girls dress in their traditional and customary clothing and prevent harassment and intimidation of them.

The authors discuss Arab and Muslim patterns of immigrations so that the reader has a heightened historical perspective of when Arabs and Muslims began to immigrate to the United States and from what countries. Chapter 3 gives us a mini history lesson by delving deep into the immigration patterns of Arab Muslims, Arab Christians, and Arab Jews and the motives of why they left their native countries of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Sudan, and Yemen to name a few. For us to move forward in understanding the Arab and Muslim patterns of immigration, including the current exodus of people from Arab nations, we must understand and acknowledge the socio-economics, socio-political, persecution, and unimagined poverty of their countries, and why they are leaving in hopes of a better life elsewhere. As educators, we must address the ugliness of discrimination and prejudice and realize that not every Arab is a rich oil sheik.

No discussion of the plight of Arab and Muslim Americans would be complete without a recounting of the events of September 11, 2001. Since that point on the historical timeline, Arab and Muslim Americans have been discriminated against and scrutinized over the horrific and acts committed by Muslims. The authors give us rich vignettes full of personal descriptions of hate crimes that been committed against Arabs and Muslims in the United States. It gives us an urgent sense to build bridges and not walls to ease the tensions between Arabs and Muslims in the United States. The real life scenarios give educators a vehicle to understand the Arab and Muslim students and to assist them in assimilation into the fabric of American life. In light of events here in the United States and abroad, the media has depicted Arabs and Muslims with very powerful negative visual images which fuel hatred and contempt. Suleiman and Abu-Lughod give us implications and lessons of the power the media has in portraying Arabs and Muslims on a global stage, and its impact on this deep rooted complex issue.

The plight of Arab and Muslim women cannot be ignored, and Suleiman and Abu-Lughod illustrate with sensitivity the oppression and discrimination that this sector of our population is

confronted with on a daily basis. Chapter six clarifies the role of women in the Arab and Muslim community, and how the traditions, culture, customs, belief systems, and religions have influenced their role and place in society. The reader is educated on a positive note how Arab and Muslim women are moving forward in leadership roles in a wide range of occupations and careers.

Chapter 7 is one of the most important and critical ones in the book, as Suleiman and Abu-Lughod discuss in detail the Arab-Israeli Conflict and its impact on Arab and Muslim Americans. This one chapter in the book is a must read for everyone who is attempting to understand, the socio-political, geo-political, and religious divisions with the never-ending conflicts in the region. The authors explain in simple terms the historical background and the complexity of the conflict and why solutions to peace have been so difficult.

In conclusion, the authors Suleiman and Abu-Lughod have skillfully depicted the plight of Arab-Americans, in a straight forward easy to read format. The presentation of each chapter throughout the book gives us real-life vignettes of the struggles of Arabs and Muslims in America. The book lets us visualize and reflect upon what we as a community of humanity can do better in understanding our fellow citizens that are dealing with unparalleled atrocities on the global stage. This is a must read in any multicultural or cross-cultural class setting, and should be a part of all teacher credentialing programs and sensitivity training of public safety officers and governmental organizations

In Spite of Being White by Suleiman and Abu-Lughod is an excellent resource and a must-read to understand the trials and tribulations and the rich history and culture of our fellow Arab and Muslim Americans.

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