

# Sexual misconduct teachers



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# **What is Wrong with our Teachers: An Interdisciplinary Approach to solving the Problem of Educator Sexual Misconduct**

## **Introduction**

Educator Sexual Misconduct (ESM) is becoming more and more of a problem in our society to date. Occurrences are happening at an accelerated rate when compared to twenty years ago. To date there are no preventative measures in place to intercept these potentially harmful individuals who are on their way to becoming teachers in charge of our children. A new nationwide process that will research, evaluate, and forecast these types of criminal behaviors associated with ESM is what's needed today in order to avoid this problem in the future. In addition, legislature could step in and create a more stringent penalty structure for both male and female violators. The school is a place for learning and although a cliché, that is where our future lies. Because of that, we need to protect and nurture that environment and not let potential pedophiles roam freely to disrupt that environment.

Educator sexual misconduct is not a new problem by any means, but a topic that has jumped onto the scene and won't go away without special attention. Just talking about it won't help or even lessen the problem. Sexual predators are a brash group and just telling them you know they're there and that you are looking for them won't deter them from their prey.

Sexual predators come in many packages. Sexual predators could be male, female, old, young, gay, lesbian, or even bisexual. Considering that, every child who at one point in time goes through the education system is at risk of

becoming a target of these predators. The actual victim could be school aged child, a mom, a dad, a spouse, girlfriend, boyfriend, or a friend. This type of perversion can potentially touch any individual person at any time and last for a lifetime. Since this is an event that could potentially touch every person who ever goes through the school system then why shouldn't we put more emphasis on making sure this doesn't happen.

ESM is a wide spread problem that need to be attacked from many different sides. To solve this problem we will need to pull expertise from numerous disciplinary perspectives to reach and expert understanding.

Educator sexual misconduct cannot be solved just by one topic alone. Many disciplines are needed to understand the problem, the children involved, and the context in which these events typically occur in. Specifically, one should understand the psychology of the predator as well as the prey, have a sound understanding of the educational system, criminal law, as well as the skill to comb through mountains of statistical data. (Dr Repko's text must be cited but not quoted here)

In examination of this problem a view from multiple disciplines is necessary in order to reach a complete understanding of the issue at hand. The disciplines needed to understand this topic are criminal justice, political science, psychology, and statistics.

Specifically, we need to know how an ESM event will affect the development of a child and what problems they will face in the future. It is also necessary to look at the problem from a political science viewpoint in order to understand what legislature could, will, won't, and can't do about the

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problem. A criminal justice viewpoint will allow for a better understanding of how these perpetrators are currently being punished and what adjustments need to be made to in the penal system to get them to not commit these acts.

To what I have learned about epistemology is that the question asks you how you learned the event in question. So, for the epistemology for this paper, there was a primary focus on analysis of scholarly research, interpretation of previous mentioned scholarly articles, examination of recent laws court decisions, and policy when it come to prevention and punishment of these acts.

Statistics is a process of gathering, arranging, summarizing, and presenting data in a simple yet informative way (Keller 2006). Statistics will be implemented to show that these events are on the rise when compared to twenty years ago.

Psychology targets the academic study of mental process and behavior (Plotnik & Kouyoumdjian 2007)). Psychology will be utilized to highlight the long term damage that these predators inflict on their victims. It will also show the difficulty these victims face in relation to recovery from the behavioral, developmental, and social disorders associated with ESM.

Criminal Justice, which is the system of law and penalties used to maintain order, social control, and to deter and control crime (Siegel & Senna 2008)). This discipline will reflect societies current trend when attempting to punish and deter these criminals.

Political Science will be the last disciplines and one of the most important. It is in this discipline that the power for reaching a complete resolution for this problem. Political science itself is a social science that is concerned with theory, analysis, and prediction of political behavior (Jackson & Jackson 1996). In this case, we will focus on legislature, policy makers, and administrators who have the power to change laws and implement policies to make future violations of these adolescents nearly impossible.

This paper is based on careful research of scholarly articles, state laws, recent court decision and administrative decisions and policies of government run school systems. Together these sources will allow for a deeper understanding of complex and growing problem in our school systems.

The purpose of this paper is to show that that there is a growing problem in the school system. In the end it should be clear that there is a need or a new process that will multi faceted process to screen potential teachers who fit the profile of ESM, provide harsher punishment for offenders, and a process to help identify personality types of students who are at higher risks of becoming targets. ESM to date is one of the most feared and devastating problems for any school district. So why not attack your most feared enemy with your most powerful weapons available?

### **Background**

9. 6 percent of all students in grades 8 to 11 report contact and/or non-contact educator sexual misconduct that was *unwanted* . While this definition includes many different kinds and degrees of ESM they are all

considered unwanted and serious in nature. Using this data, for every 2, 000 student in a high school, 192 students will experience some degree of ESM. Take for instance a student that goes to a 5A school in Texas. The data shows that they will have a 9. 6% chance of being one of those 192 students and an even greater chance of knowing or being friends with one of the 192 students.

Now take the total US population and apply it to our topic. Out of 303 million people 29, 088, 000 million will, or have personally experienced some sort of ESM. That number grows substantially when associated with people who are mildly affected by ESM.

It isn't clear when exactly this problem began to spiral out of control, but it is clear that it is a recent trend. In this case, straight comparisons to past numbers wouldn't be accurate because of major population growth. But comparisons or percentages do show a growth in this trend that is began to accelerate its growth in the last fifteen years. Although there has never been a time when ESM did not exist, there was a long period where it was an incredibly rare occurrence and violators were treated severely. Now, most violators aren't scared off by the punishment or believe that the system won't catch them.

Those that think the system wont catch them are right. To become a teacher you must only be able to pass a background check. Being a person who has gone through that process I know it is not a very thorough one. I don't have a criminal record or anything but I do have an unreasonably high amount of traffic violation on my driving record. However, the school asked me if I

would like to get a bus certification since my driving record appeared clean and I would need it for coaching. If that is typical of the care these administrators take in clearing an individual's past driving record then you must ask how bad could a person's criminal record be and still be allowed to teach?

Besides fingerprinting and criminal background checks there isn't much else schools are doing to prevent these predators from entering the schools.

Some districts are starting to catch on and requiring additional references to include ones personal life in the application process but that is all. There still is no psychological examination, personality screening, extensive research, or a full criminal background check. Some might say that is an invasion of ones privacy but remember that this is voluntary and these teachers have chosen to be around children. When one chooses to help children they need to also extend that aid in helping safeguard them, if that means surrendering so more intrusive examination during the interviewing process than that's what has to be done.

To date there is not enough attention given to the seriousness of t he problem. If a person went out today and began their research to see the extent of the problem they would find; cases involving male teachers and female students at an all time high, court cases involving women educators that receive a favorable judgment often times not including jail time, and an environment in which student don't know of or aren't concerned with the dangers.

One town epidomises the mindset around the nation. This town, their policymakers, and their citizens thought they were not at risk and couldn't be touched by this epidemic. That was the sentiment in Spring, Texas which is now on their third case in the past two years. When asked, city officials responded with, " When it happens to you and your school district, it certainly increases your awareness" (Radcliffe 2008). That answer is not sufficient though. A better question would be what is being done now that you realize you need to change, or what are you going to change from two years ago, and why did you miss this?

According to a draft report commissioned by the U. S. Department of Education, in compliance with the 2002 " No Child Left Behind" act signed into law by President Bush, between 6 percent and 10 percent of public school children across the country have been sexually abused or harassed by school employees and teachers.

Here are some excerpts from the study:

In the state of New York alone, more than \$18. 7 million was paid between 1996 and 2001 to students who were sexually abused by educators. Fees for attorneys and investigators are in addition to the settlement amounts. None of the abusers was reported to authorities

\*\* Only 1 percent lost their license to teach

\*\* Only 35 percent of abusers received a negative consequence for their actions: 15 percent were terminated or, if not tenured, they were not rehired; and 20 percent received a formal reprimand or suspension.



\*\* Another 25 percent received no consequence or were reprimanded informally and off-the-record. Nearly 39 percent chose to leave the district, most with positive recommendations or even retirement packages intact.

There are many reasons for why teenagers don't see the danger in a relationship with their teacher but I believe the media is the reason for not communicating the problem in a correct manner. Recently in " Boston Public", a recently cancelled primetime show that's set in an inner city high school, a female student engages in a sexual relationship with a male teacher and is seen as being a ' cool' for having the relationship, and the teacher carries on the relationship because he is given the chance to resign and isn't even prosecuted. Another episode has a young female student who falls in love with her teacher and initiates contact with him. She then uses that event to blackmail him many times before he turns himself in.

Once again, ESM is a complex, ongoing, and disturbing problem in the U. S. and deserves a careful examination. To do so requires an interdisciplinary approach that will allow input from the various topics and academic disciplines that this problem exists in. To better describe how this process will work you should take the complete opposite of " *ceterus parabus*" which is the theme for economics. It basically states that economics will study the effects on supply from one perspective or event at a time. Here, we will need more than one perspective to examine our topic or we will fail to completely understand the problem and not see the solution. While all steps in the interdisciplinary process are important, without integration you cannot develop, combine and produce a new deeper understanding to the problem. In this case the interdisciplinary approach will allow for a further breakdown

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of the problem itself. It will allow for perspectives from psychology, political science, math, and criminal justice. When you individually attack the many different and complex aspects of this topic, you will then be able to synthesize this knowledge and come out with a “ new whole” (Repko 2005).

### *Disciplinary Perspectives and Insights*

### *Integration*

### *Conclusion*

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Appendices

Glossary

Contact or Non Contact Abuse: