



# ***Cases for Teacher Development: Preparing for the Classroom***

## **Is the Teacher's Gender an Issue in a Kindergarten Classroom?**

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## Is the Teacher's Gender an Issue in a Kindergarten Classroom?

In this case, a new teacher wonders if the problems he encounters are gender related. The case commentators Ellen Moir, Barbara B. Levin, Kristopher Wells, Jerry Lee Rosiek and Becky M. Atkinson, and Paul Axelrod engage in a case discussion by examining present issues of gender, stereotyping, school, and societal concerns.

### Thinking Ahead

As you read this chapter, reflect on the following questions and issues:

- Consider the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experience of the teacher. How does he prepare for his new assignment?
- Consider the contextual elements of the school and the class that affect the dilemmas this teacher faces.
- What challenges does Hannah pose for this teacher? What conflicts or dilemmas might arise because of the teacher's gender?
- Consider the role of school administration in the kindergarten classroom.

The use of "she and he," while it may appear awkward to the reader, is intended to ensure the absence of gender bias.

"You are a new teacher to the school. Is this your first year of teaching?" inquires Hannah's mother. I could tell that both she and her daughter were very anxious about the looming start of the school year.

"Yes, I'm very eager to begin teaching. I am from out of town, but I have heard so much about the city and the school community," I respond nervously. "What are Hannah's favorite toys? Does she like puzzles? Well, I look forward to seeing her next week. Thanks for the coffee and cookies."

"Hannah, come out from behind the couch and say good-bye to your teacher," Mrs. Wilkens demands, as Hannah ducks behind her mother's skirt. "Don't worry, all of the children are a little timid at first," I say. "Bye Hannah. See you in school."

I collect the toys that I have brought from the classroom and make my way hurriedly to the front hall. This is my last home visit to the children in my class. Next week, they will begin their entrance into the world of education, and I will make my debut as their kindergarten teacher.

"One more thing before you go," adds Mrs. Wilkens. "My husband and I were discussing how you were going to be Hannah's teacher, and, well, we were expecting a female teacher. And you are a man, fresh out of college. Why would you *want* to teach kindergarten?"

The nerve! My first instinct is to respond sarcastically: "*It's part of my probation, you know, community service.*" But I restrain myself and casually remark, "Yes, I am male. And I am professionally trained to educate kindergarten children as well as I am trained to teach the sixth grade. I look forward to meeting the daily challenges 5-year-olds will throw my way. Have a great day. Don't forget to label Hannah's backpack!" I force a smile, turn, and depart.

Why didn't I take that sixth-grade position that I was offered in Hillsdale? Sure, it was an isolated town, but now I'm stuck in the suburbs of Williamstown, teaching kindergarten with parents whose first impression is that since I am a man teaching young children I must have ulterior motives. I am beginning to experience serious reservations regarding my choice of grade.

As I trudge home from that final home visit, troubled by Hannah's mother's probing questions, the words from my principal upon signing my contract resonate in my head: "You are taking a historic journey as the first male teacher in the kindergarten." I guess I was, perhaps, a little too naive to anticipate the struggles that would lie ahead.

Filled with fear and apprehension, I put the final touches on the calendar board in my classroom. How would I respond to the student who gives me a big hug? My eyes wander around the class as I do my final room inspection before the children arrive. Suddenly, I notice a second door in my room. Hey, that's cool. I have my own washroom in my class. Suddenly my delight turns to dread. Oh no! Four- and 5-year-olds are toilet trained, aren't they?

Unfortunately, my imagined fears materialize by the end of September. The children, warming up to me, seek normal childhood affection, be it a hug, touching my leg, holding my hand when we go outside, or wanting to crawl onto my lap for a story. A short time ago, a kindergarten teacher wouldn't think twice about these innocent gestures, but society has changed. Worried about the potential repercussions of these demonstrative childhood behaviors, I deflect every attempt at these shows of affection, each time wondering if I am doing a grave disservice to the children. Am I robbing them of a spontaneous gesture of affection that they need? Affections they would readily receive from a female teacher?

The first snow falls in November, and I eagerly anticipate the fun games we will play outside. The change of season, however, brings with it additional clothing: Gloves. No problem. Hats. A piece of cake. Snow pants? Oh! Oh! A plethora of problems. I wonder if it is possible to put on pants without inadvertently brushing the children's limbs? I remember the first time I heard a child giggle while I was assisting her with her snow pants, and my hand barely grazed her knee. I stopped dead in my tracks. But thankfully, she was laughing at Johnny across the hall. He had put his gloves on backwards.

Fears of false accusations from students and parents trouble my thoughts on a daily basis. I am aware that children have wild imaginations, and I don't want to leave anything that I do open to interpretation. I try to ensure that I am in full view of another adult at all times. Am I so worried about incorrect perceptions that I purposely spill paint on the table before the bell rings just to have the custodian come into the room when I dress the children for home time? He could serve as my witness if any child accuses me of inappropriate acts.

With the Christmas break comes word of a new student. Brad has Down Syndrome and has had minimal toilet training. Funding is not immediately available for a full-time educational assistant so I am expected to change him when he has an accident. I've been told to keep the classroom door open at all times, but what about the washroom door? I wrestle with this issue, as it adds to all of the other worries that I am plagued with because I am a man teaching kindergarten.

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My paranoia is getting the best of me, and I was not looking forward to my first interviews with parents. I have already heard the murmurs in the hallway: "He's cute. And sure he'd make a great father. But do you think he is—what kind of man would want to teach small children?" Surprisingly, my fears do not materialize, and I survive the interviews relatively unscathed. In fact, most comments are positive in nature regarding my role as a male in the classroom. Some parents are actually looking forward to having younger siblings register in my class next September. Was I really coping in what was normally seen to be a woman's world?

May 12th. A Monday. It is the annual fundraising tradition at St. Suburb School. Children raise money, and for every donation they receive a ballot to have lunch away from school property with their favorite teacher. Jennifer is elated when I select her name from my class. She is an extroverted child who has shown no problem handling new situations. I suggest we go to The Keg, but, like a typical child, she is eager to get to McDonald's to feast on a Happy Meal, courtesy of me. I tell her mother that we will go on Friday. Casual day means that I will be wearing jeans, just perfect for a lunchtime trip to the local McDonald's.

When Jennifer's mother drops her off early, she repeats incessantly that her daughter is overly excited about having lunch with me. In the eyes of a 5-year-old, she has just won the lottery. Jennifer loudly proclaims that she doesn't want her mother to accompany us to lunch. At 11:30 a.m., we leave for the restaurant.

Jennifer has a love for reading and rambles on nonstop in my car about her favorite story characters. However, her comfort level abruptly changes when we must wait in line to order. Amidst a packed lunchtime crowd, her voice becomes tremulous and she whispers, "I want my Mommy. I want to go home." Her arms start to flail from side to side, and I immediately realize that I have to try to calm her down, order lunch, and get back to school as quickly as possible. In desperation, I use the trustworthy bribe of a toy from a Happy Meal, but to no avail. As we finally sit down, the quiet concerns of an anxious child quickly escalate to hysterical screams, "I WANT MY MOM. I WANT MY DAD." Her cries shake the restaurant as if over the loudspeaker so that all the listening patrons hear her wailing. Defensively, I turn to my suspicious audience and attempt to explain that the sobbing child is my student, and that I am her teacher. But whoops, I am a *male* teacher. I quickly realize that this probably does not look too good. Hurriedly, wrapping up the discarded hamburgers, I decide to return to school as fast as we can exit the restaurant.

But Jennifer refuses to budge. I must carry her, bodily, to my car. It isn't until I pull into the school parking lot that I notice my limbs are no longer shaking. The rest of the school day runs smoothly, and at pickup time, Jennifer's mother and I share a laugh about Jennifer's sudden outburst at McDonald's.

It is 4½ hours later when I am awakened from my daily nap at my apartment (If you have ever taught kindergarten, you'll understand why I needed a nap) by a loud knock at the door upstairs. I had just moved into the basement apartment, so I am slow to my feet in finding my way to the door. I am unsure if upon opening the door, the ticking I hear is from the kitchen clock or from my pounding heart. Three police cruisers are in my driveway, two police at the front door, and two police at the back. I am dumbfounded. Soon, I realize my predicament as the officers explain that an arrest warrant has been issued for an alleged kidnapping.

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Apparently, the manager at McDonald's had been watching my car as I left the parking lot, and six people had called the police from the restaurant, and three others had written down my license plate number. When police followed up on the concern from patrons in the restaurant, my license listed my former place of residence—where I no longer lived.

The empty house and the fact that I was last seen dragging a child kicking and screaming into a car quickly raised their alarm. An all-points bulletin was issued for my vehicle and border crossings were alerted. The police were even prepared to release a surveillance video of me to the media in time for the nightly news. It was early evening when I accompanied the officers in the cruiser that day. Once more, my limbs began to tremble uncontrollably.

I kept asking myself one question. If I had been a woman, would the events have unfolded as they did?

### **Exploring the Case**

A teacher who has taught for 8 years wrote this case.

### **Identification**

Identify the key facts of this case. What factual events are central to understanding the situation? Identify the dilemmas and tensions in this case. Explore the main aspects of each dilemma and tension.

### **Analysis**

Analyze the issue(s) from the viewpoints of the different people in the case. What questions should this teacher ask that require deeper knowledge of teaching principles. How effectively does this teacher cope in and out of his classroom? What educational themes are revealed by the teacher's interactions with the class, and both school and home communities?

### **Evaluation**

Examine critically the teacher's strategies for handling the challenge(s). Does the teacher depicted fulfill, fall short of, or surpass your notion of the role of a teacher?

### **Alternative Solutions**

Were there alternative solutions or strategies available to deal with the dilemma? Generate alternative solutions to the ones presented in the narrative. Take into consideration risks, benefits, and long- and short-term consequences of each proposed action.

### **Reflection**

At the conclusion of the narrative, the teacher ponders the question of his gender as responsible for the unfolding of events in the early stage of his career. Do you agree with his thinking? Has anything been resolved?

Consider your thoughts and assumptions at the beginning of the chapter. Who or what has caused you to consider a new way of thinking? How strongly do you still feel about your previous assumptions?

### **Synthesis**

Synthesize your understanding of this case into a statement. What is this a case of?

### **Case Commentary by Ellen Moir**

The life of a beginning teacher is filled with a series of first experiences. As a result, it makes it hard to always anticipate the outcome of one's actions. The traditional "sink or swim" approach to induction leaves beginning teachers on their own to navigate a new role with many complex responsibilities. As a new teacher, embarking on a "historic journey as the first male teacher in the kindergarten," this young man is in need of an experienced, knowledgeable mentor teacher to guide him.

This case is a compelling illustration of how schools and school districts often fail to offer new teachers the job-embedded, ongoing, and structured support they need and deserve as they enter classrooms, regardless of their gender. New teachers come to the classroom from a variety of preparation programs. If they have been fortunate enough to have meaningful and intensive student teaching experiences, they may still, as in this case, lack exposure to the challenges of the grade level they agree to teach. A skilled mentor could have helped him anticipate potential problems and constructively address legitimate concerns about the appropriate physical relationship between male teachers and young students. The mentor could also have helped facilitate clear communication about this issue with students, parents, and his principal.

My work directing a program that has supported more than 12,000 new teachers has convinced me that novice teachers are vulnerable on many levels. Not only are they learning to teach while teaching, but also they are simultaneously forging a new identity from student to teacher. The young teacher's insecurity and uncertainty are understandable but could have been eased had he had a trusted and knowledgeable veteran teacher to honor his fears while helping him move beyond his "paranoia." Without this support, the new teacher is left to fend for himself, questioning both his judgment and the legitimacy of his being a male kindergarten teacher.

Tragically, when a school-sanctioned outing runs awry, the author's greatest fears materialize in full force. As a reader, you can easily identify the sequence of bad decisions that led to the unfortunate and unnecessary encounter with the police. What could have been done to prevent such a fiasco? I suggest that a mentor's ongoing support would have helped this teacher be very clear in advance about professional boundaries and the need to have another adult or child present despite Jennifer's proclamation to the contrary.

The new teacher asks if the outcome would have been the same for a woman. Undoubtedly not, though women must also be guided in how to interact physically with young children and also fear legal consequences stemming from innocent actions. These are difficult considerations for veteran teachers as well as novices. Developing a professional perspective and learning how to create a caring and safe environment for

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students takes time and guidance. Good intentions do not always result in positive outcomes. Nonetheless, students deserve male role models at every age. Helping new male elementary teachers grapple with the complexity of their role to allow them to succeed is crucial.

Regardless of gender, all new teachers ought to be carefully inducted into the teaching profession. During these critical early years, new teachers are easily overwhelmed by the competing demands of running an effective classroom. When new teachers are left on their own to sink or swim, not only do they leave the profession, but also students receive far less than they deserve. Imagine how different it would have been had a trained mentor been available to forestall this blight on the career of a promising and enthusiastic new teacher.

### **Exploring the Issues New Teachers**

Moir examines the lack of support given to new teachers. How might a mentorship program aid in preparing for new situations, programs, and schools? How has Moir been able to ease new teachers' feelings of insecurity and uncertainty?

### **Gender Issues**

The teacher in the case wonders if outcomes would have been the same for a woman. What do you think? What does Moir suggest is necessary to gain perspective on teaching events?

### **Teacher Identity**

The commentator worries about a teacher's sense of self or even "paranoia" if all good intentions in the classroom do not yield "positive outcomes" or good results. How can teachers develop a "professional perspective" when an "outing runs awry"?

### **Diversity**

Moir comments on the need for all students to have "male role models at every age." How might strategies or knowledge for a male teacher differ at the kindergarten and secondary levels?

### **Case Commentary by Barbara B. Levin**

From my perspective as a teacher-educator for the past 15 years, I think this case asks a very good question: Is the teacher's gender an issue? The easy answer is "Of course gender matters! This was a male kindergarten teacher—very unusual!" However, I also wonder if this case is also about stereotyping. Gender is one way we stereotype people, but we also make uncritical assumptions about people based on age, skin color, accent, occupation, the way they dress, and other rather superficial features. For most of us, it takes getting to know people as individuals to see that our stereotypes are shallow and dangerous manifestations of who people really are. If the people at McDonald's really knew this teacher, they probably would have helped him comfort this child instead of looking at him with suspicion.

Is this a case of gender only, or is it also a case of stereotyping? If I were in this



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teacher's shoes, I might ask myself some "What if?" questions: What if this child was a boy? What if I was a female? What if I was a female of color? What if I was Caucasian and the child was of color? What if I was a person of color and the child Caucasian? What if I was a much older person? What if I had on the robes of a cleric or wore a military uniform? What if... ? What if... ? These questions should lead me to think about this case from other perspectives and lead me to ask, "Would the same thing happen to another teacher?" and "What else is this a case of?" (Shulman, 1992, 1996).

This case also says something about our society today and the power of the media. In light of our increasingly instant awareness of child abductions, child molestations by clergy, child pornography, and other forms of child abuse, we have to wonder if everyone observing a distraught child who calls for their mother at McDonald's would call the authorities? Would they have reacted the same way 30 years ago? Would they react the same way in a small town, in the suburbs, or in the city? Are we even more likely to stereotype people as a result of recent media events related to the safety of children? I believe that this crisis did not happen in isolation. Unfortunately, we live in a time that makes us hyperaware of potential threats. Maybe it is a good thing that people were quick to act—not for this teacher, but for the sake of a potential threat to a child. Nevertheless, you have to ask yourself— What would I do if I witnessed the interactions of this child and her teacher? Would I intervene? Ask if I could help? Call the police? Follow the car? Keep my thoughts to myself?

This case raises some "big picture" issues related to teaching, especially those that surround the belief of many people that teaching is women's work. Right or wrong, this stereotype is perpetuated by the numbers, especially in elementary schools, as well as by our cultural assumptions about male and female roles in society. However, I think this case is also about the difficulty of separating gender issues from issues of race, class, and sexuality (Biklen & Pollard, 1993).

### **Exploring the Issues**

#### **Stereotyping**

On what other bases, besides gender, do people stereotype? How and why can assumptions and models be dangerous in the classroom, as Levin suggests?

#### **Reflection**

Are the questions Levin raises that pertain to gender ones that you might have asked if you had observed this scenario? If so, what assumptions were at play to make you react in that prescribed way? If not, what has caused you to reflect wisely? Did your attitude toward the media play a role in your response?

#### **Case Commentary by Kristopher Wells**

At the Center for Research for Teacher Education and Development, we frequently discuss personal, political, and pedagogical issues that arise as we attend to our teaching and research on the landscape of schools. These issues are often based on the moral, ethical, and legal principles that are embedded in professional codes of conduct and standards of teaching practice. These codes and practices are designed to help teachers navigate their way through the daily realities of living and teaching in an increasingly complex world.

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The narrative “Is the Teacher’s Gender an Issue in a Kindergarten Classroom” raises a series of important questions and tensions that cannot be easily resolved by turning to a set of prescribed guidelines or codes of conduct. In this case study, there are many influential discourses at work that serve to shape and construct the first-year teacher’s personal and professional identity. Three of the key discourses presented deal with issues of fear, sexuality, and the body. As educators, we often learn to fear, instead of critique and challenge, many of the unspoken questions or subtle comments that occur in school hallways and staff rooms: “Why would you want to teach kindergarten?” “But do you think he is ... ?”

These questions, as presented in the case study, serve to cast doubts on the first-year teacher’s abilities and motives. These questions also raise the suspicion that as a male elementary teacher he might be gay or, more insidiously, a pedophile. As this young man searches for his teaching identity and voice, he is quickly learning that male elementary teachers are positioned in very particular ways. As you reflect on this case study, I encourage you to explore the discourses at play and consider a few of the following questions:

*Discourses of fear:* What are the parents afraid of? What is the teacher afraid of? How are these fears similar, yet different? Why are homosexuality and pedophilia constructed as the ultimate fear in schools? How is fear used as a regulatory device in schools? How do silences or absences influence teacher identities? What role does silence play in maintaining fear and control?

*Discourses of the body:* How is the male teacher’s body read in the elementary classroom? What binaries does this reading create? What sanctions are in place for those who transgress these gendered roles? How do these binaries serve to fix and regulate teacher and student identities? How has the feminization of elementary schools—and teachers—served to construct the identity of male teachers?

*Discourses of sexuality:* How is sexuality constructed in the elementary classroom? How does this construction lead to fixed notions of what it means to be male and female? What effect do these constructions have on student and teacher identities? How are discourses of (hetero)sexuality encoded and inscribed in the daily operations of the classroom and school? In what ways are sexual, emotional, and physical needs and desires present or absent in the classroom and school (Fine, 1988)?

Discourses are not only limited to words or actions, but they are also strongly shaped by silences and absences (Britzman, 1991). When examining discourses, our challenge is to move beyond simplistic binary understandings (i.e., black/white, male/female, mind/body, good/bad, heterosexual/homosexual). Instead, we should attempt to create inclusive and ethical pedagogies that seek to challenge and reshape unquestioned discourses (Boler & Zembylas, 2003). By carefully deconstructing case studies like the one in this chapter, “Is the Teacher’s Gender an Issue in a Kindergarten Classroom,” perhaps we can begin the challenging work of learning to think about our schools differently. In this way, we are seeking to build the capacity to question, challenge, and critique the structures of education that valorize particular teacher and student identities and marginalize others. When we question the discourses of fear, of the body, of sexuality, we can become catalysts for change that take up and engage new ways of thinking, acting, being, and becoming in our classrooms and communities.

To act differently, we must begin to think differently about our teaching and learning if

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we are to truly open up and create spaces of hope and languages of possibility where all bodies matter (Butler, 1993). I encourage you to think carefully about the unspoken questions in your school and see where the answers might lead you.

## **Exploring the Issues**

### **Diversity Issues**

Wells encourages us to deconstruct discourses of fear, the body, and sexuality as they relate to teaching. Consider and respond to the questions and insights raised. How does this approach of deconstruction encourage a reconstruction of how teachers teach and students learn?

### **Reflection**

Usually simplistic approaches, such as binary understandings, and simple answers ignore underlying issues. What approach does Wells support for tackling the challenges that may not be overt in teaching? How would you apply Wells's suggestion to other societal issues?

### **Case Commentary by Jerry Lee Rosiek and Becky M. Atkinson**

The answer to the question in the title of this chapter is clear: Yes, gender matters. The question that follows, and that this case study permits us to explore, is this: How does gender matter?

On one level, we can ask whether the fact that the teacher is a man shapes the response of children, parents, teachers, and restaurant workers to his work. The story the teacher tells certainly invites that interpretation. However, it is difficult to discern the exact causes of any specific human response, because human experience is so complex and our ability to know the thoughts and feelings of others is so limited. The author and reader can at best speculate about what is on the minds of the other characters in the story.

On another level, we can ask whether gender identity shapes the experience of the teacher himself. The story above provides a clear answer to this question: yes. As a new male kindergarten teacher, the author finds himself almost obsessively thinking about his gender identity and what it means to others around him. Whether or not anyone else is thinking about his gender, his experience has already been shaped by the gendered cultural discourses that frame the work of teaching.

By “gendered cultural discourses,” We mean the taken-for-granted understandings of gender embedded in the language and practices of a given community. These understandings are as real as the bricks and beams that make up the school building. And, as this case study illustrates, these understandings can profoundly influence the work of teaching.

They work this influence in two ways. First, community members internalize the discourses. Consequently, they shape our actions even when no one else is watching us. In this case study, the teacher is constantly monitoring his own behavior even when no one is present to watch him. Second, these discourses are often invisible to the people they influence because they are thought of as “normal” or “natural.” The result is that a community will often require a member of a minority population to defend itself

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against general suspicion, but will not question the source of their suspicion. In this case study, the author observes that no one questions why a woman would want to teach young children, but his decision to teach young children is considered abnormal and interrogated. More dramatically, restaurant workers see a male teacher, not their own assumptions, as the cause for concern.

The ultimate solution to such problems is, of course, challenging and transforming narrow gender roles considered normal in our society. This, however, is unlikely to be achieved soon. Therefore, in the meantime, teachers need to be prepared to work constructively against the grain of narrow gender expectations. This work, I offer, cannot be effectively accomplished alone. Teachers need to learn how to work together to resist the negative effects of oppressive cultural discourses.

It is worth noting that in this case study, the teacher seems to be alone in his struggle with the narrow gender expectations he faced. Rather than ask what he could have done differently, I think the question needs to be asked, "What could his colleagues and administrators have done to support him in this situation?" More generally, how can teachers know when to be an ally to another teacher whose gender, race, class, sexuality, or (dis)ability status is different from their own?

### **Exploring the Issues**

#### **Societal Perception**

Rosiek and Atkinson examine the variety of ways that gender matters. They address the internalized and invisible ways that biases lodge in our sensibilities. Evaluate the authors' "ultimate solution" to challenging and transforming gender roles. What might you add to their suggestions?

#### **Support for New Teachers**

Rosiek and Atkinson comment on the teacher's virtual obsession about thinking about gender identity and how others will perceive him in a traditionally female role as a kindergarten teacher. How does gender affect teachers' personal professional knowledge? Does awareness of gender contribute to new teacher anxiety and "frame the work of teaching"?

#### **Case Commentary by Paul Axelrod**

This scenario addresses an issue of utmost importance: personal interactions between teachers and students, and, in particular, the relations between male teachers and young children.

Although the teacher has legitimate concerns about this matter, he appears to be an individual who lacks good judgment and the ability to work comfortably with the students he teaches.

I question, first, why he would be visiting the homes of the children in his kindergarten class. This indicates, inappropriately, that he intends to be a family friend as well as the child's teacher. Home visits on this scale erode the necessary professional distance that teachers should maintain from students and their families. Teachers can demonstrate their accessibility to parents and their genuine interest in the children in their classes in other ways. For example, the teacher could have invited the parent(s)

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and child to speak to him in the classroom at the beginning of the school year. Only in exceptional circumstances—for example, in the case of immobile parents—and with the knowledge of the vice principal or principal, should the teacher visit the family home. In addition, there may be some small communities and boards where this practice of home visits still has currency, but in all likelihood, this would be rare.

Teachers should certainly avoid any kind of intimate contact with students. Children should not sit on their teachers' laps or engage in prolonged hugs with them. But a certain amount of physical contact—a reassuring arm around the shoulder, for example—is acceptable. Even this level of interaction, however, worries the teacher in the scenario, who lacks insight and perspective on the matter.

The contest, which led to the teacher having lunch with the winning student at McDonald's, was entirely inappropriate and should not have been permitted. At the very least, one of the child's parents should have accompanied them to the restaurant. Even that, however, raises some professional boundary issues. Any such “prizes” ought to have been awarded at the school.

At the restaurant, the teacher handled the student's temper tantrum foolishly and dangerously. Assuming this unlikely situation transpired, the teacher should have called the parent(s) to come to the restaurant or had someone else contact them. He should not have physically handled the child unless she was acting violently or was at risk of harming herself. And even then, it would only be appropriate for the teacher (or any adult) to use restraint, not aggression. He certainly should not have bodily dragged the child from the restaurant, and in calling the police, the manager and patrons of the restaurant acted sensibly.

Finally, one might ask why this teacher felt so isolated and unable to consult his fellow teachers and school authorities. Something is amiss in the organization and culture of the school itself when teachers feel so at sea. There should be channels in the school that allow teachers, especially new ones, to address their concerns without feeling threatened or demeaned.

## **Exploring the Issues**

### **Relationships between Teachers and Students**

Why might Axelrod be critical of the new teacher's preparation for his kindergarten class? Do you agree with Axelrod's statement, “Teachers should certainly avoid any kind of intimate contact with students”? Explain the reason for your answer.

### **Teacher Behavior**

Axelrod questions the teacher's behavior outside of the classroom. What safeguards by the school could prevent a new teacher from encountering similar difficulties?

## **Engaging with the Commentaries**

### **Gender Issues**

Moir, Levin, Wells, and Rosiek and Atkinson agree that gender does matter; however, their reasons why it matters and approaches toward eradication of stereotypes differ. Compare and contrast their responses on the topic of stereotyping.

Although Moir, Levin, Wells, and Rosiek and Atkinson intellectualize the new teacher's plight, Axelrod states that the teacher "lacks good judgment and the ability to work comfortably with the students he teaches." Do you agree with Axelrod or not? Explain your answer.

### **New Teacher Support**

Compare the suggestions made by all of the commentators for support of new teachers. Which support(s) would most directly affect classroom teaching? Why? Have you followed Wells's line of thinking in responding to this last question?

### **Student Learning**

This case deals with issues that extend beyond the classroom, but will ultimately influence students' acceptance of diversity. How might a teacher prepare her or his students to deal with diversity in and out of the classroom? Do the commentators provide clues?

### **Connecting Questions**

The Connecting Questions located in the introduction highlight themes that are threaded throughout the cases. You may continue your exploration of the issues raised in this case by addressing those connections. For questions pertinent to this case, please see questions 7 and 8.

### **Additional Readings**

Chernin, K. (1998). *The woman who gave birth to her mother: Seven stages of change in women's lives*. New York: Viking.

Kim Chernin offers a new paradigm for women's development. She offers a model for breaking cycles of mothers' stereotypes of blame and forgiveness. Tales from Chernin's clinical practice illustrate this model. This is a good companion piece to the works of Hope Edelman, Mary Pipher, Carol Gilligan, and Mary Catherine Bateson for understanding women's lives.

Cockburn, A. D. (1996). *Teaching under pressure: Looking at primary teachers' stress*. Washington, DC: Falmer, Taylor and Francis.

This book examines the pressures that primary teachers will encounter in their work.

Connelly, M. F., & Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as curriculum planners: Narratives of experience*. New York: Teachers College Press.

The authors examine the role of personal professional knowledge in daily teaching practice. Many examples of real-life experience are presented in narratives that are authentic and engaging. This book adds to the impact of qualitative research that goes deeply into understanding teachers' lives and the roles they play in the classroom.

Flanagan, O., & Jackson, K. (1987). Justice, care and gender: The Kohlberg-Gilligan debate revisited. *Ethics*, 97(3), 622–637. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/292870>

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Kohlberg presents the argument that morally good people are reasonable people, acting on principles of justice and fairness. Gilligan looks at how society divides the sexes. She says that men conceive of morality as created by obligations and rights, constituted by the demands of fairness and justice. Women, however, understand moral requirements as emergent from the specific needs of others. The focus here is the contrast of gender stakes.

Gauntlet, M. (2002). *Media, gender and identity: An introduction*. London: Blackwell.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9780203360798>

Theories of self, gender, sexuality, and identity are clearly explained, and then connected to current films, TV, and pop music. Within this landscape of complex media messages, there are individuals trying to establish their own identities, to feel comfortable in themselves and as part of society. The author highlights Michel Foucault, queer theory and fluid identities, men's magazines and modern male identities, and women's magazines and female identities today.

Hall, S. (1997). *The work of representation: Cultural representation and signifying practices*. London: Sage.

Stuart Hall discusses issues of identity, gender, and power. Foucault underpins arguments along with concepts of democracy.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (1992). *Understanding teacher development*. New York: Teachers College Press.

The 12 chapters in this book focus on teacher development in relation to self-development, reflection, biographies, cultures of teaching, teacher careers, teachers' work, gender identity, and classroom practice.

Hennessy, R. (1993). *Materialist feminism and the politics of discourse*. New York: Routledge.

Hennessy discusses many impasses in materialist feminist work by rethinking the notion of "woman" as discursively constructed. She argues for a theory of discourse as ideology, taking into account the work of Julia Kristeva, Michel Foucault, and Ernesto Laclau.

Shulman, J., & Mesa-Bains, M. (Eds.). (1993). *Diversity in the classroom: Casebook for teachers and teacher-educators*. San Francisco: FarWest Lab.

The framework of *Exploring the Case* was adapted from this book.

Zembylas, M. (2004). The emotional characteristics of teaching: An ethnographic study of one teacher. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20(2), 185.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2003.09.008>

This article explores the emotional characteristics of an elementary school teacher during a 3-year research project: the role of emotions in teaching, relationships with students, and the political context. Field observations, in-depth interviews, an "emotion diary," and a collection of teaching documents (e.g., lesson plans, philosophy statements, etc.) contribute data. Findings point to the tensions and challenges that

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teachers experience. Politics and power relations influence the values, discourses, and beliefs of the teacher who was the focus of this study.

- kindergarten
- teaching
- restaurants
- children
- gender issues
- student teachers
- classrooms

<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452232362.n3>