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Reconceptualizing Teachers as First Responders

Cecile H. Sam
Rowan University

Jarrett Gupton
University of South Florida

ABSTRACT

This conceptual essay expands the existing understanding of teacher roles in the United States by introducing the concept of teachers as "first responders." By exploring this new perspective, the essay offers insights into how it can reshape the current approach to understanding teachers' work experiences. It addresses two core questions: (1) Why should the role of first responder be integrated into our conceptualization of teachers and their work? (2) How might this reconceptualization alter our perception of the teacher work experience? The essay further contributes to the literature on teachers, with a particular focus on those serving vulnerable populations.

Keywords: teachers, first responder, emotional work, compassion fatigue, secondary trauma, vicarious trauma, burnout

In recent years, practitioners and researchers have begun to shift our understanding of children in the United States to take into consideration how poverty, food and housing insecurity, and trauma can adversely affect their lives and school performance (Alvarez, 2020). Programs such as free and reduced lunch, school health visits, increased mental health services, and community schools try to alleviate some of the effects of these environmental factors. In response to this shift, efforts have been made to explore how U.S. schools can become more responsive to trauma and help mitigate some of its more harmful effects, such as through school-community models like trauma-informed care (Ieva et al., 2021; McInerney & McKlindon, 2014; Metzler et al., 2017).

If the education community recognizes that there are vulnerable populations of students who experience any of the aforementioned issues, then they also have to also

recognize that there will be a population of teachers who work with these students on a daily basis. Unfortunately, though our understanding of students has shifted, the academic and practitioner community has not had a similar shift in understanding of teachers and their work experience with vulnerable populations. Over the last decade or so, there has been an increase in teacher turnover (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2017; Sorensen & Ladd, 2020), which in recent years has been exacerbated due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Steiner & Woo, 2021). During this time, educational researchers have been looking to understand why teachers leave and to figure out how to get teachers to stay (e.g., Ingersoll et al., 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019), and they may have been looking in the wrong areas.

Traditionally, researchers and practitioners conceptualize teachers as employees similar to those in business organizations (e.g., the commonly used *NCES School Staffing Survey* borrows heavily from the business literature), which we term the "human resource management" (HRM) framework. This framework sees teachers as professional employees at a workplace, so if employees are leaving or unhappy it looks to school management (e.g. budgetary cuts, job dissatisfaction, salary), school environment, or monetary rewards/salary (e.g., Borman & Dowling, 2008; Ingersoll et al., 2014). Though these are important factors, the HRM framework does not take into consideration decidedly different aspects of teacher work, such as the vocational elements of care and emotional work and labor (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006). These vocational elements of the work need to be considered if educational researchers and leaders want to better understand and support teachers.

In this essay, we propose a different conceptualization of teachers working with vulnerable populations to emphasize the vocational elements, while retaining the professional elements of teacher work: teachers as first responders.

We use the following questions to guide the argument and structure of this essay:

1. Why should we include first-responders as part of our conceptualization of teachers and the work that they do?
2. How does this reconceptualization change how we currently understand the nature of the teacher work experience?
    a. What are the implications of this reconceptualization?

We propose this conceptualization as a way for the educational community to understand that though teachers are employees, it is not enough to only look at human resource management factors (e.g., salary, professional development, and school governance). We also have to consider those factors that affect mental health and the spirit (e.g., community, workplace environment, and student context). We are not placing an additional role and responsibility onto teachers. Rather, our conceptualization highlights the role and responsibilities that many teachers *already have*, but that receive very little consideration from education leaders and scholars alike.

We use the metaphor of a first responder to understand the duality of teaching, as both professional and vocational (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2007), and to highlight the considerations that are specific to care work often not addressed in the classic teacher literature. Metaphors are useful epistemological tools to help us make

meaning of the reality that we experience (Morgan, 1980). They serve as a symbolic representation of the world, and as a "creative form that produces its effect through a crossing of images" it can help us recreate meaning (Morgan, 1980, p.6). We recognize that metaphors have their limits, at some point, the comparisons diverge into irreconcilable differences. But even with those limitations in mind, the metaphor of teachers as first responders opens avenues for thinking about teachers' work that our traditional schemas otherwise miss.

CONCEPTUALIZING TEACHERS AS FIRST RESPONDERS

To better understand the work of teachers, it is important to start with whom teachers spend a majority of their time: the students. We are situating teachers within the context of the US education system, and the data on students in the US indicate that a large population of students experience poverty (US Census, 2021), housing insecurity (https://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/ConsolidatedStateProfile.aspx), food insecurity (usda.gov), trauma (Alvarez, 2020), or any combination of the prior. Data indicates that minoritized students, and those who live in rural or urban areas are more likely to be in this population, often experiencing a combination of stressors, but this information does not mean other students are immune to these experiences (Alvarez, 2020; CDC, 2014).

Regarding more current events, the COVID-19 pandemic added another layer of complexity. At the time we wrote this essay, the number of deaths connected to the pandemic had passed 1.1 million (CDC, 2023) and many children may have experienced the trauma of personal loss. The pandemic has also compounded the problems of poverty and food insecurity for families (Schanzenbach & Pitts, 2020). For example, the Northwestern Policy Institute found that between March 2020 and April 2020, the food insecurity rate among all US households doubled from the predicted rate in March (Schanzenbach & Pitts, 2020). Further, the rate of food insecurity for children was 40 percent higher in that same time frame (Schanzenbach & Pitts, 2020). Further, the National Institutes of Health notes that the experience of food insecurity is associated with increased rates of mental health issues, increased risk for adverse childhood experiences, exposure to physical violence, and increased risk of chronic health conditions (Hecht, 2018; Hefline et al., 2005; Niles et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2016). The pandemic and the economic crisis exacerbated and increased student exposure to multiple sources of trauma.

The goal of this section is not to focus on or define a student community based on its deficits, but it does describe the environmental context and structural challenges that many students in these communities may experience (Alvarez, 2017). We cannot ignore the lived reality that some students experience, to do so would be disingenuous and antithetical to the focus of trauma-informed care (SAMHSA, 2012, p. 4; Hopper et al., 2010). In this essay, we treat the issues of hunger, homelessness, and poverty, as sources of psychological and/or physiological stress, and depending on the extent to which a student experiences these issues, they can be considered adverse childhood experiences similar to trauma (Shonkoff et al., 2012).

Even though there is little comprehensive data on the number of teachers working with students with adverse childhood experiences, we can extrapolate from the data

on students that there are teachers who work with them on a near-daily basis. The very lack of data on these teachers is an example of how our traditional academic understanding of teachers does not account for this facet of their work.

Why First Responder?

To capture what it may be like to work with students having chronic or acute adverse childhood experiences daily, we look to professions where this responsibility is part of their every-day experience. These professions tend to be emergency response professionals (paramedics, nurses, and doctors), social workers (including child protective services), mental health professionals, and law enforcement and rescue workers (Haugen et al., 2012; Koh et al., 2008). These are professionals who work with people in times of acute or chronic crisis and are often the first point of professional contact before further support systems are engaged, thus earning the title of "first responder."

For teachers, they may be working with children who are in moments of crisis. When discussing constant states of student poverty, hunger, trauma, or mental illness, oftentimes it can be the teacher who is the "first professional to interact" with students in crisis, to borrow the language from Koh and colleagues (2008, p.399). Crisis can take many forms. From the literature, we distill four forms of crisis pertinent to our framing teachers as first responders: environmental, material, physical, and psychic. Environmental crisis relates to natural disasters that impact school communities (e.g., O'Toole & Friesen, 2016). Material crisis refers to students experiencing material hardship (e.g., homelessness, extreme poverty, etc.) (e.g., Shonkoff et al., 2012). Physical crisis refers to bodily harm or trauma (e.g., Muro et al., 2006). Finally, psychic crisis refers to mental well-being and adverse stressors a student might experience (e.g., Brunzell et al., 2016). These four types need not be exclusive of one another, since depending on the context a student may experience all four at once.

Care Work and Teachers

Though teachers are charged with instruction, in this essay we want to highlight that there is a component of care work that also takes place. Historically, teachers have acted in the stead of parents (Rumel, 2013), and though the application of *in loco parentis* has changed over time, many teachers are still expected to be caregivers in addition to content instructors. Given the amount of contact hours teachers have with students, especially in younger grades, much of the work also entails care for the students on a personal level (Noddings, 1993; hooks, 1983). This care includes an emotional and even at times monetary investment in the mental and physical well-being of students (Willis, 2022). For example, in a 2015 national survey of teachers by Community in Schools (CiS), the study found at least 50% of teachers reported that they had used their own money to feed students, and/or also helped a student get new clothing or footwear (2015). In the same survey, 29% of teachers reported needing to arrange for a student to receive medical attention (unrelated to school-based incidences) (CiS, 2015). This component of teacher work is often ignored in the broader academic conversations and research about teachers.

Recognizing the Emotional Work of Care

Because teaching focuses heavily on relationships between teachers and students, the work often has an emotional component (O'Connor, 2008; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2008). Termed "emotional work," (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006) it emphasizes a person's connection, understanding, and empathy with others and highlights the emotional investment that goes into that connection. This description is very similar to the care work that scholars like Noddings (1993) and hooks (1993) state as important for teachers. The teacher education literature encourages teachers to find ways to connect with students and build relationships with families in addition to pedagogy (Salerno et al., 2018; Sowell, 2019)--that is emotional work. Though levels of care may vary depending on the individual person, for those who see teaching as a vocation or as a value connection with students (e.g., Willis, 2022), care may be a very integral part of their work.

Implicit First Responder Expectations

As we noted earlier in this essay, we are not using the first responder metaphor as an additional role and responsibility to put on teachers. In many cases, it is an already implicit expectation placed on teachers via *de facto* and *de jure* policies. For example, teachers are among the few professionals who have a legal obligation to report incidences of child abuse and neglect. This policy is because when children disclose their abuse "of all professionals, teachers are the most likely to be told" (Allnock, 2010). Trauma-informed school models, despite separating educators and first responders, place teachers in key positions to be able to respond and work daily with students who have experienced past or continuing trauma (Crosby, 2015; Koh et al., 2008). Even within the more traditional definition of first responder, some states require CPR or First Aid training, and most districts have some sort of emergency preparedness system that places teachers on the front line of responding to students (Graham et al., 2006; Mutch, 2015). Most recently, states have been looking to mandate suicide prevention training in schools for teachers.

In light of the increased tragedies of school shootings, there have also been new active-shooter policies proposed, which make teachers de facto first responders to help ensure student safety. These policies range from arming teachers with firearms (Martindale & Schildkraut, 2022) to being trained in crisis management and response (Badzmierowski, 2011). By keeping the designation of teachers as first responders implicit, we may overlook the challenges and needs specific to those roles and not provide the support that teachers may need.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CONCEPTUALIZING TEACHERS AS FIRST RESPONDERS

When we make the role of first responder more explicit in our conceptualization of teacher work, we can get a better sense of different factors that may shape the teaching experience that otherwise may have gone unnoticed and may result in the gap in the literature

There has been a small body of research that explicitly designates teachers as first responders, but it has emerged recently in the literature, and they are still few and far between. One of the earliest specific uses of the term "first responder" can be found in a study where Muro et al. (2006, p.3) explain that "teachers and providers are often on the front lines or are the first responders when children face challenging emotions in times of danger or peril." Berzin and colleagues (2011) and Frey et al., (2011) saw teachers as the front-line responders and interventionists for students with mental health issues. Following the more traditional definition, O'Toole and Friesen (2016) look at the work of teachers who were first responders during the 2011 Christchurch earthquake. Other studies on natural disasters included teachers as first responders, but they acknowledge that oftentimes teachers are overlooked during these catastrophic events (Mutch & Marlow, 2013; Mutch, 2015; Shepherd et al., 2017). Our essay seeks to normalize the idea that teachers can be first responders, not just in moments of acute crisis or during catastrophic events, but at times in their average day-to-day work on an ongoing basis.

Recognizing the Existential and Psychological Toll of Care

The traditional literature on teacher work recognizes that many teachers experience stress and burnout and this can lead to teacher turnover (Herman et al., 2020). For example, Podolsky and colleagues (2016) examined the reasons why teachers leave, using data from the *2012-13 School and Staffing Survey* and *Teacher Follow-up Survey*. They consolidated the reasons for leaving into three categories: a. family and personal reasons; b. compensation, status, and job satisfaction; and c. working conditions (e.g., accountability systems, administrative support, and teacher decision-making). However, many instruments use the HRM lens which looks at contextual factors that contribute to stress. Contextual factors are those found outside the locus of control for a person, such as student behavior, institutional support, and it includes school climate, leadership, and organizational issues (Fernet et al., 2012; Ingersoll et al., 2018). Many of these studies utilize the *NCES StaffingSsurvey*, or something similar to capture teacher work. This data can be valuable to understanding the teaching experience and teacher turnover.

However, it is also important to note that in a study using data from the same survey, Ingersoll et al., (2018) found that over half of teacher turnover occurred in only a quarter of the schools, and those schools happened to be "High-poverty, high-minority, urban, and rural public schools" (p.18). These are the same schools where students are statistically more likely to experience chronic or acute adverse childhood experiences as noted in the earlier section.

For those teachers who work with vulnerable populations in these schools, the external contextual constructs found in existing instruments (e.g., student behavior; administrative support; fiscal resources) and the more individual personal constructs (e.g., health, family, and other opportunities) does not quite capture the challenges of emotional work and labor. Some analyses may use "poverty" as a proxy to account for the stressors experienced from working in high-needs schools, but it does not acknowledge the inherently different experiences working with students in crisis versus those who are not. Among the different instruments used in the different

studies, few address the potential stress of the day-to-day experience with vulnerable student populations.

The literature on first responders recognizes that there can be an existential and psychological toll in their line of work. Research indicates that negative emotions such as anger, shame, and sadness can arise because participants felt that the events that occurred (e.g., natural disasters, or accidents) seemed to go against the "natural justice in the world" (Alexander & Klein, 2009). Such sentiments can be familiar to teachers who work with children with adverse experiences. In a study examining the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, first responders reported feeling overwhelmed, helpless, or frantic due to witnessing so many people suffering and trying to help them—even during the recovery efforts years later (Wyche et al., 2011).

Teachers can also feel these negative emotions in their line of work. In her review of the teacher burnout literature, Chang (2009) argues that scholars should take into consideration the role that emotional work plays concerning teacher burnout. Anger, frustration, anxiety, and guilt were the four emotions that Chang (2009) found lead to exhaustion. As an added layer, those teachers who experience these negative emotions, also often have to hide these emotions from others while continuing their work. Scholars define this process as emotional labour (Naring et al., 2006). In a study of different professions, teachers, along with other first responders (e.g. police officers, firefighters, and security personnel) were the largest group of professionals who indicated that they often had to suppress emotions in their line of work (Ybema et al., 2002). The existential and psychological toll that can come with teaching can result in occupational hazards that are often not discussed in the literature on teacher work.

First Responder Occupational Hazards

In the existing literature on first responders, three occupational hazards often arise: compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress (Adams et al., 2006; Rothschild & Rand, 2006). Often these terms are used together, and sometimes researchers use these terms interchangeably (Newell & MacNeil, 2010). For example, Hydon et al., (2015) uses secondary traumatic stress as another term for compassion fatigue. In their qualitative study on preschool teachers and empathy, Peck and colleagues use compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, burnout, and vicarious traumatization as surrogate terms for empathy fatigue (2014). For this essay, we treat them as three separate terms, though they may have overlapping effects.

Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a phenomenon often connected with professionals and volunteers who work with those who have experienced trauma (Conrad & Keller-Guenther, 2006; Figley, 1995; Hydon et al., 2015). Broadly speaking, compassion fatigue is defined as the reduced capacity for a person to be empathetic to the suffering of others, ironically due to the "stress resulting from helping or wanting to help a traumatized or suffering person" (Figley, 1995, p.7). One of the markers of compassion fatigue can be desensitization, disengagement and withdrawal from the

workplace (Coetzee & Klopper, 2010). Compassion fatigue can manifest in three ways. First, through psychological distress, such as feelings of depression or dread, insomnia, and physical ailments. Second, there are "cognitive shifts" where individuals feel either extremely helpless or vulnerable (Hoffman et al., 2007, p.17). Finally, compassion fatigue can manifest through a person's relationship with others, becoming distant and detached from family, friends, and other people (Figley, 1995).

Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma is often paired in the literature with compassion fatigue and can occur as first responders are chronically exposed to other people's trauma and have effects from that exposure. It is a shift in mindset. Vicarious trauma can affect the ways that teachers perceive themselves, work, and others. It does this by affecting teachers' "trust, feelings of control, issues of intimacy, esteem needs, safety concerns" amongst other issues (Trippany et al., 2004, p.32). Those effects could include symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome, anxiety, and stress (Baird, 2006; Hydon et al., 2015). Teachers may experience vicarious trauma after working for long periods with students who have experienced trauma. This experience can begin to create "profound changes" to the core of the person's self (Trippany et al., 2004 citing Pearlman & Saakvitne, 2005). It is important to note that compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma can be linked to teacher burnout. Researchers argue that burnout can occur in almost any profession, but compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma stem specifically from working directly with people who have experienced trauma in some form (Hydon et al., 2015; Trippany et al., 2004).

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Of the three occupational hazards, secondary traumatic stress can manifest over a short period rather than due to continuous exposure to working with people experiencing trauma (Newell & MacNeil, 2010). Though similar to vicarious trauma, secondary trauma "focuses on outward behavioral symptoms" rather than a shift in mindset (Newell & MacNeil 2010, p.60). Teachers could experience symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress: anxiety, insomnia, fatigue, irritability or anger, inattentiveness or inability to focus, or hypervigilance (Bride, 2007; Figley, 1995). As a student recounts her own traumatic experience to a teacher, the teacher may experience symptoms of secondary traumatic stress and not realize what it is.

We are beginning to see some researchers using ideas of compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and secondary traumatic stress to understand teacher work (Brunzell, 2021; Sharp Donahoo et al., 2018; Yang, 2021) and turnover, but that exploration is still in its nascent phase. For example, Caringi and colleagues (2015) found that before 2012, there was little to no research available on public school teachers and secondary traumatic stress, despite there being some concern about the issue. Their study was one of the first to even look at secondary traumatic stress and public school teachers (Caringi et al., 2015). As researchers explore these ideas that can influence teacher work, conceptualizing teachers as first responders can be a way

for researchers and practitioners to frame these different phenomena and connect them.

In recent years with the COVID-19 pandemic and racialized violence, it is important to note that we may have a larger number of teachers who have also experienced trauma themselves and are trying to meet the needs of their students. The challenge is that trauma can beget trauma, creating a cycle of harm that can become systematized (Ieva et al., 2021). The aforementioned HRM ignores the existential costs of what it means to be a professional working with vulnerable populations. It also results in missed opportunities to support teachers.

Finding a Way Forward: Together not Alone

Even though there is limited but growing research on educators and these constructs, there has been a growing literature on school psychologists, counselors, and social workers (Bride, 2007; Brunzell et al., 2021; Lewis & King, 2019; Newell & MacNeil, 2010). This body of literature explores how emotional work and labor, compassion fatigue, and vicarious trauma affect their work (Baird & Kracen, 2006). Bride, Jones, and MacMaster (2007) focused on secondary traumatic stress and child protective service workers. and have been exploring ways to try and mitigate or reduce harms that stem from working with vulnerable populations. Caringi and colleagues (2012) examined emotional labor and secondary traumatic stress within child welfare organizations.

Equally important is the growing literature focusing on preventing or limiting the harms caused by these occupational hazards. Recent examples include Figley's (2013) latest edition of his work on coping with secondary traumatic stress and Lewis and King's (2019) work on teaching self-care. Eastwood and Ecklund (2008) looked at self-care practices for child-care workers. Meanwhile Brunzell et al. (2021) explored teacher well-being for those who work with students who experience trauma. Higher education faculty have begun finding ways to mitigate stress and to have it incorporated in coursework and certification training for school psychologists, counselors and social workers (Newell & MacNeil, 2010). Many of their respective programs are beginning to include self-care and recognizing occupational hazards of working with people who have experienced trauma as part of the curriculum (Pryce et al., 2007; CSWE, 2008). However, this component is still missing in teacher education, and a large part may be due to the lack of recognition that there may be a problem (Brunzell et al., 2021).

To reconceptualize teachers as first responders is to acknowledge that elements of their work may lead to mental or emotional struggles. This acknowledgement is especially important because in general, occupational hazards like vicarious trauma are at best ignored and at worst stigmatized in the broader community (Carr et al., 2018). School leaders and other teachers may dismiss these experiences or attribute them to a teacher being "too sensitive." Teachers may be hesitant to seek help, or even be able to articulate what it is that they may be feeling (Ekomes et al., 2012). With the traditional understanding of teachers as instructors and caretakers, there is little room to have a conversation about why teachers may be struggling.

A first responder framework can also open doors to other challenging discussions, such as the demoralization teachers may experience working with vulnerable children (Santoro, 2011). By recognizing that teacher work in this way, researchers and practitioners can work towards finding ways to lessen or mitigate the potential negative effects of emotional work. For example, Hydon and colleagues (2015) and Brunzell et al. (2021) were among the few articles focused on preventing secondary traumatic stress in specifically in educators. If researchers and practitioners continue to ignore the vocational aspects of teacher work and the occupational hazards that may affect teachers, then it will be a issue that would continue to be under-researched and unaddressed.

As we think about ways to mitigate some of the harms that may come from being in the first responder role, we also must be mindful of where we place the locus of responsibility. There is a current trend in the literature that emphasizes "self-care" and building resilience for teachers (e.g., Erdman et al., 2020; Gibbs & Miller, 2014). While it is important, overemphasis can place the burden of managing and coping with secondary trauma, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, and burnout solely with the teachers as individuals. This focus on the individual may de-emphasize the role and responsibility that school administrators and the organization have towards their teachers to also foster a working environment that can aid rather than hinder (Caringi et al., 2012). Moving forward, the organization and those leading these organizations also need to think about the culture, structures, and policies to support teachers.

Our reframing of teachers as first responders necessitates the need for different studies on teacher satisfaction and turnover. Referring back to the HRM framework, most studies explore teacher satisfaction and turnover from this lens. Current HRM models of teacher turnover do not include constructs of emotional work and labor, nor do they include the occupational hazards of compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious trauma. Thus, teacher turnover is viewed as largely an issue of resource inadequacy and organizational dysfunction. Further research is needed to illuminate how teachers confront and address student trauma and the impact it has. This area of inquiry would also provide valuable insight into how teachers work with students in crisis and inform the trauma-informed school literature. Future scholarly examination should operate from a strengths-based or positive psychology frame. In framing teachers as first responders, we can explore how teachers enact, cultivate, and sustain resilience. Further study should also center, critique, or evaluate the organizational culture of the school, district, and union and the resources they provide to support teachers experiencing personal or vicarious trauma.

Framing teachers as first responders has multiple practical implications for district and school leadership and teacher preparation programs. Regarding administrative leadership, districts can look to programs designed to increase resiliency or to provide professional development on preventative practices for teachers. They can also help principals recognize the signs of the three occupational hazards and provide resources to help mitigate harm. At the school level, principals can shift their view of human resource issues, school culture, and climate. By providing support for teachers experiencing trauma, school leaders signal that they see the toll of the invisible emotional work. Principals can reform the school climate

and culture to promote the personal and professional health and well-being of teachers, staff, and administrators (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008). By fostering an inclusive environment to access and receive support related to issues of stress and trauma, school leaders promote work-life balance and address some of the concerns that drive teacher burnout. Teacher preparation programs can look at ways to help newer faculty build resiliency and practice self-care when working with students who experience trauma. Finally, we suggest that shifting our thinking about teacher work also changes our thinking about school leadership. In this new model, the role of the principal and other administrative leadership is to help facilitate a positive school climate for teachers and students the supportive practices and resources that promote resilience (Caringi et al., 2012). One way to begin is to start by making the topic of teacher mental health and well-being more prevalent.

We realize that in this age of accountability, increased demands, limited resources, and escalating student challenges, the mental well-being of teachers may have less priority. However, if we conceptualized teachers as often the first or second line of response to a student experiencing trauma—the wellness of that first responder is important to promoting the wellness of the student. When we think about teachers working with vulnerable populations, we hope that they are dedicated, compassionate professionals who care about their work and their students. That caring can come with a cost. Current HRM frameworks for understanding teacher roles and turnover are missing that component. Without recognizing and finding ways to address the occupational hazards that some teachers experience, the problem of teacher turnover, especially in underserved areas, will continue.

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CECILE H. SAM, PhD, is an Associate Professor at Rowan University. She teaches primarily in the Department of Educational Leadership, Administration and Research. Her research interests include qualitative methodology, faculty work, ethics in educational spaces and how technology affects all three areas. Email: sam@rowan.edu

JARRETT T. GUPTON, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of South Florida. He primarily teaches in the higher education and student affairs program in the College of Education. His research interests weave equity, ethics, and justice to address educational inequities. Email: jgupton@usf.edu