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# Do or do not, there is no try: Is your teacher a Yoda or a Darth Sidious?

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## DO OR DO NOT, THERE IS NO TRY: IS YOUR TEACHER A YODA OR A DARTH SIDIOUS?

R. B. FORSYTH

Star Wars. The epic plot that never ends. The total franchise revenue now approaches eight billion dollars. The archetypal science fiction series captures the hearts, minds, and pocketbooks of all including the quintessential Millennial. Millennials consistently demonstrate their continued love affair with both old and new Star Wars movies across the Internet through Instagram posts, Facebook stories, and hundreds of BuzzFeed articles. Responding to the continued interest in the films, Disney Corporation purchased LucasFilm, and by extension Star Wars, in 2012. Disney capitalized own their purchases with a reboot of the franchise beginning with a sequel trilogy. Released in December 2015, *The Force Awakens* sold close to 110 million tickets, the most tickets sold of any film in the U.S. since *Titanic* in 1997.

Obviously, people everywhere, but especially the movie-going Millennials, are enthralled by this gripping plotline that relies upon one central narrative device to ensnare attention: the primeval battle between the forces of good and evil. However, this fervent struggle is not, as it may first seem, embodied in the violent clash of neon lightsabers or the inept firing of blaster rifles. This battle occurs between Yoda and Darth Sidious: powerhouses of manipulation, chessmasters of the galaxy, and equivalent figures of wisdom and knowledge. Their antithetical perspectives place them at opposite sides of the spectrum of ethical teachers. They are the teachers of the greatest and most terrible men. In the same way, these men shape their cinematic galaxy through the impressionable minds of their students; average, everyday teachers have profound impact on the world through their students.

While Allison, Goethals, and Kramer (2017) are correct in acknowledging our deep hunger and veneration for the heroic ideal, they overlook the invisible heroes of our society. This instinctual and evolutionary veneration of heroes has turned to “adoration of pseudo-hero celebrities” who have done little to earn our approbation beyond being blessed with good genetics, deep wallets, and passionate lives to entertain us. The average person asked to name the shapers of society may list presidents, cultural icons, leaders of industry; they seldom note the importance of teachers. Yet, the subtle importance of the teacher permeates every level of society through the minds of the next generation. Teachers have always fulfilled an essential role developed within society since the earliest days of simple hunter-gatherer clans sharing survival skills. While the Millennial generation may no longer be attending primary school, you will rarely find a kindergartner over the past decades, who does not speak of their teacher with either the devout reverence of a convert or the passionate anger of a betrayed innocent depending on how recently they had to deal with a time out. However, rarely are these teachers recognized for their potential impact. Their actions are defining the beliefs and opinions of our next generation, yet even when they excel or strikingly fail at their task, teachers are seldom recognized as heroes or villains. As I move forward through my analysis, I aim to promote the importance of the teachers by delineating their role as a platform for acting heroically or villainously, inspiring others through their vocational and societal role.

To address this aim, I will begin my analysis by drawing a distinction between objective and subjective perspectives of “teaching” and exploring the associated

advantages and disadvantages of each stance. I will then provide a general overview of current research on heroism, a burgeoning avenue of research compared to villainy, to elaborate on how the role of the heroic teacher is encompassed or excluded from the field. I will consider a number of elements of heroism research drawing from a range of topics such as prosocial heroism, moral heroism, and career identity of everyday heroes. This assortment of topics aims to provide a framework to understanding teachers as heroism, but also to draw attention to impediments of heroism that can create a villainous teacher. By exploring both misunderstanding and misuse of the power of the teacher role, my goal is to offer a cogent analysis of how teachers can commit subtle acts of passive or active evil. I will use examples drawn from both cultural elements of media such as movies and books as well as cases from news stories and blogs of everyday heroic and villainous teachers. Lastly, this chapter will explore historical role that teachers have played according to social and anthropological analysis connecting the teacher archetype to the Jungian ideals and the study of the mentor to revisit the iconic teachers of Star Wars.

#### DEFINING A TEACHER

Defined by Merriam-Webster Dictionary as “an individual whose job is to impart knowledge,” (Merriam-Webster, 2016) the category of teacher seems to encompass a broad variety of people. The dictionary definition does not place limitations on the type of knowledge or the category of job. It includes the typical understanding of the teacher as professors or instructors, but could also include other individuals ranging from mentors, life guides, journalists, or Oprah. Before we can delve into the analysis of the teacher as a hero or villain, we must explore the role of the teacher fully in its different manifestations. Who exactly are those considered objectively as teachers and those who are merely acting like teachers? Current members of the educational system could be the only people who are technically considered fulfilling the role of teachers, but that definition may be limiting in terms of a complete analysis. Should there even be an objective perspective on the qualifications for labeling an individual as a teacher? By limiting the definition of a teacher, is it inherently lessening the impact of the title. We will raise advantage and disadvantages of these two opposing theories of the classification of the teacher.

From supporters of an objective analysis of teachers, it seems more concise to be able to identify a teacher based on their vocational identification and their participation in the education system. Within this context, teachers are those who either complete a secondary school teaching license, have a bachelor's degree in the subject they are going to teach, or complete a longer program for a Master of Education (M.Ed). Typically, these well-qualified individuals are paid a certain fee to fulfill the duties required by their schooling system, instructing on core academic concepts such as mathematics, literature, or social studies, depending on their field. This narrowed definition of teachers limits the responsibility of the teacher to adequately covering the material from textbooks and the like. In the United States, teachers are often evaluated based on their students' performance on standardized federal academic tests such as the SOLs (Standards of Learning and Testing) in the Virginia public school system. According to the governmental policies explicitly outlined by President George W. Bush, Jr. in the No Child Left Behind Act, a teacher's performance should be measured by the performance of their students on these standardized tests.

On the one hand, according to the objective perspective, the main benefit of this definition of teacher is this standard of performance, which allows for clear demarcation of competence. If a teacher is unable to teach their students the base essential material evaluated by the approved examination, then they are not good teachers and should be removed from their position. These high-stakes tests greatly increase the incentive for teachers to focus on only material that will be directly assessed, limiting any knowledge about more current or contested information. Any standardized test, whether referring to the SOLs, SAT (formerly called the Scholastic Aptitude Test) or GRE (Graduate Record Examination), is often criticized as being biased in terms of subject matter, inherently biased against different styles of thinking, and covering material that is no longer relevant to the job market as intended (Mulholland, 2015). Another readily apparent disadvantage is the context of the testing; a teacher may have excellent grasp of material and be able to impart information, but their students may not be motivated to excel.

Some students may have had previous teachers who reached adequate competence as measured by a particular test, but who did not actually teach comprehensive thinking. Additionally, since the tests are integral to determining teacher's performance their salaries and even continued occupation can be adversely affected by failing students who had not improved over the year of

schooling. There are many instances of endemic cheating within the school system in order to avoid these negative repercussions. One of the most infamous instances of cheating occurred in Atlanta, Georgia where 34 teachers, administrators, principals, and a superintendent were investigated for racketeering and other crimes related to cheating. These teachers changed their students' response on their standardized tests so their students could meet certain score goals at the risk of sanction if they failed (Strauss, 2015). These high-stakes tests have had unexpectedly negative effects by increasing demands on the students and the teachers, but doing little to stem the cycle of incompetent teachers and poorly educated students.

A broader definition of the role of the teacher will focus on a more reflective understanding of the teacher and their responsibilities. Rather than strictly focusing on academic material and standardized testing performance, it can be essential to consider individuals who impart knowledge that is rarely directly assessed: values of behavior. Yet, teachers must still inform about essential values within public education simply interacting with their students throughout the classroom activities whether organizing groups or assigning tasks. The school system is the earliest form of the workplace where ideally students learn how to effectively communicate with their peers, deal with group dynamics, and establish their social identities. These skills and processes are delicate, difficult items of instruction that teachers implicitly affect for more than a decade of any child's development. Either as a direct goal or an indirect byproduct of the educational context, teachers will invariably instruct on appropriate standards of behavior. They will tell students how to gather into groups or establish group identities between classrooms.

Specific analysis later in the chapter will explore how teachers can call attention to certain standards of success creating implicit mindsets. To evaluate teachers acting as villains, this paper will use the broader parameter evaluating teaching performance in order to focus on teachers that are still covering necessary academic material, but are failing to fulfill other associated responsibilities. The subtle prejudices or lay theories of the teacher can have a monumental impact on their students that is rarely immediately evident in the lives of their students. A benefit of expanding the role of the teacher to encompass these other learned skills is the wealth of data that emerges for analysis of the relationship between the behavior of teachers and their heroic or villainous impact.

The subjective perspective of the teacher broadens the understanding of the teacher to include any individual who imparts knowledge or wisdom as fulfillment of a societal script. As explored in later sections of the chapter, this evolutionary or anthropological understanding of the teacher allows for categories such as coaches, researchers, mentors to be considered separate equally important facet of the teacher social identity. The subjective approach to consider the role of the teacher shares many weaknesses for most subjective definitions, in that the term can become diluted and vague. People may refer to their parents, strangers, celebrities as teachers because they may teach important values and skills as an indirect effect of the interaction. It can become difficult to separate the act of teaching from the societal role of the teacher. Additionally, the limitation of this subjective approach with these broader types of teachers is that it is more difficult to evaluate the relationship between the teacher and their students. However, the objective perspective does allow for a wider understanding of the historical view of the teacher as the vocational components of public education are a relatively recent addition to everyday life. In the past, there are many types of teachers such as advisors, philosophers, ancient logicians who fulfilled the teaching role, but may not strictly adhere to the subjective definition and its evaluation parameters. To begin exploring the role of the teacher as a potential hero or villain, this paper will initially use the subjective definition of teacher and relevant examples. In the final section, this paper will close by considering teachers in a more subjective sense in order to evaluate the roots of the teaching role outside of the educational system, but within the archetype of an instructing individual.

#### HERO RESEARCH AND A CASE STUDY: TEACHERS WHO CHANGE THE WORLD

Just as the definition of teacher must be closely analyzed before research can be applied, it is essential to define what constitutes a hero. There are many different ways to define a hero and each definition reflect separate perspectives that emphasize distinct social, emotional, and physical traits of the hero. The variety of definitions of hero can be directly applied to our objective understanding of teachers by considering how the average teacher can be heroic. While reviewing the hero literature, this chapter aims to emphasize how the objective definition

of the teacher role can still attain a heroic prestige. Specifically, this section aims to provide real-world and cultural examples of heroic teachers acting in extreme circumstances and in daily classroom development. This section will cover topics from heroism research related to the moral hero, the hero functions framework, and the social career identity of the everyday hero using iconic teachers and real-life examples of heroism in action.

*“Heroes are individuals concerned with protecting and promoting the well-being of future generations.”*

– McAdams (2008)

This definition of heroism most clearly relates to the objective approach to defining the teacher. Invariably, the teacher is responsible for promoting the well-being of the future generation by educating the younger generation and imparting the knowledge of previous generations. While teachers engage in this daily subtle act of heroism, there are clear examples of heroic teachers actively protecting their students in a more direct manner, putting them at physical risk. This element of physical risk is central for the research approach of certain scholars. Franco et al. (2011) developed a framework of heroism to classify based on situation and risk that underlies the definition of a hero. Their model is based on an in-depth analysis of the situations that lead to heroism resulting in 12 sub-types of hero shown below. Social psychologist, Philip Zimbardo, often focuses on elements of risk and specific acts that typify a hero.

Victoria Leigh “Vicki” Soto is a clear example of a heroic teacher as she made the ultimate sacrifice to protect her students. On December 14, 2012, Soto was shot trying to protect her students from Adam Lanza, an armed man, during the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting. Soto was directing her first grade students to hiding places around the classroom when Adam Lanza entered the classroom after shooting 15 children in the connected classroom. She attempted to misdirect the armed gunman telling him that the children were in the auditorium. When some of the children fled from their hiding places, Lanza began to shoot. Soto, behaved heroically throwing herself in front of the children to protect them. Ultimately, 11 of Soto’s class survived. For Victoria Soto’s heroism she was awarded the Presidential Citizen’s Medal along with five other adult teachers and administrators who were killed during the incident. Victoria Soto is a prototypical example of a teacher taking a physical risk. There has been a recent push to develop nationwide procedures to train teachers in dealing with

classroom emergencies such as school shootings, natural disasters, or health issues. This training is fundamental to increasing the heroic actions of teachers by giving them the skills and knowledge to effectively protect their students.

*“Heroes demonstrate wisdom and the capacity to do the right thing.”*

– Schwartz (2009)

A teacher has an untold number of opportunities to demonstrate wisdom. They are responsible for the minds of their students, developing critical thinking and instructing on the values of ethics, morals, and the best of human behavior. This definition focuses on the hero’s willingness to do the right thing, to make personal sacrifices to promote justice, truth, or equality. This moral element of the definition is reflected in the work of Decter-Frain, Vanstone, and Frimer (2017), who distinguish between heroes who are known for their “competency, ability and agency ... from moral heroes...known for both their agency and their communal forces.” Their research focuses on famous heroes such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Dalai Lama who have mobilized millions of followers to raise awareness of a communal goal or cause. In comparison, a great teacher acts as subtle example of a moral hero for their students. Provided that the teacher can act as an inspiration and example of leadership, their students serve as their followers benefiting from the same strengthened in-group ties, enforced cooperation, and serving as a positive example for emulation. A teacher can mobilize her students as active followers for a moral cause especially when they instruct on material outside of the typical academic purview. Ideally, this moral heroism focuses on promoting equality or furthering prosocial values, but villainous teachers have also been shown to negatively affect their students as will be explored later in this chapter.

Sheila Edwards, an eight-grade history teacher at Sierra Vista Middle School, is a powerful example of how teachers can make a moral impact on their students. Over fifteen years ago, Edwards developed a program called “Make a Difference” to teach students how to be civically responsible while also imparting valuable lessons of charity and empathy. Twice a year Edwards takes 50 students to Skid Row in Los Angeles to help the homeless by donating clothing, blankets, and toiletries the classes had donated or fundraised throughout the year. On each trip, Edwards and her current students are joined by former students who return to continually donate their belongings, time and attention to the less privileged. Edwards has been awarded multiple teaching awards over the years for her devotion to teaching students important skills and values that go beyond the

classroom. She acts as a moral hero by modeling exemplary and inspirational values for her students that continue to affect their choices later in life.

The benefits of the moral hero that are befitting to their active followers would encompass the advantages that students had participating in the “Make a Difference” program developed by Sheila Edwards. These benefits are encompassed by three categories explored in the research of Kinsella, Richie, and Igou (2017) who developed the Hero Functions Framework. The first category of their research is the function of the hero to uplift and enrich the lives of others as a force of enhancement. Edwards enhances the lives of her students by boosting the positive emotions of her students who feel proud of their accomplishment and empathy. Heroes also provide social scripts for modeling values and virtues of society which Kinsella et al. defined as moral modeling. The heroic teacher models important values, instructing their students on how to act appropriately. The final category of the Hero Function Framework is protecting which we have already addressed. Victoria Soto and numerous other heroic teachers have acted as protectors for their students whether in active shooter scenarios, interceding in physical altercations between students, or taking active steps to evaluate the safety of a student’s home environment. Teachers are constantly fulfilling heroic functions.

*“Heroism is an extreme form of prosociality, a category of behavior that involves benefiting another.... A hero incurs costs to deliver greater-than-expected benefits to others.”*

– Kafashan et al. (2017)

This definition reflects the evolutionary theory of heroism emphasizing the greater than expected benefits that a hero will provide. Their research expands from the prototypical hero to emphasize unexpected examples such as fictional detective Sherlock Holmes who is renowned as a hero not because of any direct physical risk or sacrifice, but due to his superior logical thinking that ultimately was used to solve crimes and save lives. However, teachers are rarely acknowledged as prosocial and certainly not extremely prosocial. Despite making sacrifices in wages, hours, and job stress, teachers aren’t typically seen as behaving altruistically, undertaking difficult careers for the future generation. Research by Allison and Goethals (2013) uncovered a categorization of heroes based on their social influence. They found that people when instructed to think of hero can name a diverse range of figures, yet rarely did the participants consider their

teachers. Their research asking people about their heroes revealed distinct subtypes. People are more likely to name the famous political leaders exemplifying or the infamous athletes who inspire athletic ability and drug use. These are clear examples of Transcendent or Traditional categories of heroes. However, participants reported that over 65% belonged to one category, ironically the category that is least recognized – the Transparent hero. The Transparent heroes are the behind-the-scenes heroes such as firemen, nurses, and police officers acting to promote society and help others without the recognition. They are not often given titles and awards or lauded as the Greatest Detective, like Sherlock Holmes. These are the “invisible unsung heroes” that compose the best aspects of society (Allison & Goethals, 2014). Undoubtedly, teachers would typify this category.

Similar to other Transparent heroes, the role of the teacher can be interpreted as a clear example of the intersection between career development and heroism. The profession of teaching is to impart knowledge and values of prosociality, serve as moral paragons, and serve the future generation at the risk of social or even physical sacrifice. To develop a nuanced understanding of the relationship between teaching and heroism we must consider the components that would motivate a person to become a teacher. On one hand, there are few extrinsic rewards associated with a teaching career with an estimated yearly salary of only \$50,000. The training requirements are difficult to meet and expensive yet the associated wage when controlling for location and prestige of specific institutions is relatively low. There is little prestige associated with the teaching either as noted in popular saying such as “those who can’t do, teach”. Additionally, as noted in similar careers through research by Dik, Shimizu, and O’Connor (2017) these types of careers have a high-cost on the individual’s personal and emotional lives. If a student does not succeed in a particular class or even chooses to leave school, a teacher can feel responsible, leading to feelings of anxiety, depression, and guilt. The high personal cost of the daily responsibilities of the teacher are reflected in higher than average early retirement or job-switching rates. Many teachers suffer from “burnout” or extreme emotional fatigue from teaching, impacting their students, and serving as this moral figure of inspiration can be overwhelming and exhausting. However, research on heroic careers reveals how an individual’s social career identity can potentially alleviate the high costs of the stressful work. It has been theorized through earlier research that teachers who conceive of their work as a calling are more likely to overcome the difficulties of their daily career and remain as Transparent unsung heroes (Allison & Goethals, 2013; Goethals & Allison, 2012).

Johanna Mansfield Sullivan Macy, better known as Anne Sullivan, is a prime example of resilience within the teaching vocation as she educated her student, Helen Keller. Initially, Anne Sullivan was afflicted with a particularly high emotional and social cost of work as many people openly doubted her ability to instruct her pupil. As dramatically depicted in the film *The Miracle Worker*, Anne Sullivan could not initially communicate with Helen. She was forced to deal with a spoiled and openly rebellious seven year-old blind and deaf child who did not want to learn from her. Sullivan was initially unable to teach her sign language or even get her to behave appropriately. However, theoretically Sullivan was able to continue with her instruction and overcome these adversities by forming a strong career identity based upon her role as Helen's teacher. She had experienced what is defined in the current literature on career development as a calling or "a transcendent summons ... to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward ... deriving a sense of purpose" (Dik & Duffy, 2009, p. 427). Her calling was what enabled her to help Helen Keller when no one thought she could.

There are three components of a calling that would have influenced Sullivan. The first, a summons to heroism, encompasses both the explicit request by Helen's parent for Sullivan to be Helen's governess but also encompasses Sullivan's personal background. Her earlier experience as a young girl with poor eyesight and encroaching blindness prior to successful restorative surgery moved Sullivan to experience empathy for Helen's plight. The second aspect of a calling is the alignment of the individual's work activity with their broader meaning-making of the significance of those activities. Sullivan might not have realized that she was facilitating the heroic journey of Helen Keller to becoming a renowned inspiration, an American author, and political activist, but Sullivan found her purpose and knew her vocation was essential to the life of a seven year-old girl. The final component of social heroism is self-evident as Sullivan's work was not carried out for personal benefits but to advance the well-being of others, specifically her student Helen Keller, which in turn greatly impacted subsequent generations. Sullivan was an inspirational teacher.

The vast majority of teachers would fall under the final category of social heroism as explored by Dik and his fellow researchers through their analysis of the everyday hero and their subsequent self-identification with their career as a calling through three cognitive mechanisms. Teachers who strongly identify

with their careers are able to overcome the high costs outlined earlier such as the financial burden of low salary, depreciated reputational value, and high interpersonal, emotional costs to continue in the profession. Vicki Soto, Sheila Edwards, and Anne Sullivan are all examples of everyday teachers who felt this calling whether in response to a specific person, a moral issue, or a dangerous situation. They led lives rich in meaning connecting with the broader world; their lives exemplify purpose-guided heroism (Kendall & Riches, 2017). These people had careers that prompted them to form clearly defined values and beliefs that readied each to perform heroic acts. However, not all teachers are heroes-in-waiting. Some do not strongly identify with their career or experience a calling; they do not lead lives of purpose derived from their career. Such teachers are more likely to falter under the impediments of heroism and are less likely to fulfill the responsibilities of the Transparent hero. Far from heroes-in-waiting, these people may be negatively affecting their students through their everyday interactions.

#### EVERYDAY TEACHERS IN THE CLASSROOM: WHAT ARE STUDENTS LEARNING?

Sensational journal articles and late night news station use extreme acts of heroism and villainy to create moving headlines about the amazing sacrifices and acts of selfishness perpetuated by a select percentage of humanity. These are not routine actions or even extreme acts done by everyday heroes. It is all too easy to overlook the mundane goings-on of people like teachers, police, rescue aid workers. Their stories about the average day are never reported on the front page or splashed across social media in the same overwhelming numbers. However, the everyday actions of people are critical to defining their social identity. Kramer (2017) eloquently emphasized the importance of considering the habitual actions that compose behaviors rather than focusing on the extremely villainous or heroic things that people may be driven to do.

*“Every day is, after all, the only way human beings can and do - decide how to live --- and it is in that sense that the judgements and choices we make each and every day about who we are and who we wish to become.”*

– Kramer (2017)

Teachers, specifically, habitually shape their students. They influence the judgments and choices that their students must make, creating long-lasting impressions

on their students' self-identity. The average teacher always has the potential to make a profound effect on their students, especially during their students' early development through primary and secondary school. Students at younger ages are considered more impressionable and adhere to their teacher's knowledge and conclusions on topics of information outside of the academic material such as leadership, social cues, and lay theories. Thus far, we have reviewed how teachers have gone beyond their role in the educational system in protecting their students, teaching positive values, and inspiring others, however teachers can also perform inadequately. Now we turn to educational villainy.

Teachers serve as forces of villainy in two distinct ways, either as a misunderstanding or accidental misuse or blatant damaging abuse of the power that is intrinsic to their role. The first method relies upon the teacher's style of interaction with their students while the second method explores how the content of instruction can be actively harmful.

Teachers who misunderstand the impact that their teaching has on their students often promote negative values as an unintended result of their interactions with their students. Rather than actively committing evil acts by explicitly instructing on biased interpretations of religion or politics, a teacher may inadvertently and passively encourage their students to act in a harmful manner. For instance, researcher Hughes and colleagues (2001) found substantial evidence of teachers acting as a type of social reference for their students such that students make inferences about a select child based on their observations of the teachers interacting with that student. These student inferences about a particular student's qualities, skills, or attributes can negatively affect the student. Hughes et al. found a strong correlation between student-peer evaluations and teacher-student relationship measures, supporting their theory that teachers have a stronger impact on the interpersonal aspects of the classroom than previously recognized. Their results suggest that teachers who are more prone to open displays of their emotions such as boredom, confusion, or frustration are going to teach those impressions and displays to their students. If a teacher has a negative opinion about a student based on her background, racial profile, or personal issues, then the teacher will teach that opinion to their other students even when the teacher lacks purposeful intention. Students who have comparatively negative relationships with their teachers are more likely to experience negative emotions associated with education and face social exclusion from their peers. If a teacher does not understand how she serves as a social referent for

their students, she may not realize the importance of appropriately regulating her interactions and subsequent emotional displays with her students.

Impression-formation is not the only implicit knowledge that is being emphasized by the average teacher. Research in social psychology indicates that teachers also can heavily influence their students' implicit theories across a wide domain of beliefs but particularly their students' implicit beliefs about intelligence. Implicit beliefs or mindsets are lay theories that people hold about the nature of any specific ability such as intelligence, computer science ability, or weight management, for example. This research is based on Dweck's (2006) original theoretical framework which consists of two types of beliefs about the nature of a trait or ability. On one hand, a person can be an entity theorist meaning that they believe their traits, such as intelligence, are fixed and cannot be controlled. On the other hand, a person could be an incremental theorist who believes that abilities can be learned, adapted and changed through hard work. Implicit beliefs are critical because the way people see their abilities shape how they behave and use those abilities. Previous research on implicit beliefs has been shown to have a broad impact across different domains. Specific to our analysis of teachers, it is shown that the beliefs that teachers hold about their students can impact not just how they teach their academic material and other student-interaction, but also influence their students' implicit theories of themselves.

Current research suggests that teachers are more likely to deliver praise that promote entity implicit theories especially to students who have identified as being advanced or gifted. For instance, a teacher can form a positive opinion about a student's intelligence and will then praise the student for being smart or creative. These types of reward phrases do increase the positivity of the student, but they reinforce a fixed mindset about the nature of intelligence. A student who is repeatedly told that they are smart or gifted will not recognize the importance of hard work and effort. Research shows that students with an entity implicit theory will often prefer not to challenge themselves within both the experimental and on-task setting. These types of students are more likely to make internal attributions of failure if they do not receive good grades and more likely to quit activities that when facing academic obstacles. Students who have received recognition from their teachers for hard work or good progress are more likely to have an incremental implicit belief about intelligence. They are more likely to understand that certain skills require time, attention, and daily challenges in order to improve. These students are empirically shown to have reduced

stereotype threat, increased resilience when dealing with failure, and improved overall dedication to one's academic field (Dweck, 2006). These students are much more likely to have growth mindsets about other abilities that they have not tried, seeing new topics as areas of challenge and improvement. Teachers can often overlook their own implicit beliefs and how their interactions with students can influence the formation of a potentially harmful mindset.

These deleterious interactions between teachers and their students are inadvertently occurring on a daily basis in most classrooms across the United States. Our Western culture emphasizes an innate personality and freedom of expression which can result in teachers perpetuating entity mindsets and negative impression-formation. However, as research findings in social psychology accumulate, teachers can gain a better understanding of the strength of their role and modulate their implicit beliefs. Teachers who have been informed about the strengths and benefits of incremental versus entity mindsets are more likely to change their implicit beliefs of intelligence. They report intentions and plans to deliver praise encouraging learnable skills and develop learning modules that emphasize the importance of hard work, perseverance, and determination. Additionally, teachers can be encouraged to practice healthy strategies of emotion regulation in order to control their impact as a social referent. Emotion regulation is a valuable tool for achieving emotion-related goals such as decreasing negative emotion intensity or frequency. Additionally, emotion regulation is a learnable skill that has been increased through research-based interventions (Sheppes et al., 2011). This type of research could serve as the basis for designing specific workshops that could be included in teacher training to advance the personal and interpersonal skills of the average teacher.

These accidental perpetuations of negative values that have been outlined above can be changed and even completely negated through training and careful effort. However, purposeful acts of villainy that a teacher can commit are more difficult to analyze, categorize, and subsequently eliminate. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, teachers can violate different moral and ethical codes of conduct such as in the Atlanta cheating scandal where the teachers violated explicit government policies in order to increase their students' performance. To gain a full understanding of teachers as active perpetrators, the full range of villainous teacher actions must be narrowed to examine one manifestation of the power imbalance inherent to the teacher-student dynamic: the act of bullying. Bullying is defined within the literature as a pattern of aggressive behavior

directed towards another person who has less status or power (Rigby, 1997). Current research on social violence conducted by Collins categorized bullying as long-term, institutionalized form of attacking the weak, which is one of the key strategies outlined by his analysis of successfully committing violence (Collins, 2009). His theory of bullying is supported by empirical research in the field that shows that bullies in school whether peers or teachers do not attack popular and socially connected people but isolated individuals who already emotionally weak. As repeatedly emphasized throughout this examination of the role, all teachers possess a degree of power over their students that is often overlooked or underestimated by society. Students are inherently of a lower status, with their grades, their development, even their social status dependent either explicitly or implicitly on the judgement of their teachers. This unequal power-dynamic that is intrinsic to the role can lead to acts of aggression. The aggression or violence may not manifest in physical acts within a teacher-student interaction, but may occur through non-physical acts such as verbal or emotional abuse.

Much of the research conducted on bullying focuses on peer victimization which illustrates that teachers can passively encourage bullying between peers by creating an environment that tacitly accepts or promotes exclusion and hostile interactions. The teacher can be seen as 'turning a blind eye' to peer bullying. However, teachers can also act directly by becoming co-conspirators with bullying students by taking an active role of humiliation. Research conducted by Delffabro and colleagues expands on the topic of bullying by directly comparing the psychological and social well-being of students subjects to either peer-bullying or teacher-bullying. This analysis showed that peer-bullying that results from the accepting environment established by a teacher has severe negative effects on the victims. Students who reported peer victimization also reported higher levels of social alienation, poorer psychological functioning, and poorer self-esteem and self-image. These negative qualities were also present in students who reported hostile interactions, verbal abuse, and other types of active victimization by a teacher. Active bullying from the teacher figure trained the victimized student into a subservient relationship based on the repetition of verbal taunts that culminated in social isolation.

The victim of bullying had no social resources to call upon to maintain emotional stability as the bully becomes the entirety of their network (Collins, 2009). Both groups exhibited a comparable yet distinct psychological profile, however the effects of teacher-bullying is shown to have a greater impact

outside the academic setting. The students who were victims of teacher-bullying were more likely to engage in high-risk behavior such as weekly drug usage, smoking, and drinking. They were also significantly less likely to complete their high school education (Delfabbro et al, 2006). The one relationship between student and teacher can negatively impact the student's academic, social, and emotional lives, causing long-term damage that may not be immediately recognized.

An iconic film of the 1980s, *The Breakfast Club* has maintained consistent popularity over the years in part because of its powerful analysis of group processes, social influences, and character relationship. The relationship between Mr. Vernon, the school assistant principal, and John Bender, a student, is a clear example of a powerful story that explicitly examines bullying in the school system. The teacher-victim relationship parallels much of the research conducted in the field in terms of action and consequences. Vernon is disproportionately vitriolic to Bender, the rebel outcast, compared to the other students who are more socially connected. Vernon has a greater power over Bender compared to the rest of the students and exhibits this to Bender and the group by giving him additional punishment at every turn. Additionally, Vernon repeatedly verbally abuses Bender with outright discrimination and attempts to enforce his negative views onto the other students. His explicit actions have the effect of creating an environment that encourages students to falsely judge and categorize others.

When Vernon's infamous rants fail to stifle the group bonding, he even goes so far as to physically isolate John, completely removing him from the social network before issuing debasing and damaging verbal abuse. Bender exhibits many of the consequences of teacher-victimization including an increase in high-risk behaviors, poorer social abilities, and an unwillingness to continue education. His rebellious behavior could stem from the feelings of inadequacy and powerlessness that accompany repeated abuse. Far from curbing his rebellious behavior, Vernon's bullying causes Bender and the other students to break the rules as a statement of rebellion against his prejudice. While his villainy served as crucial requirement of the group formation, Vernon theoretically had a long lasting impact on Bender's stability and well-being. Their relationship explored within the film exhibits the strong effect of a negative student-teacher relationship that will shape the student's path through life.

The final section of this paper aims to move past the traditional perspective on the role of teacher within the education system by considering the more objective definition of teacher. As mentioned earlier, the technical definition of teacher is broad and can be extended to consider any individual who has taught a skill, shared knowledge or otherwise left an impression that has resulted in the attainment of wisdom or clarity. Just as the journey of discovery does not end upon completing the official duration of education, people are constantly learning from those individuals around them who may not fulfill the subjective requirement of the teacher. These individuals can exist outside the typical education system at all levels of learning whether as therapists, coaches, or babysitters. However, all of these people share common elements of shaping the lives of the people they interact with, inspiring their followers, and ultimately teaching a new perspective to examine the world. These people are not just teachers working in the school system. They are mentors.

The essential researcher of human society, psychologist Carl Jung, analyzed different patterns of interactions throughout time. He proposed the existence of archetypes or universal prototypes that are inherent to the human narrative such as the mother, the child, or the wise old man. These manifest representations give specific context to aspects of human development; for example, the wise old man represents the role of the teacher, or more specifically the mentor. Rather than existing within the school system, the wise old man represents a cultural model of development and the human psyche. The anthropological roots of mentoring and the teacher-student relationship is responsible for eons of counsels. The mentor role has been filled by mythological figure such Merlin from the tales of King Arthur's court to Niccolo Machiavelli as advisor to royalty and the government. The act of providing wisdom to those in power is an integral aspect of the historical impact of the teacher role. Current research on mentors conducted by Allison and Smith (2018) illustrates the strength of the mentor role as it designates a special subtype of teacher. This paper uses the categorization developed by their research to evaluate the teachers that shaped the Star Wars universe: Yoda and Emperor Palpatine.

Both Yoda and Emperor Palpatine emerge as powerful teaching figures throughout the Star Wars narrative sharing wisdom, teaching their followers important

skills, and actively changing the destined path of prospective acolytes. In order to provide the context for their mentoring, it is essential to consider these characters in their role influencing the main protagonists of the narrative thus far, Luke and Anakin Skywalker. Both of these young men distinctly featured in their own trilogy were following the narrative of the hero's journey, a cross-cultural pattern of development of the heroic protagonist (Campbell, 1949). The monomyth features different stages of development of the hero beginning with the departure, moving through obstacles, receiving guidance from mentors or guardians, and finally returning triumphantly to the original world a fully-formed hero. George Lucas, the director of *Star Wars*, was heavily influenced by Campbell's original analysis of the hero's journey as can be clearly seen in the classic narrative featured in each trilogy. Both Skywalkers were thrust into a novel and dangerous world incomplete, lacking fundamental inner qualities of wisdom, self-identity, and control of their innate power – the Force. Their journeys are clear parallels as both begin quests to master the Force in order to achieve a greater goal of providing protection for their loved ones. They both received training from Obi Won Kenobi, a classic mentor figure. However, their paths diverge abruptly upon meeting their true mentors, the most influential character in the *Star Wars* universe. These secondary mentors -- Yoda and Emperor Palpatine -- act as teachers along the hero's journey, spurring the next stage of development in both Anakin and Luke Skywalker.

Yoda embodies a Grand Mentor, a specific subtype of mentor defined within the categorization created by current research conducted by Allison and Smith (2018). Yoda as the Grand Mentor is the mentor's mentor, existing in the upper echelon of the society as he is responsible for influencing multiple generations of students of the Force. Yoda is the most recognizable mentor of the Jedi side of the ongoing conflict between good and evil. Yoda's teaching heavily influence the *Star Wars* universe by creating the Jedi faction, acting as an influential general in the Clone War, and serving as a powerful political figure. Allison and Smith accurately describe Yoda's prestige within society as they note that the Grand Mentor is recognizable based on the awe and silence that permeates his arrival. The *Star Wars* audience can see the power of Yoda on the societal level during the prequel trilogy movies, but his mentoring has the strongest comparative impact in the original trilogy. Yoda offers advice and wisdom throughout Luke's journey toward heroism, coming out of years of exiled hiding to train him. Luke was crippled by insecurity and anxiety, yet Yoda's powerful words "do or do not, there is no try," teach Luke that there is no point in trying without

fully committing. Yoda passes away before being able to witness the impact of his teaching. Ultimately, Yoda's wisdom and training of Luke Skywalker is the catalyst for his final transformation; he is able to attain heroic abilities of leadership and bravery. Yoda's training is what allowed Luke to resist the manipulation of the Dark Side of the Force, topple the Empire, and restore balance to the Star Wars universe. Yoda is a heroic teacher and mentor as he actively created and inspired heroes and their actions.

Emperor Palpatine emerges as the true villain of the Star Wars universe for his corrupting influence in his quest for immortality and power. Known to his evil acolytes as Darth Sidious, this character conducted political machinations to achieve influence eventually bringing down the fall of the government and the Jedi Force. He is a Grand Dark Mentor, a mentor that deliberately manipulates the hero down a dark path through his teachings. Current research conducted by Allison and Smith (2018) explores the category of Dark mentor as a manifestation of a generational cycle of corruption where mentors from each generation transform their students into their worst selves. Supporting this theory, the first mentor of the Dark Side of the Force, Darth Plagueis, serves as the mentor of Palpatine or Darth Sidious, which then led to Darth Sidious's greatest impact on the galaxy: transforming Anakin Skywalker into Darth Vader. Emperor Palpatine clearly defines this category as he perpetuates a cycle of evil, controlling and deploying new apprentices at every turn to influence every level of society.

Throughout Anakin's development, the audience witnesses Emperor Palpatine subtle manipulations. Rather than openly training Anakin and providing mentoring, his main strategy is subversion as he targets Anakin who has already developed skills under alternative mentorship. Darth Sidious exerted a powerful transformative effect on Anakin, effectively halting his hero's journey, manipulating his emotional and cognitive states and ultimately fundamentally altering his moral stance on the appropriate use of the Force. He encourages acts of villainy such as revenge and violence that force a rapid descent into evil. During the prequel trilogy, the audience witnesses the complete and total annihilation of Luke Skywalker's personality. When the character emerges as Darth Vader, he is a corrupted version of his former self, intent on serving the dark side and his mentor. His destined path was heavily impacted by the role of the Dark Mentor, eventually leading to Anakin as Darth Vader attempting to perpetuate the cycle of evil by manipulating his son, Luke, to joining the Dark Side.

Through Yoda's teaching, Luke was able to resist corrupting influence, temptation and overcome fear. He was fully committed to his task of overcoming the Empire and the power of the Dark contingent.

The hero's journey, as explored in the Star Wars franchise, is a pattern of development that echoes throughout anthropological history through the narratives of our myths. It would be incomplete without the role of the mentor or teacher to act as the final transformative agent of the potential hero. As this chapter has explored, the teacher can serve as an everyday hero through this influential process of development by emphasizing key values, enduring physical and emotional sacrifices, and creating a career identity based upon prosocial acts and altruism. However, teachers can also serve as detriment along the hero's journey, serving as yet another obstacle preventing learning and personal growth. Yoda and Emperor Palpatine are cultural icons symbolizing the distance between the opposite ends of the spectrum, both exerted untold influence upon their students and the world. Teachers fulfilling their duties to educate and better their students are heroes as they overcome salary inequalities, reputational difficulties, and inspire altruism. Teachers allowing biases to affect their teaching are villains creating a negative cycle of discrimination, fixed mindset, and bullying by impacting the development of their students. Teachers must actively decide how they will act along the moral spectrum as they influence their students to become their best selves, remain stagnant without change, or transform into their worse selves.

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