Teacher Stereotypes Annotated Bibliography


A study examining portrayals of teachers in nine films spanning 50 years. The study concluded that teachers were depicted in an unrealistic and stereotypical manner. Teachers were portrayed as earnest and dedicated, but poorly trained, ineffective and dull. Graduate students in an education program who watched the nine films and responded to a survey suggested that they would not emulate these teachers or be inspired by them to become educators.


Farhi describes the superteacher that is portrayed in film as someone who is willing to defy opposition from administration and risk anything to help his or her students. In movies, such teachers quickly and dramatically change their students’ behaviors and attitudes without help from others. The superteacher is usually quirky and unconventional and sacrifices their personal life for their students. Such films also perpetuate a stereotype of students who are unruly delinquents in need of reform. Farhi suggests that such movies portray teachers in a way that is impossible for real teachers to emulate, and the result is that students will be dissatisfied with their teachers.


Fisher conducts an analysis of the cartoon “Beavis and Butt-head” in order to examine stereotypical portrayals of teachers in the show. He concludes that teachers are portrayed
as either traditionalist or progressive. Traditionalist teachers are depicted as disciplined, conservative, individuals who uphold the standards of society. Progressive teachers are portrayed as undisciplined, liberal, and interested in finding new ways of doing things. In the show, both stereotypes are negatively characterized and mocked.


This is structured as a dialogue between an educational researcher and a mass media researcher. The authors point out the need to remember gender and ethnicity when considering stereotypes of educators. Although the specific focus of the article is on the representation of Latinos and stereotypes of ethnic minority students, there is also a section on the teacher as savior. This follows the superteacher stereotype of the teacher who is expected to solve students’ problems. The article emphasizes the role of the “other” in creating a relationship in which the heroic antics of the teacher are made possible by the supposed hopelessness of the students’ lives.


In our presentation, Denise used this article as reference for the children’s books she discusses. The article discusses stereotypes and inaccurate images of teachers in children’s books and stresses the need for educator awareness about such influences, which define and shape the educational institution. An appendix with a complete list of the 62 children’s books examined is included, making this article a great resource.

This article points out that media portrayals of teachers can cause the general public to negatively view the education profession, while also making it difficult to recruit exemplary teachers. According to the article, teaching is portrayed as easy and something anyone can do. The media also supports the idea that learning should be easy and fun. Stereotypes include the teacher who has an antagonistic relationship with school administration, and the teacher who is incompetent with an “anything goes” personality. The article concludes that such portrayals are demeaning and unrealistic and negatively affect real teachers. Additionally, the superteacher myth is discussed, and the manner in which it sets unrealistically high standards for educators.