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Teachers Behaving Unprofessionally: Stories from Students

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Summary



This module has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and sanctioned by the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of education administration. In addition to publication in the Connexions Content Commons, this is published in the **International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation**, Volume 4, Number 1 (January - March 2009) at <http://ijelp.expressacademic.org>, formatted and edited by Theodore Creighton, Virginia Tech.

Introduction

Effective teachers are desired at all levels and in all areas of education. As such, previous researchers (e.g., Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, Collins, Filer, Wiedmaier, & Moore, 2007; Slate, Capraro, & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, & Minor, 2001) have sought to establish characteristics of effective teachers. Debate over ideology and methodology regarding specific traits of good teachers, how to determine the traits, and the best way to make use of such characteristics still continues. The study of teacher characteristics has most often concentrated on the effective or positive traits of teachers. Recent studies were designed to establish the make up of effective teachers and the parameters used to identify the specific

traits. Tuckman (1995) focused specifically on personality traits and Demmon-Berger (1986) included the examination of instructional techniques with the study of effective personal traits. Stronge (2002) expressly pointed out parameters of effective teachers which included the trait of professionalism.

Several studies focusing on student perceptions of effective teachers have been published in recent years (e.g., Greimel-Fuhrmann & Geyer, 2003; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, & James, 2002; Onwuegbuzie et al., 2007; Slate et al., 2007; Wang, Gibson, & Slate, 2007; Witcher, Onwuegbuzie, Collins, Filer, Wiedmaier, & Moore, 2003; Witcher et al., 2001). In a 2001 study (Witcher et al.), students in preservice teacher education programs were asked to describe effective teachers. Of the 219 responses, six emergent themes were identified. The six themes identified through mixed-method analyses of the responses were: student-centeredness, enthusiasm for teaching, ethicalness, classroom and behavior management, teaching methodology, and knowledge of subject (Witcher et al., 2001). In a second study in 2002, Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher, and James investigated the educational beliefs of preservice teachers as well as their perceptions of effective teachers. Seven themes, through the use of mixed methods analyses from 134 student surveys, were discovered: student-centeredness, effective classroom and behavior management, competent instructor, ethical, enthusiastic about teaching, knowledgeable about subject, and professional.

Unfortunately, researchers have also uncovered many undesirable traits amongst some educators. Ineffective teachers can possess some effective characteristics, but they also demonstrate traits that are potentially harmful to students. Such mannerisms may well be the off-putting attribute or lasting memory for a student. Negative characteristics displayed by teachers in the classroom may affect students in damaging ways. A 2002 report from the British government's Office for Standards in Education stated that problems with the recruitment and retention of good teachers were "having an adverse impact on pupils' standards of academic achievement" (Jepson & Forrest, 2006, p. 2).

In the literature few researchers have investigated ineffectual or negative characteristics of teachers. More information is needed from students concerning experiences they might have had with teachers behaving in unprofessional ways. Such information concerning potentially detrimental and damaging behavior may provide practitioners and researchers alike with a student's perspective on what really goes on inside the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate unprofessional K-12 teachers' behaviors by analyzing the stories retrospectively told by college students. From the analysis of these student stories, specific themes related to unprofessional teacher behaviors were derived and delineated.

Research Question

What are the themes present in the student stories of their poorest K-12 teacher about the unprofessional behaviors?

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were selected from a larger group of 423 students (Wang et al., 2007) who were enrolled at a 2-year college in the Southwest during the Spring Semester, 2007. Eighty student participants who indicated the theme of unprofessional in their responses to the Poorest K-12 Teacher open-ended question were utilized in this study. Of the 80 respondents, 29 were males (36.3%) and 49 (61.3%) were females. Regarding ethnicity, 90% (72) were Hispanic, 1.3% (1) was Caucasian, 1.3% (1) indicated Native American, and 2.5% (2) were of Other ethnic membership. Students' GPAs ranged from a low of 1.5 to a high of 4.00. The majority of participants were between the ages of 18-25 at 84%. Thirty six (45%) participants signified they were the first person in their family to go to college. Out of the 80 identified cases, 13 respondents stated they currently have children attending school K-12.

Instrumentation

The current qualitative study was a companion study related to a larger study (Wang et al., 2007), in which two surveys were utilized two surveys: one with 10 Likert-format items and another with two open-ended questions with demographic questions on each survey. For purposes of this study, data from only one of the open-ended questions were utilized. The open-ended question whose data were analyzed in this study was: Describe the POOREST teacher you ever had while enrolled in any grade from elementary through twelfth grades (K-12). What made this teacher the POOREST for you? Please be as detailed as possible, without naming the person, about what made this teacher your POOREST teacher.

Procedures

Surveys were administered in the classrooms of faculty members who agreed to have their students participate in the study. Permission for survey administration was sought from faculty members at the 2-year college. A member of the research team identified faculty members and requested for their students to be surveyed. Particular days and times were agreed upon by the

faculty members for the administration of the surveys. Voluntary participation in the study was sought by students in the designated classes. Surveys were then collected from the students by the proctor and delivered to the research team member and the surveys were placed in a secure area. From a total of 423 participants, 80 students, primarily Hispanic, who wrote stories of teachers behaving in an unprofessional manner were selected for this study.

For purposes of this study, we included in the analysis of themes of *Behaving Unprofessionally* when the following descriptors were present in students' stories: their teachers would give an assignment and then leave class until class was almost over, would be absent frequently, told entire class about a problem a student was having at school, went into another class and pointed out all the students the teacher thought would fail, left class to have a snack and then came back at the end of class, slept at desk, played cards all class period, played on computer while in class, would rush through lessons in order to go have a cigarette, would play video games in class, would go outside the classroom to talk to other teachers, would talk on the cell phone in class, would put on makeup in class, would come to class drunk, would only teach when an authority came by the class, would fall asleep during their own lecture, and would hit student on the knuckles with a ruler.

Analysis

Qualitative data analytic techniques were employed to determine themes from the data. A thematic analysis was performed by reading and rereading each participant response to the open ended question. The method of constant comparison (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) was used to determine the presence of consistent words and/or phrases.

Results

Through the method of constant comparison (Glasser & Strauss, 1967), reoccurring words and/or phrases were noted and then coded into an SPSS data file. Once identified and typed into SPSS, a frequency distribution was conducted to identify the themes that were present in participants' responses to their poorest teachers. A minimum of 4 times was determined by the researchers to be the cut off point indicating when a theme occurred. This number was decided upon as it created an endorsement rate of 5%, using Cohen's (1988) non-linear arcsine transformation, and in turn, representing a medium effect size, according to Cohen's (1988) criteria.

Poorest K-12 Teachers Between-Case Analysis

Theme	n	%age
Poor Teaching	36	45.0
Learning Not Occurring	35	43.8
Poor Communication with Students	14	17.5
Uncaring	14	17.5
No Explanations	12	15.0
Being Overly Emotional	7	8.8
High School Teacher Mentioned in Story	7	8.8
Off-Task Behaviors	7	8.8
Poor Classroom Management	5	6.3

Participants' Themes Concerning Unprofessional Behaving Teachers

Though not coded as themes in this study, in stories of unprofessional behavior by teachers, males were mentioned more often than females. Interestingly, in the larger study, female teachers were indicated more often than male teachers in student stories of worst K-12 teachers. High school teachers were also indicated by students as exhibiting unprofessional characteristics.

The first theme was *Poor Teaching* which includes such behaviors as notes on board in no order, no instruction, no help with learning, not keeping student attention to learning, having students do all of the grading, discouraging learning, reading word for word from book, not following textbook, assigning work students don't know how to do, not linear, poor curriculum, not teaching required text, testing on material other than what was taught, only assigning questions from book, not working out the problems for students, having silly stories instead of teaching, sitting at desk the whole class, not requiring work from students, and not being able to lecture well. The theme *Learning Not Occurring* was also present. For this theme, respondents used phrases, such as no learning, class being a joke, not doing anything in class, students being on their own, telling students to just read the book, and material not meaningful. *Poor Communication With Students* was the label assigned to student comments such as teacher not explaining materials well, teacher not explaining assignment, lesson not explained, difficult to understand, hard to understand pronunciation, not speaking English well, not understanding anything teacher said, not communicating well with students, not understanding directions, hard to understand expectations, not thorough enough, expecting students to know what teacher wanted without teacher explaining, no expectations, and not responding to student attempts to contact teacher.

Uncaring was the label assigned to student comments such as not caring about students,

unwilling to help, uninterested in students, not providing positive reinforcement, no compassion, and being insensitive. The theme of *No Explanations* was assigned to stories that included descriptions, such as not explaining well, teacher not explaining assignment, and lesson not explained. For the theme of *Being Overly Emotional* students wrote their stories about teachers who displayed the following: Teacher crying in class, teacher hiding under desk, being moody, losing her mind, and being depressed. This theme also included descriptions of teachers who yelled at students, screamed and raised voice to students. *Off-Task Behaviors* was the classification used when students identified behaviors such as being off-task, doing and talking about things unrelated to learning or subject, going off topic, scatterbrained, losing track of where lesson was, never getting to point, rambling and being long-winded. *Poor Classroom Management* was the theme found present when teachers did not have a hold on class, had poor classroom management, did not get up from desk, let class run wild, did not correct disruptive behavior, and had a chaotic classroom.

With-in Case Analysis

During the reading and rereading of participant responses, stories that provided rich detail about participants' poorest teachers were identified. From those poorest teachers stories, students who wrote of unprofessional behavior and related traits and characteristics were specifically designated for this study. Of these involved stories, 24 student responses were provided in this study.

The following student stories are grouped thematically. Stories are reproduced directly from the surveys from the handwritten responses by participants. Brief contextual discussion follows each grouping.

Unethical Behavior, Illegal Behavior, Violent and Mean Behavior

"The poorest teacher I had was my second grade teacher. She was very mean with all of her students, and when someone didn't understand something she wouldn't care and keep going. At the middle of the semester she was fired, and put to jail because she would put tape in the students' mouth so they could stop talking. She was the poorest teacher I ever had because she was very mean." (Hispanic female, 19 years of age, a Nursing major)

"The poorest teacher I had was in Junior High. He was my science teacher. I would always feel uncomfortable around him and he would always stare at me in a weird way. All of a sudden in High School I found out that he was in jail because he had some kind of relationship with a little girl who was there at that time." (Hispanic female, age 19, Business major)

“She was grouchy. She grabbed students and pinched them with her long fingernails. She humiliated us and made us sit under her desk for running in bathrooms. She was prejudice. Said she couldn’t give everyone As, even though the work was deserving. Because of social status of student. Poor vs. rich.” (Native American female, 55 years old, Education major, first person in family to attend college, currently has children attending school K-12).

“My 2nd grade teacher was stupid. I paided him off so he can pass me without teaching me anything.” (Hispanic male, 20 years of age, no major indicated).

“The poorest teacher I had was algebra teacher from (name of school removed) High School. She never helped students that needed the extra help. She would just point and laugh at us if we didn’t know the answer. Sometimes she would throw rocks at me cause I used to comb my hair funny and because of that my feelings were hurt. I start listening to depeche mode music by myself in they dark (student drew an unhappy face at the end of the story)”. (Hispanic male, 23 years of age, Business management major, first person in family to attend college).

These five particular responses for unprofessional behavior by teachers illustrated some of the most disturbing and negative behavior described by students in this study. Outright illegal behavior, haunting illicit conduct, violent acts perpetrated by teachers, and damaging unethical conduct are all told by students recounting their poorest K-12 teacher. Details of the effects of such behaviors by teachers on the student themselves illustrate the ramifications of unprofessional behavior in the classroom.

Unprofessional behaviors and how the teacher teaches or treats a student permeate throughout the remainder of students’ educational journey and beyond. Revealing the stories by college students of unprofessional behavior by K-12 teachers can aid those persons in the field of education and research. Such information may be useful to persons in area of teacher preparation and development, those persons who create and administer assessment and evaluation methods and instruments, and those persons researching teacher effectiveness, characteristics, and teacher behavior. We believe that the current findings will assist in the continued effort of improving the educational experience for our students.

Illegal conduct by adults serving as educators does not always get addressed by supervisors and other administrators in ways that would prevent such damaging acts from reoccurring. A teacher's misconduct may go unreported, dismissed, or even unrecorded in records. First reported in 1981 in Schweizer's study, a male special education teacher resigned from a position due to a complaint from a student concerning sexual advances. Because the teacher was provided with good references he obtained another teaching position. The unscrupulous educator continued to work with children at different schools while being accused of different types of sexual misconduct for over 15 years until he was finally jailed for sexually assaulting one of his special education students. He was sentenced to 20 years (Schweizer, 1998).

Another example of disturbingly unprofessional behavior is that of an elementary school teacher in San Francisco who "placing her 6-year-old students in a trash can, closing the lid, and kicking the can" (Schweizer, 1998, par. 8). Administrators became aware of the situation but were only able to suspend her once other teachers heard her threatening to "cut off a child's private parts with a pair of scissors. The district was successful in dismissing the individual from their position, though she was able to obtain another position in another distict.

Overly Emotional Behavior

“He was a jerk. He never thought us hand to hand. He made look out the book work. He didn’t helped us when we had a problem. Use to have bad tantums and would sleep the class period.” (Hispanic male, age 20, Digital Imaging major).

“The poorest teacher I remember I consider her the poorest due she would scream @ us and did not really care if we understood her lessons. There were certain students she preferred and got along with and some were excluded.” (Hispanic female, 22 years of age, Business Administration major, currently has children attending school K-12).

Overly emotional behavior such as yelling, screaming, and tantrums by the teachers left a negative impression on students. In the above two stories, students describe negative characteristics, such as being uncaring, unhelpful, and indifferent along with the unprofessional behaviors of yelling and screaming at students by teachers. Verbal abuse and emotional abuse by teachers can leave bruises and scars on children that go unseen.

One example of how unprofessional characteristics such as yelling and other overly emotional behavior affects children both academically and psychologically is that of a young girl in Suburban Maryland (Mathews, 2005). The student seemed to love going to her elementary school until fourth grade. Once the school year began “she began to cry every morning and beg her mother not to make her go” (Mathews, 2005, par. 1). Because of the dramatic change in her daughter’s attitude towards her education, the mother investigated the situation. The mother soon found out that the teacher would often yell at the children for misbehavior, punish the students by not allowing recess or other non instructional activities, and was not instructing the students or providing any type of lessons at all. Unfortunately, the student, along with her classmates, suffered emotionally and was cheated out of an education (Mathews, 2005).

Lack of Interest in Students and No Motivation to Teach

“The poorest teacher I’ve had in school was the teacher who would get to class, write page numbers on the board and questions to do and sat at her desk talked on her cellphone, not letting us concentrate on our work, while putting makeup. Having this teacher in particular was a total disaster because I strongly feel that I did not gain no knowledge what so ever from that class in particular.” (Hispanic male, 19 years of age, Civil Drafting major)

“My poorest teacher was in high school. He was a football coach and also my government teacher. All he could think about was the football games on Friday and how our team was going to be the other and I hated that because I love the subject of government and I really wanted to know was much as possibly. I would hate it sometimes going to his class because one he would hardly do anything in class and just goofy off all the time.” (Hispanic male, 19 years of age, Radiology major)

“In my freshman year I had this teacher that taught World History and was the POOREST! Teacher I have ever had. He never taught us anything. He would just give us our work and we

had to do it ourselves. If there was a fit in the classroom would just watch and do nothing about it. In the last 2 months of that class I did not go because I had problems with one of the student. The other student would do the attendance and would count me absent and I got in an argument with her and the teacher wouldn't do nothing and would tell him that it was not her job to do the attendance it was his job, and so I talk to one of the principals and I did not have to go back to that class." (Hispanic female, age 20, Engineering major)

"He gave us class work and never explained the material. When we asked questions he asked us to look for it on the book and he was always playing in the computer instead of giving the class." (Hispanic female, age 21, Paralegal major, first person in family to attend college).

"Teacher was a heavy smoker person, she was always grouchy. If she had not smoked she would rush through the material to give us free time so she could take us to recesses, (it was a long time ago)." (Hispanic female, 33 years of age, Education major, currently has children attending school K-12).

"Basically it was my sophomore year in high-school. He was a football coach but he also taught history. He was just walk in, read the newspaper and would put us to do definitions." (Hispanic female, age 23, Education major).

"It would have to be my senior English teacher. We literally did nothing in her class. We would go sit down and just talk and play board games. Sometimes she never even showed up to class. Most the time she was on medication for ADD. She rarely taught us English by some how she passed us all to graduate." (Hispanic female, 18 years of age, Biology major).

"Did not care for the class sometimes would fall asleep in class. Very boring." (Hispanic male, 34 years old, Criminal Justice major, first person in family to attend college, currently has children attending school K-12).

"I had several real poorest teachers in my Middle School. This was also when I studied in Mexico. I had an English, History, Art teachers completely lazy. We never did something on any of these classes. They always released us like ten minutes after the class started. They just passed the class (indistinguishable) and that is it." (Hispanic female, 18 years of age, Criminal Justice major).

Unprofessional behavior by K-12 teachers includes teachers who are uninterested in the success and wellbeing of their students, teachers who are unwilling to teach, and even those teachers who seem too busy with other things to teach. Such attitudes can transfer to students who do not feel motivated to do well in school or even attend school. Students who may have been engaged with previous teachers or in prior subjects may become disengaged and often suffer academically. Additionally, as illustrated quite well in the stories above, there are teachers who do the absolute minimum to get through the school day yet still receive a paycheck and are rehired for the following year. These behaviors model a less than desirable work ethic for children and young adults.

Students can be critically affected by poor teachers, as sub par teaching damages a student academically and personally. Students who are interested and eager to learn and participate in class may become deflated and discouraged by disconnected and unmotivated educators. Often, poor performing teachers are not thoroughly evaluated or, due to the lack of quality numbers in new hires, are moved from classroom to classroom or school to school. Few states have probationary periods for teachers longer than two years. Often, teachers can achieve a permanent status less than three years after certification, though some state legislative bodies

are considering a change (Weeding Out Bad Teachers, 2005).

Disrespectful Behavior Toward Children and Disregard for Students

“This teacher was mean. Very insulting and would use punishment if I didn’t understand my work. She, instead of helping, would insult me and would make fun of me or any other student that was a slow learner.” (Hispanic female, 35 years of age, Education major, currently has children attending school K-12)

“My fourth grade teacher. I told her about a problem happening in school and she told the whole classroom. I had to drop out of the school.” (Hispanic female, age 25, Dental Hygiene major, first person in family to attend college, currently has children attending school K-12).

“My English teacher in 10th grade. He would always put me down because I was pregnant and married at the age of fifteen. My appearance after being absent would just make him so mad and always had something negative to say, until I told him if he had something to say to me to talk to me instead of saying negative thing to the class. He didn’t keep me from graduating high school.” (Hispanic female, 31 years of age, Education major, first person in family to attend college, currently has children attending school K-12).

Respect for others is a trait seen as desirable in society and is even taught in schools. Yet, as described in the stories above, many teachers disregard their students and even outright disrespect them. Teachers who show contempt in the classroom may foster a hostile environment for a student or even an entire class. Behaviors such as making fun of students, breaching the bond of trust with a student, and calling students names by teachers are poor role modeling and often manifest into larger issues as seen above.

Disrespectful behavior on the part of teachers towards their students can take many forms, including embarrassment, humiliation, disregard for a students’ beliefs, and harassment. As Mathews (2005) reported in 2003, the family of a female student in the Washington D.C. public school system notified the girl’s teacher that she would be staying home on the designated day to observe Yom Kippur. The mother of the student explains how when the daughter provided the teacher with the note, the teacher “in front of the entire social studies class asked [the daughter] in a very critical voice which she thought was more important: Yom Kippur or getting an education” (Mathews, 2005, par. 23). Such disrespectful behavior on the part of the teacher hurts students’ feelings and affects student motivation to learn.

Poor Classroom Management

“In my years in high school there was one teacher who did not teach me anything. Economics was the subject and the teacher tied teaching yet students did not care much less of him. I passed that class but because he passed all of us. He would let students do what they want and that time it was fun but now that I realize it was not I should have learned what I could in high school.” (Hispanic male, 22 years old, Pharmacy major, first person in family to attend college).

Viewed through the eyes of a child a classroom with no enforced rules and no structure for learning might be considered fun and cool at the time. However, whether in the next year of school or later as an adult, the student may realize no learning actually took place and the inaction of the teacher was to their detriment. How a teacher manages a classroom, and therefore the behavior and learning of the students in the classroom, seems connected to a student's perception of professional behavior on the part of a teacher.

Education majors and pre-service teachers go through many hurdles and batteries of tests to achieve their teaching certification. Not all individuals qualify to teach children. Yet, even with the system designed to weed out poorly qualified individuals there are those persons who make it to the classroom lacking the specific skills, knowledge, and abilities needed to deal with such a multidimensional position (Blair, 2001).

One possibility for problems with classroom management and other pedagogical issues is that teacher preparation programs teach a subject but not necessarily teach the teachers how to teach. In the State of Texas, a "state law, implemented in 1991, prohibits prospective teachers from taking more than 18 hours of pedagogical coursework - including student teaching - in an attempt to emphasize subject-area knowledge" (Blair, 2001, Par. 89). Another hindrance to potentially well-trained teachers in the classroom is that in the State of Texas teachers may work in public schools up to two years lacking their permanent license.

Absenteeism

“My Pre Cal teacher because I did NOT learn anything!!! She was absent the first 3 months then finally came in and left as she got hired somewhere else. We got another teacher who didn't teach us anything. I lost a whole year of math. Now I hate it.” (Hispanic female, 20 years of age, Communications major).

“The poorest teacher I had was when I was a senior in high school. She was always complaining that she had family problems. We always had a substitute and gave special attention and preference to people that would “suck up to her”. She was never available if I had any questions and would be mad if we didn't understand something.” (Hispanic female, 20 years of age, Criminal Justice major, first person in family to attend college).

There are times that being absent from a job cannot be avoided. A teacher's absence can have a negative impact on a student's learning and their connection to the classroom. As seen in this study unprofessional behavior by teachers and excessive and long-term absences are connected in the perceptions of students. Being late, leaving early, or not showing up at all models qualities not desired in society. Some teachers might abuse the system. One teacher from Chicago repeatedly showed up late in the morning to teach her classes. She would arrive just before the time deadline that her contract deemed her supervisor able to reduce her pay or even fire her (Weele, 1994). Unpredictability and lack of a teacher in the classroom potentially created an environment not conducive to learning.

Racism/Prejudice/Favoritism

“The worst teacher was my third grade Spanish teacher. She always showed favoritism to the richest children. She always put me down and talked about me to a colleague loud enough so that I would hear her. Other students that picked on me never got in trouble. To this day I never learned anything in her class.” (Hispanic female, 18 years of age, Business major)

“The worst teacher was a person who the only thing would do was give us the work and tell us to read the book for examples. And tell us that college was like that. When we were only in middle school. And talk about how she would hate the Mexican people who would come to the Valley only to ask for help.” (Hispanic male, 23 years old, Psychology major, first person in family to attend college).

Inclusion and acceptance are sought out by children and adults alike. Favoritism by teachers of students may negatively affect students academically as well as emotionally. Teachers who swap grades for favors not only model unprofessional and unethical behavior but set students up to fail. A St. Louis algebra teacher would give A's to students "who would bring her Big Gulps and Snickers bars" (Schweizer, 1998, Par. 21). In these situations students did not receive the necessary instruction, learn the correct information, nor accumulate the skills necessary for the next level. Once in their next class, it would be easy to surmise that the students who were passed unscrupulously had difficulties academically.

A 2006 lawsuit filed by Native American families in South Dakota claimed schools in the Winner school district discriminated against Native American students. In *Antoine et al v. Winner School District* the plaintiffs stated that “the schools discriminated against Native American students in disciplining them, were hostile toward Native American families, and took statements from students involved in disciplinary matters that were later used to prosecute them in juvenile and criminal courts” (Native American Families and Winner School District Announce Settlement in Case Alleging Discrimination, 2007, par. 5). Just over a year later the lawsuit was settled through judge led mediation (Native American Families and Winner School District Announce Settlement in Case Alleging Discrimination, 2007).

Being singled out by teachers because of race, ethnicity, nationality, or socio-economic status could humiliate and alienate a student. A student might shut down academically due to harmful remarks from a teacher. Hurt feelings can grow into emotional scars that follow a student through their academic career and beyond. Animosity felt towards a racist or prejudiced teacher could in turn push the student to be, at the very least, weary of other individuals similar to the educator's race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, or socio-economic status. As illustrated by the stories above, students do not easily forget incidents of racism, prejudice, and favoritism practiced by teachers.

Discussion

Teachers affect children academically, developmentally, and emotionally. The impact teachers make on students can affect them both in and outside the classroom. Student perceptions of

characteristics displayed by educators are valid and memorable. Such traits can influence a student both positively and negatively. Positive characteristics displayed by teachers, such as high expectations, have a positive effect on students, whereas negative behavior, such as negative feedback, can shape a student negatively (Wentzel, 2002).

Unprofessional behaviors and how the teacher teaches or treats a student permeate throughout the remainder of students' educational journey and beyond. Revealing the stories by college students of unprofessional behavior by K-12 teachers can aid those persons in the field of education and research. Such information may be useful to persons in area of teacher preparation and development, those persons who create and administer assessment and evaluation methods and instruments, and those persons researching teacher effectiveness, characteristics, and teacher behavior. We believe that the current findings will assist in the continued effort of improving the educational experience for our students.

Stories by students of the unprofessional behavior of their K-12 teachers need to be shared with the larger professional community. Examples provided by the researchers are illustrative of some of the negative traits displayed by teachers that detrimentally affect students, both academically and emotionally. Additionally, specific descriptions of unethical, abusive, and sometimes shocking behavior on the part of those persons designated to teach and care for our students may draw attention from educators, administrators, researchers, advocates of education, and parents alike.

The authors of this study attempted to examine what is perceived to be unprofessional within the context of K-12 teachers from the retrospective views of college students. Findings from this research project may help educators better understand what negative, and potentially life changing, experiences students had during primary and secondary schooling. Information derived from the study may also provide teacher preparatory programs, administrators, and teachers themselves with descriptions of unprofessional behavior and related negative characteristics which in turn can be utilized to promote more effective teacher behavior, develop more successful and valuable evaluation instruments, and opportunities for professional development. Such findings can allow our profession to police itself for the sake of our students.

To prevent some teachers from demonstrating unprofessional behaviors in the classroom, we need to do a better job providing quality teacher preparatory programs, embedding character-building and work ethics training in these programs. We also need to have better mentoring programs for new school teachers and better evaluation and accountability systems to ensure teachers behaving professionally. In addition, schools should conduct surveys to gather students' and their parents' opinions about their teachers for the sake of finding out important information and areas for improvement for teachers. Meanwhile, reward systems should also be in place to reward teachers who are caring, competent, and professional. Whatever measures we take, we need to keep in mind that our students' learning experience in schools impact their whole life. As such, we believe that educators and school leaders have the responsibility to ensure a positive and productive learning environment and learning experience for our students.

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