

1014-V1-1217      **Judith Lynn Gieger\*** (lgieger@oglethorpe.edu), Oglethorpe University, 4484 Peachtree Rd.  
NE, Atlanta, GA 30319. *The myth of the good mathematics teacher.*

Teachers are most often blamed for the lack of student success in mathematics, and a strong set of cultural beliefs exist about teachers' lack of qualifications (codified by the requirements of No Child Left Behind). At the same time that the larger group of mathematics teachers hold the blame, individual good teachers (specifically Jaime Escalante) take on a mythical status. The myth of Escalante serves an ideological function in society—the fact that his story is true further contributes to the ideology. The celebrated characteristics of Escalante's teaching are highly individualistic, which perpetuate the cultural belief that everything depends on the teacher. Also, implicit in the myth is the teacher as an expert in the field, yet this is not discussed explicitly. What is made explicit is the teacher as a force of personality, making the self an even larger factor in the success of his students. The acceptance of expertise in the myth likely comes from the belief that mathematics is hard to understand, allowing society to accept the myth of expertise without directly questioning that expertise. This leaves us with a notion of good mathematics as difficult to comprehend, yet a commonsense notion of a good mathematics teacher as having qualities evident to all. (Received September 27, 2005)