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THE STUDENT IMAGE OF THE TEACHER IN A BUSINESS SCHOOL*

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One of the topics about which we talk most and know least is "what makes a good teacher." The reason we know as little as we do is twofold. One, it is difficult to determine on what characteristics one should evaluate those faculty members who are acclaimed by colleagues and students alike as good teachers. Second, it is difficult to trust the criterion of colleague and student opinion. Just because a person is perceived to be a good teacher does not mean that students actually learn more from him in terms of some independent measure of skill or knowledge acquired and retained for some years after school. The second of these problems, that of the criterion, we have not solved in the present study. The criterion used is the nomination by a student of someone from whom he learned a lot or a little. The first of these problems, finding adequate categories of description, is the focus of this study. Basically its purpose is to determine what kinds of descriptive dimensions or constructs differentiate the person who is named as someone from whom students feel they have learned and someone from whom they feel they have not learned.

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Procedure

The basic procedure was to ask a sample of students first to nominate and then to describe one or two faculty members in each of four basic categories:

a) A faculty member from whom I learned a great deal ("Learned a great deal" is meant to imply not only formal knowledge but total personal influence in the sense of new points of view, attitudes, and values)

b) A faculty member from whom I learned very little

c) A faculty member whom I like personally (This person does not need to be someone with whom you have had a course)

d) A faculty member whom I dislike personally (This person does not need to be someone with whom you have had a course)

For purposes of this report, we will label members of category (a) "good teachers" and members of categroy (b) "poor teachers," bearing in mind that we are using only the student opinion as the criterion. Members of category (c) will be labelled "liked persons" and members of category (d) "disliked persons." Each student had two sheets for each category, one required and one optional one.*

The adjective dimensions used are shown in Table 1 of the results section. We included 36 dimensions to reflect a number of areas of concern: a) intellectual competence (e.g., original-unoriginal); b) interpersonal response traits (e.g., helpful-not helpful); c) personal qualities (e.g., high integrity-low integrity). Particular items in each of these areas were selected in terms of the

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* Data on liking and disliking are not reported in this paper. These will be reported in a future paper.

broader criterion of relevance to the role of teacher and the role of manager. Adjectives like "active--passive" were inserted because they are highly descriptive of the "good manager." We wished to check, if possible, whether the good teacher was seen to be similar to the good manager. In addition to the 36 dimensions, we inserted four blank spaces for students to write in their own dimensions if they cared to.

Each student was asked to place a checkmark somewhere along each of the dimensions and then to go back and circle the three adjectives which for him best captured the characteristics of the person he was rating. We, therefore, have three sources of data: a) the descriptions along the 36 original dimensions; b) the adjectives circled as being "most characteristic;" and c) the dimensions written in spontaneously by the student.

The sample studied

The rating forms were given to the entire membership of two groups of students in the Sloan School of Management at M.I.T.: a) a class of 41 Sloan Fellows (hereafter simply called "Sloans") who are middle managers ranging in age from 30 to 45 who attend M.I.T. for one year to obtain a Master of Science degree in Industrial Management; and b) a class of 71 regular graduate students in the Sloan School (hereafter called "grads"). Grads are usually younger than the Sloans, have usually not had prior work experience,

usually come directly out of college, and attend M.I.T. for two years leading to the M.S. in Industrial Management. The Sloans were given the questionnaire after they had been at M.I.T. for approximately seven months and had had some 10 to 12 courses; the grads were given the questionnaire at the end of their first year after some 10 to 12 courses.

Forty out of 41 Sloans returned completed questionnaires for a response rate of 98 percent; 55 out of 71 grads (78 percent) returned the questionnaires.

In describing the sample studied, we must also discuss the number and range of faculty members who were nominated in each of the categories. The Sloans mentioned 19 different faculty members as good teachers, 14 as poor teachers, 20 as liked persons, and 12 as disliked persons. Grads mentioned 30 different faculty members as good teachers, 21 as poor teachers, 36 as liked persons, and 17 as disliked persons. In the sample of good teachers, 5 men out of the total of 47 appeared in both the Sloan and grad lists; in the sample of poor teachers, 2 out of 35 were common; in the sample of liked persons, 7 out of 56 were common; and in the sample of disliked persons, 3 out of 29 were common. When we later compare the Sloan and grad groups, therefore, if we find the profiles to be similar, this is not based on the artifact of the same people being rated. Basically, the two student groups were exposed to different sets of faculty members, hence they can be treated as

independent both in terms of their stereotypes of the good and poor teachers and in terms of the actual personalities they were rating.

Data analysis

All descriptions were first disguised by replacing the faculty member's name with a code number. Students were automatically disguised since each questionnaire was identified only by number. For each rating category (good teacher, poor teacher, etc.) the description sheets were then sorted by faculty member named. If a given person was named more than once, all the descriptions of him in that category were first averaged into a single profile. To get a profile of the good teacher, etc., we then averaged all the individual profiles of all the different people who had been named in that category. Thus the profile of the good teacher as seen by Sloans is based on 19 different faculty members, even though the number of actual descriptions is much greater. We followed this averaging procedure in order to elicit those characteristics which good and poor teachers had in common, necessitating that each nominee be allowed only one "vote" in influencing the final profile.

In examining the profiles, we looked for those adjectives which produced the largest differences and which received the most extreme average ratings. Extremity was considered important as an estimator of intensity of feeling. Size of difference was important because, as we will see, in comparing the good and poor teacher, almost all of

the adjectives were significantly different from each other in terms of a purely statistical criterion. We also feel that we are operating within the framework of hypothesis development rather than hypothesis testing, which necessitates a more global evaluation of the data. Therefore we used the profiles to seek out quantitatively which dimensions differentiated the good and poor teacher best, but then supplemented the profile analysis with a count of relative frequency of mention of adjectives written in as "most characteristic." Finally, we relied on the spontaneously written in dimensions to provide further corroboration of dimensions previously identified and to formulate a more general concept of the good and poor teacher in terms of sets of dimensions which reflect common themes.

Results

a. Profile analysis.

Table 1 shows the average ratings for the good and poor teacher made by Sloans and grads. A number of factors are evident from inspection of these profiles:

1) Sloans and grads tend strongly to agree with each other in their ratings of both the good and the poor teacher. This can be seen visually in Table 1. On none of the dimensions is there as much as one full category width of difference between the Sloan and grad ratings for good or for poor teachers. None of the differences reach the .01 level by a medians test on the underlying

Table 1

MEAN RATINGS BY SLOAN FELLOWS AND GRADUATE STUDENTS OF FACULTY MEMBERS NAMED AS SOMEONE FROM WHOM THEY FELT THEY "LEARNED A GREAT DEAL" OR "LEARNED VERY LITTLE"

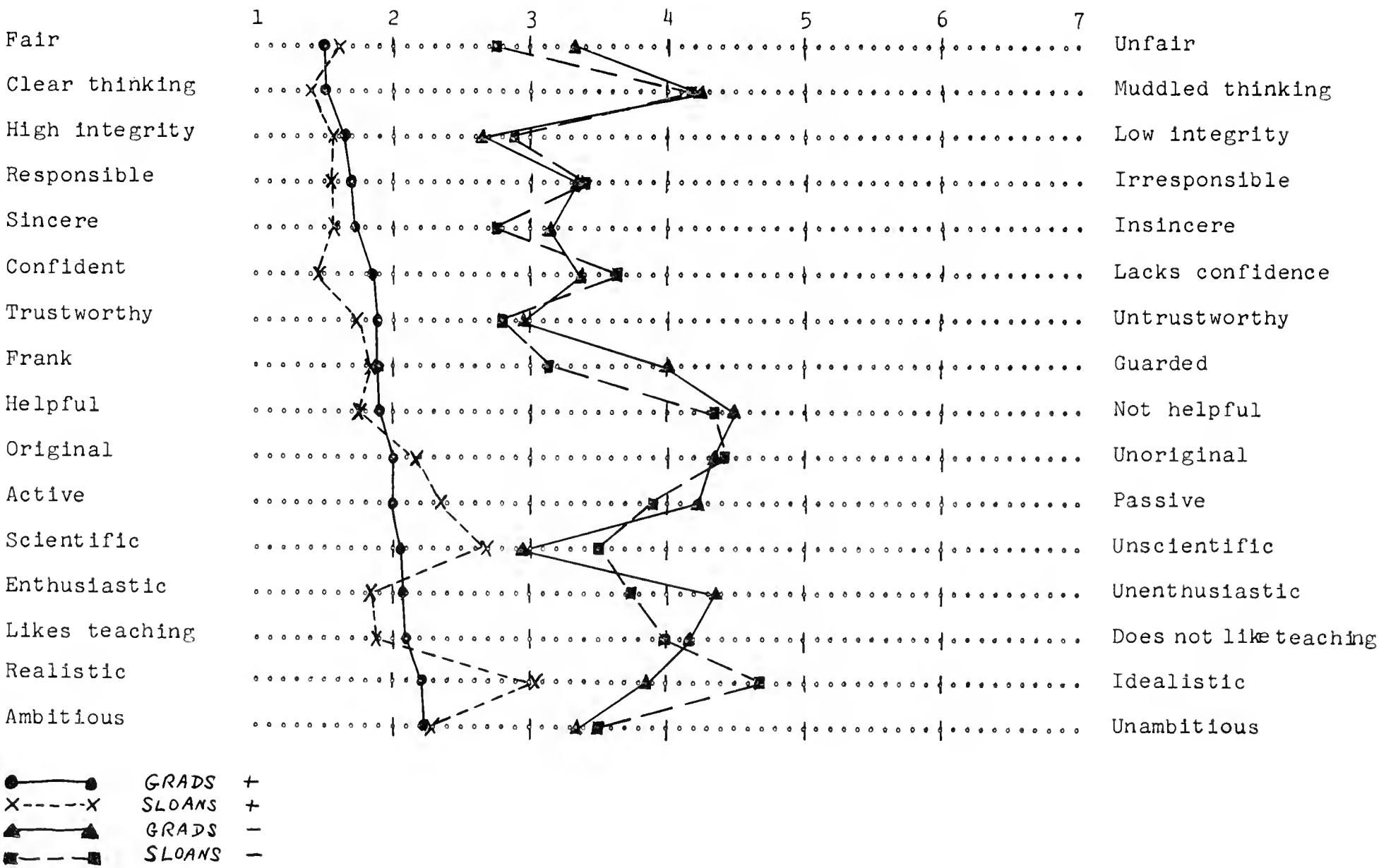
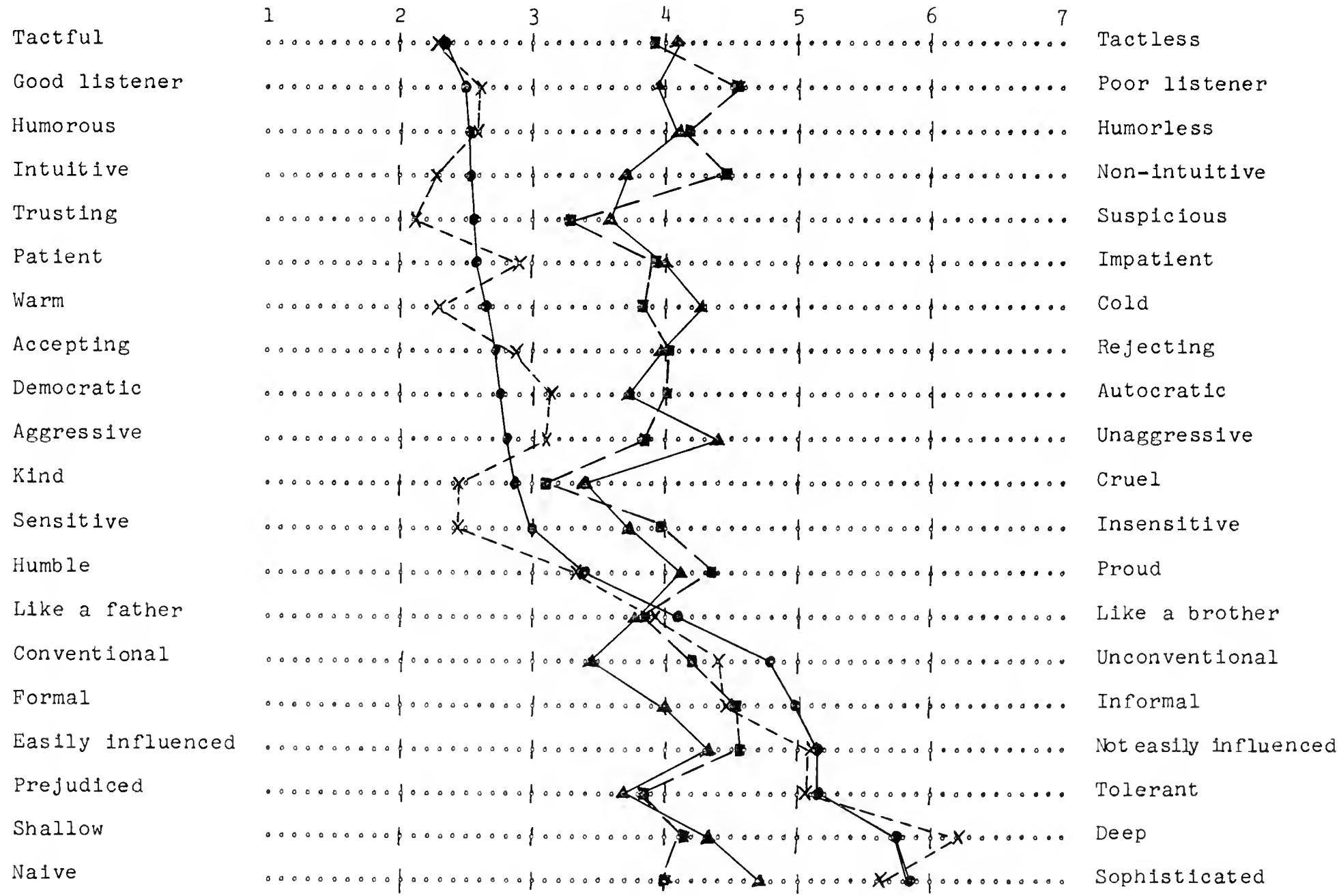


Table 1 (continued)



distributions of responses. Since there is virtually no overlap between the groups of faculty members being rated, these similarities reflect a genuine agreement in how students tend to perceive a good and poor teacher. As we will see below, some differences do emerge upon closer examination of all the data, but at a gross level the fact that Sloans have had work experience and approach the student role differently from grads does not influence their perception of good and poor teachers in a major way.

2) The image of the good teacher is generally "clearer" than the image of the poor teacher. This conclusion follows from three kinds of data: a) the average disagreement between Sloans and grads is less on the good profile than on the poor profile (average difference of .266 vs. .333). b) The means for the good profile tend to be relatively more extreme than the means of the poor profile; the latter set tends to stay near the middle of the rating scale for all adjective dimensions while the positive profile moves from one extreme over to the other. Willingness on the part of the student to give extreme ratings implies that he has a clearer, less ambiguous image of the good teacher, and that there is relatively greater agreement among students concerning these characteristics. c) There are more dimensions in the positive than the negative profile on which high consensus is achieved, as measured by the size of the standard deviations around each mean. On the good profile, the number of standard deviations below 1.0 is 32 (21 for the Sloans and 11 for the grads); on the poor profile, the number of standard

deviations below 1.0 is only 15 (10 and 5 respectively). The fact that the Sloans have more low standard deviations than the grads could be due either to greater consensus among them or to the fact that there were fewer of them doing ratings (since S.D. goes up with size of N).

3) Both groups distinguish clearly between the good and the poor teacher. On virtually every dimension in both student groups, there is a highly significant difference between the mean rating of the good teacher and the mean rating of the poor teacher. This result implies that the student makes a kind of global evaluation and then rates the good teacher on the positive side of most dimensions while the poor teacher is rated neutrally or negatively on most of them.

To clarify the manner in which the student discriminates above and beyond whatever global stereotyping he does, we must examine the amount of difference on different dimensions. Table 2 shows the ten adjective dimensions which produced the greatest absolute difference between means of good and poor teachers for each student group. These, we may infer, are the dimensions which occupy the greatest importance in the student's mind when rating his teachers. Choosing ten dimensions is, of course, an arbitrary decision since the distribution of differences tends to be fairly continuous, as can be seen by an inspection of Table 1.

Table 2

THE TEN ADJECTIVE DIMENSIONS WHICH PRODUCED THE GREATEST DIFFERENCE IN RATINGS OF FACULTY MEMBERS FROM WHOM STUDENTS "LEARNED A GREAT DEAL" OR "VERY LITTLE"

Sloan Fellows dimensions	"great deal"		"very little"	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Clear thinking--muddled thinking	1.38	.44	4.24	1.35
Helpful--not helpful	1.76	.79	4.30	1.13
Original--unoriginal	2.19	.97	4.40	1.39
Confident--lacks confidence	1.47	.54	3.62	1.38
Intuitive--non-intuitive	2.29	.74	4.46	.97
Likes teaching--does not like teaching	1.87	.66	4.00	1.11
Shallow--deep	6.20	.67	4.13	1.06
Enthusiastic--unenthusiastic	1.83	.69	3.72	1.34
Good listener--poor listener	2.68	1.74	4.55	1.19
Responsible--irresponsible	1.55	.38	3.32	1.32
Graduate Student dimensions				
Clear thinking--muddled thinking	1.53	1.12	4.27	1.43
Helpful--not helpful	1.94	.76	4.49	1.45
Enthusiastic--unenthusiastic	2.10	1.13	4.36	1.67
Original--unoriginal	2.00	.98	4.35	1.20
Active--passive	2.01	1.08	4.20	1.85
Frank--guarded	1.91	1.11	4.04	1.73
Likes teaching--does not like teaching	2.12	1.26	4.18	1.30
Fair--unfair	1.49	.58	3.34	1.35
Responsible--irresponsible	1.69	.58	3.36	1.04
Tactful--tactless	2.34	1.04	4.06	1.09

Both groups give prime emphasis to clear thinking, helpful, original, likes teaching, enthusiastic, and responsible. For the Sloans, the dimensions of confidence, intuitive, deep, and good listener are relatively more important, while for the grads, the dimensions of active, frank, fair, and tactful are more important. Clarity of thought and helpfulness come out at the top of both lists suggesting that these are the two most important dimensions in assessing a teacher. Before attempting to interpret these findings, let us examine the other two types of data available in this study.

b. Analysis of adjective dimensions listed as "most characteristic."

To what extent do the dimensions which have thus far been identified as differentiators correspond to the dimensions named when the student circles the "three adjectives which best capture the characteristics of the person?" Table 3 shows the adjectives most often circled for the good and poor teachers.

The dimension of clarity of thought again emerges unequivocally as the single most important characteristic of the person from whom students feel they learn. Not only is it the most frequently mentioned on the positive side, but muddled thinking is most often mentioned by Sloans as a characteristic of the teacher from whom they felt they learned very little. This characteristic is not one of the most often mentioned on the negative side by grads, however, indicating that for them it is not specifically a characteristic which disqualifies a teacher, even though its opposite is a clear quality of a good teacher.

Table 3

ADJECTIVES MOST OFTEN CIRCLED IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION OF WHICH ADJECTIVE BEST CAPTURED THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSON BEING DESCRIBED*

Learned a great deal

Sloan Fellows		Grads	
Clear thinking	24	Clear thinking	34
Enthusiastic	18	Enthusiastic	19
Likes teaching	12	Likes teaching	16
Helpful	11	Confident	8
Confident	10	Original	8
Warm	10	Ambitious	7
High integrity	9	Fair	7
Humorous	8	Frank	6
Original	7	Helpful	6
Active	6	High integrity	6
Frank	6	Intuitive	6
Realistic	6	Realistic	6
Sensitive	6		
Sincere	6		

Learned very little

Sloan Fellows		Grads	
Muddled thinking	13	Unenthusiastic	15
Poor listener	10	Passive	11
Passive	8	Unaggressive	7
Lacks confidence	7	Informal	6
Idealistic	7	Not helpful	6
		Idealistic	6

* All adjectives circled at least six times are listed.

Enthusiasm emerges clearly as the second most important dimension, being mentioned by both groups on the positive side, and by the grads on the negative side as the most important thing the poor teacher lacks. For Sloans, however, it is not a disqualifier, being rarely mentioned as a description of the poor teacher. Liking teaching occupies a clear third position as a characteristic of the good teacher, but its opposite does not seem to be an important characteristic of the poor teacher. Both groups mention confidence, originality, and helpfulness with considerable frequency on the positive side, and passiveness, and idealism on the negative side.

The groups differ in that the Sloans more often than the grads mention warmth, humorousness, sensitivity, and sincerity, while grads more often mention ambition and fairness. In describing the poor teacher, Sloans more often mentioned muddled thinking, poor listening, and lack of confidence, while grads more often mentioned lack of enthusiasm, lack of aggressiveness, and informality.

c. Analysis of dimensions written in and development of general concept.

The final source of descriptions is the dimensions written in by the students in the blank spaces provided. Table 4 shows the list of written-in adjectives showing the frequency of mention in parentheses if an adjective was mentioned more than once.

Several broad categories of concern are revealed in these

Table 4

ADJECTIVES WRITTEN IN THE BLANK SPACES UNDER EACH CATEGORY BEING RATED

Learned a great deal

Sloan Fellows		Grads	
Knowledgeable	3	Experienced	2
Intelligent	2	Open minded, questioning, conveys to students sense of responsibility for thinking	1
Dedicated	2	Articulate	1
Capable	1	Helps out of class	1
Hard worker	1	Precise	1
Generous	1	Organized	1
Research minded	1	Efficient	1
High sense of purpose	1		
Interesting	1		
Perceptive	1		
Vital	1		
Fascinating	1		

Learned very little

Sloan Fellows		Grads	
Defensive	1	Unorganized or poorly organized	4
Vulgar	1	Low teaching ability	2
Chaotic	1	Unprepared	2
Poor teacher	1	Not punctual	1
Unindustrious	1	Inability to get across	1
Unperceptive	1	Hard to figure	1
Uncommunicative	1	Cannot express self	1
Unprepared	1	Unclear lectures	1
Undependable	1	Obscure	1
Inexperienced	1	Easygoing	1
Lazy	1	Dull	1
Sick	1	Theoretical	1
Enigmatic	1	Abstract	1
Language difficulty	1		
Does not pace himself in class	1		

dimensions, categories which may serve as organizing themes for pulling together the data from the profiles and the adjectives circled. Clearly one major concern in both groups is intellectual competence and ability to communicate. Adjectives such as intelligent, capable, and experienced clearly refer to intellectual competence, while adjectives such as interesting, articulate, precise, and organized refer to communication competence. Looking back at our earlier tables, we can now identify clarity of thinking, originality, and sophistication as falling in this same general realm. We will label this area of adjectives "intellectual and communication competence."

A second area of concern which emerges is captured best by adjectives such as dedicated, hard worker, high sense of purpose, undependable, lazy, unprepared, easygoing, and not punctual. These dimensions concern the degree to which the teacher is perceived to be committed to his role as teacher. If we look back at our earlier tables, we find there the counterpart adjective dimensions of helpful, likes teaching, enthusiastic, good listener, and responsible. Commitment to the role involves not only personal competence but also certain interpersonal competencies and an interest in students. Thus helpfulness and liking to teach have implications for how the teacher will respond to the student. We will label this area of adjectives "concern for and commitment to teacher role."

A third area in which adjectives can be pulled together is reflected in terms such as vital, fascinating, vulgar, sick, de-

fensive, enigmatic, and hard to figure. In the earlier tables, we find similar dimensions such as confident, high integrity, humorous, active, and deep. Many of these dimensions appear to be related to the concept of personal potency, in the sense of the likelihood that the teacher will stimulate positive identification and thereby greater learning. We are assuming that if the student can identify himself with the teacher, he is more likely to perceive himself as learning something. The question at issue, then, is what kinds of personal qualities make an individual more or less potent as an identification model. Adjectives such as those listed above suggest characteristics of the more or less potent individual, hence we will label this dimension as "personal potency as a model."

The above three dimensions do not exhaust all of the adjectives considered important by the students, and some adjectives cannot be placed clearly in one or another category. Nevertheless, it is useful to summarize the image of the good and poor teachers in terms of these three dimensions, as shown in Table 5. It should be noted that the adjectives which best differentiate the good and the poor teachers are distributed across all three major areas. This finding implies the hypothesis that the person from whom students feel they have learned must be several things in combination--he must be competent in his field, he must know how to communicate what he knows, he must convey a sense of commitment to teaching and display this commitment in concern for students, and he must have personal qualities which make him salient and potent as a

Table 5

GENERAL CATEGORIES OR CONCEPTS FOR DESCRIBING THE TEACHER

Intellectual and Communication Competence	Concern for and Commitment to Teacher Role	Personal Potency as a Model
Clear thinking	Helpful	Confident
Original	Likes teaching	Intuitive
Realistic	Enthusiastic	Deep
Intelligent	Good listener	High integrity
Experienced	Responsible	Active
Knowledgeable	Sensitive	Warm
Capable	Fair	Humorous
Interesting	Dedicated	Sincere
Sophisticated	Generous	Ambitious
Perceptive	High sense of purpose	Vital
Articulate	Prepared	Fascinating
Organized	Efficient	

model. Perhaps the ultimate difficulty of being a good teacher lies in the fact that many teachers have some of these qualities but very few teachers combine enough of them.

d. Sample cases.

Some sample cases which illustrate the particular combinations of the dimensions discussed in this paper are shown in Table 6. The adjectives listed are those mentioned as most characteristic of the person. Person A was nominated by 13 Sloans as someone from whom they had learned a great deal. Person B was nominated by 10 Sloans, while Person C was nominated by 7 Sloans. A and B present rather similar pictures with emphasis on all three types of adjectives. Person C, however, suggests the possibility that competence need not be as salient as the commitment and potency dimensions. Very few competence adjectives are listed for him as being his special characteristic. We checked the individual profiles of C and found that he is rated very high on clarity of thought and originality, but apparently few raters saw these as C's unique qualities.

The three persons most frequently nominated by graduate students show clearly the blend of qualities of the teacher from whom students feel they learn. In each case, all three areas are represented. The individual cases shown of teachers from whom students felt they learned little illustrate many of the opposites of the high learning cases, but in addition point up the fact we noted earlier that, on the whole, the negative image is less clear

Table 6

ADJECTIVES CIRCLED OR WRITTEN IN FOR THOSE TEACHERS NAMED MOST OFTEN UNDER "LEARNED A GREAT DEAL" OR "LEARNED VERY LITTLE"

Learned a great deal (Sloan Fellows)

Person A (13 nominations)		Person B (10 nominations)		Person C (7 nominations)	
Clear thinking	6	Enthusiastic	6	Helpful	2
Confident	4	Clear thinking	5	Likes teaching	2
Enthusiastic	3	Likes teaching	3	Warm	2
Realistic	3	Original	2	Sincere	2
Sophisticated	2	Active	2	Patient	2
Unconventional	2	Warm	2	Fair	1
Humorous	2	Humorous	2	Frank	1
Original	2	Confident	1	High integrity	1
High integrity	1	Frank	1	Sensitive	1
Deep	1	Sensitive	1	Clear thinking	1
Intelligent	1	Fair	1		
Frank	1	High integrity	1		
Active	1	Helpful	1		
Sincere	1	Good listener	1		
Like a father	1	Kind	1		
Formal	1				
Likes teaching	1				

Learned a great deal (Grads)

Person D (8 nominations)		Person E (6 nominations)		Person F (6 nominations)	
Clear thinking	6	Clear thinking	3	Tolerant	4
Enthusiastic	3	Enthusiastic	3	Clear thinking	2
Likes teaching	2	Sincere	2	Sincere	2
Scientific	2	Likes teaching	2	Tactful	2
Original	2	High integrity	2	Confident	1
Deep	2	Tolerant	1	Intuitive	1
Intuitive	1	Amibitious	1	Deep	1
Humble	1	Fair	1	High integrity	1
Kind	1	Responsible	1	Humble	1
Unconventional	1	Sophisticated	1	Good listener	1
		Realistic	1	Responsible	1

Table 6 (continued)

Learned very little (Sloan Fellows)

Person G (17 nominations)		Person H (12 nominations)		Person I (6 nominations)	
Unconventional	6	Muddled thinking	7	Ambitious	2
Insincere	4	Lacks confidence	4	Humorless	2
Idealistic	4	Does not like teaching	2	Impatient	2
Passive	3	Non-intuitive	2	Likes teaching	1
Shallow	3	Idealistic	2	Sincere	1
Sophisticated	2	Insensitive	2	Poor teacher	1
Informal	2	Enthusiastic	1	Frank	1
Muddled thinking	2	Scientific	1	Not easily influenced	1
Original	2	Irresponsible	1	Does not pace himself in class	1
Guarded	2	Unperceptive	1	Confident	1
Deep	2	Uncommunicative	1	Aggressive	1
Easily influenced	2	Unambitious	1		
Defensive	1	Rejecting	1		
Unaggressive	1	Not helpful	1		
Lazy	1	Naive	1		
Poor listener	1	Not easily influenced	1		
Low integrity	1	Passive	1		
Intuitive	1	Unaggressive	1		
Non-intuitive	1	Poor listener	1		
Ill	1	Inexperienced	1		
Lacks confidence	1				
Helpful	1				
Does not like teaching	1				
Humorous	1				
Unenthusiastic	1				
Enigmatic	1				
Sensitive	1				
Scientific	1				

Table 6 (continued)

Learned very little (Grads)

Person J (9 nominations)		Person K (8 nominations)		Person L (8 nominations)	
Unenthusiastic	7	Sophisticated	2	Not helpful	3
Passive	4	Fair	2	Unorganized	2
Unaggressive	2	Unaggressive	2	Active	1
Cold	2	Tolerant	1	Unprepared	1
Lacks confidence	2	Scientific	1	Muddled thinking	1
Does not like teaching	2	Enthusiastic	1	Helpful	1
Poor listener	1	Unable to lecture	1	Like a father	1
Informal	1	Conventional	1	Confident	1
Idealistic	1	Humorless	1	Unoriginal	1
Humorless	1	Accepting	1	Cold	1
Non-intuitive	1	Easily influenced	1	Autocratic	1
		Unoriginal	1	Insensitive	1
		Passive Unenthusiastic	1	Likes teaching	1
		Unprepared	1	Not easily influenced	1
		Lacks confidence	1	Irresponsible	1
		Frank	1	Enthusiastic	1
		Obscure	1	Intuitive	1
		Helpful	1		
		Responsible	1		

than the positive one. Many more adjectives are used across the population of describers, fewer adjectives achieve many votes, and different describers sometimes tend to see opposite qualities in the same person. Thus person G is labelled both as shallow and deep, and person K is seen as both enthusiastic and unenthusiastic.

Summary and discussion

The descriptions given by Sloans and grads of faculty members from whom they learned a great deal or learned very little revealed: 1) that the two groups agreed with each other in describing either the good or the bad teacher; 2) that the image of the good teacher is clearer than the image of the bad teacher; 3) that the good teacher is clearly distinguishable from the bad teacher in terms of student description; 4) that both student groups attach special importance to the dimensions of clear thinking, helpful, and enthusiastic; and 5) that when all the data are considered together, the image of the good teacher comes out as having three major components--intellectual and communication competence (e.g., clear thinking, original) commitment to role of teacher (e.g., helpful, likes teaching, enthusiastic), and personal potency as a model (e.g., confident, intuitive, deep, high integrity).

What do these findings, taken together, mean? We can attempt to answer this question from several perspectives. First, from the perspective of perceptual theory, we may state the hypothesis

that being a good or poor teacher is an organized, global kind of percept in which a number of separate dimensions tend to be judged together. If this hypothesis can be supported, it suggests the important implication that successful performance in the teacher role requires a number of attributes in combination. In other words, the person from whom students feel they learn may have to be at one and the same time high in intellectual and communication competence, commitment to teacher role, and personal potency. None of these three characteristics by themselves may be sufficent. We plan to test this hypothesis by first factor analyzing the present set of 36 adjective dimensions and then repeating the study with a new sample of students, using only dimensions revealed in the factor analysis. If the factors remain stable in a new group of descriptions, we may assume that they represent the major perceptual components of the teacher image.

Secondly, we can relate the results to role theory. A number of role theorists have noted that some attributes of a role are more central, critical, or pivotal than others. We will follow Nadel's (1957) terminology of distinguishing three degrees of centrality--pivotal attributes which, if they are not present, disqualify the person as a role occupant, relevant attributes which are clearly associated with the role but their absence does not disqualify the person (though it may make him seem a deviant), and peripheral attributes which have no direct bearing on role occupancy. Using the example of role of doctor, a pivotal attribute would be to have

specific medical knowledge and skills; a relevant attribute would be to be a man, to have a certain bedside manner, etc.; and a peripheral attribute would be physical appearance and personality traits which are irrelevant to "bedside manner."

The question to ask of the data presented in this study is "what do they tell us about these different kinds of attributes?" For example, the universally high importance attached to clear thinking, helpful, and enthusiastic suggests that these dimensions are pivotal for the role of good teacher. Not only do these appear often in the descriptions of good teachers, but they rarely or never appear in the descriptions of poor teachers. Those dimensions which differentiate the good from the poor teachers but to a much lesser degree, and which appear more often in the descriptions of both good and poor teachers, may be considered the relevant attributes. Here we find dimensions like likes teaching, confident, fair, trustworthy, ambitious, patient, democratic, etc. Those dimensions which fail to differentiate the good from the bad teacher may be regarded as peripheral. In this category would be dimensions like kind--cruel, humble--proud, like a father--like a brother, and formal--informal.

From a practical standpoint, these theoretical formulations suggest two guidelines for the teacher. First, they suggest that he should analyze his own performance globally and consider what combination of characteristics he exhibits and how they hang together. The teacher who knows he is clear but fails to appreciate

that clarity may have to be combined with helpfulness and enthusiasm to be effective, will possibly misdiagnose the basis for his failure. If he diagnoses his own performance in terms of the combination of characteristics he exhibits, he may discover some which augment each other and others which tend to be mutually defeating. The important point is that he should examine the pattern rather than the isolated characteristic.

Secondly, the interpretations offered here suggest an analysis of the role of teacher in terms of some characteristics which it is necessary to possess, while others are desirable but cannot compensate for the absence of the necessary ones. Clear thinking, helpful and enthusiastic appear to be necessary characteristics without which the teacher cannot perform effectively in the students' eyes. Various other characteristics may enhance effectiveness if the necessary characteristics are present but they cannot compensate for them. Consequently, if a teacher diagnoses his own performance and decides that he is too unclear or too unhelpful, the implication is that he should work specifically on these characteristics rather than seeking to compensate in various other characteristics. Being original, confident, etc. does not help if the person is muddled in his thinking or is perceived as unconcerned about his students.

References

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