

PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS OF ADOLESCENT ABORIGINES

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In an article based largely on overseas research into teacher effectiveness (e.g., Ryans, 1960; Kleinfeld, 1972) and Australian discussions of the non-Aboriginal teacher's role in educating Aboriginal students (e.g., Hart, 1974), Fanshawe (1976) argues that the personal characteristics of effective teachers of adolescent Aborigines are likely to include:

- being warm and supportive;
- making realistic demands of students;
- acting in a responsible, businesslike and systematic manner;
- and being stimulating, imaginative and original.

The relevance of such a description is acknowledged by such writers as Green (1982), Murray (1982), Eckermann (1987), Henry, Knight, Lingard and Taylor (1988), and O'Keefe (1989). However, apart from the work of Jones (1979), who investigated the effects of teacher style on the reading achievement of Year 1 Aboriginal children and found that "the literature and this study have confirmed the importance of supportive, demanding type teachers" (p.56), very little Australian research relating to Fanshawe's (1976) description has been published. The present paper addresses this deficiency by reporting the findings of an investigation of teacher effectiveness among adolescent Aborigines in Brisbane.**

The research focuses on the warmth and demandingness dimensions and is based on Kleinfeld's (1972) Alaskan findings that effective teachers of Indian and Eskimo students are characterized by personal warmth and active demandingness, while ineffective

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** The full report of this research appears in: Fanshawe, J.P. (1978). "An Investigation of Some of the Characteristics of Effective Teachers of Adolescent Aborigines." Unpublished M.Ed.St.Thesis, University of Queensland: Dept of Education. Copies of the report are located in the Brisbane C.A.E.Resource Ctr and the University of Queensland Library.

teachers are lacking in either or both of these traits. In discussing demandingness, Kleinfeld suggests that many mainstream teachers working in cross-cultural situations are in danger of making insufficient demands on minority students because of their uncertainty about the relevance and legitimacy of their demands. Extensive research on teacher expectations (e.g., Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968a, 1968b; Good, 1981; Tom, Cooper, & McGraw, 1984) has demonstrated that an important consequence of low teacher expectations (cf low demandingness) is low student performance, while a consequence of high teacher expectations (cf. high demandingness) is high student performance. It follows that teachers who want their minority group students to succeed in school need to pay special attention to making realistic demands of those students. However, although Kleinfeld attributes special importance to the demandingness dimension, she also makes it clear that she sees warmth (welcoming personal friendships with students; preferring individualized instruction because it permits closer relationships with students; and using nonverbal communications such as high frequency of smiling, close body distance, and touching to convey acceptance and encouragement) as having even greater importance:

The fundamental factor that seemed to separate classrooms where village students were silent from classrooms where they were intellectually engaged was whether the teacher assumed a stance of personal warmth or professional distance.

(Kleinfeld, 1972, p.14).

The present author's analyses of the American literature relating to the teaching of minority children and the Australian literature dealing with Aboriginal education (Fanshawe, 1976; 1978) suggested that Kleinfeld's views on teacher effectiveness were worthy of testing in the Australian context. Subsequently the following criteria for measuring teacher effectiveness were established:

- a) students' liking for their school subjects;
- b) students' perceptions of how hard they worked in their subjects;
- c) students' perceptions of their ability in their subjects;
- d) students' preferred teachers; and
- e) students' perceived degree of learning in their subjects.

In order to test the warmth-demandingness hypothesis, the researcher needed to make judgments about the relative warmth and demandingness of each teacher, as perceived by each of the students. Use was again made of a series of ordinal scales, such as the one presented in Figure 2. Warmth was measured using the adjectives, "friendly", "understanding", "helpful", and "encouraging", while demandingness was measured using the words, "demanding", "makes sure you do good work", "always expects you to do your best", and "won't let you get away with poor work". Teachers' overall warmth scores were calculated by summing their rankings on the four warmth scales, and their overall demandingness scores were calculated by summing their rankings on the four demandingness scales.

Figure 2

Example of a Scale Used to Collect Data
about Teacher Warmth

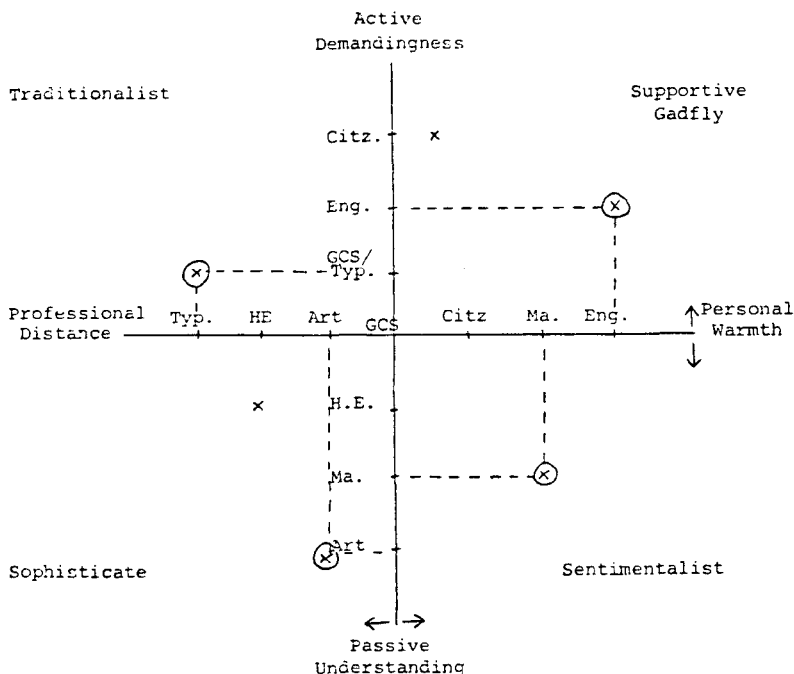
	Ranking of teachers in order of friendliness	Subjects I am taking at school
FRIENDLY		
How friendly are your teachers <u>to you</u> ?		
1 = the teacher who is most friendly to you		
2 = the teacher who is second most friendly to you		
3 = the teacher who is third most friendly to you		
		
<u>and so on</u>		
Keep numbering until you have placed a number alongside each of the subjects listed on the far right.		

In Kleinfeld's (1972) research, teachers were identified as falling into one of four quadrants which were defined by the intersection of the warmth and demandingness dimensions (see Figure 3). Teachers who displayed both warmth and demandingness were labelled as "supportive gadflies". "Traditionalists" were

teachers who lacked warmth, maintaining a professional distance between themselves and their students and, at the same time, demanding high levels of academic work. Teachers who maintained a professional distance but did not make high demands of their students, preferring that they take the initiative for their own learning, and passively accepting them as creatures of their environment, were labelled as "sophisticates". Finally, "sentimentalists" were warm and friendly towards their students but, like the sophisticates, make few demands of them.

In the present study, each student's teachers were placed in order first along the warmth dimension and then along the demandingness dimension, in accordance with their aggregate scores on each of these dimensions. A graphing procedure was then used to identify for each student, wherever the distributions along the two dimensions seemed to allow such judgments to be made, one teacher who was a supportive gadfly, another who was a traditionalist, a third who was a sophisticate, and a fourth who was a sentimentalist. The method is illustrated in Figure 3 where Claire's English teacher is identified as a supportive gadfly, her typing teacher as a traditionalist, her art teacher as a sophisticate, and her mathematics teacher as a sentimentalist.

Fig.3 - Claire's Teachers in order of Warmth and Demandingness



Once Claire's teachers had been categorized, the researcher was able to make a comparison of their ratings on each of the five dependent variables. According to the warmth-demandingness hypothesis, Claire's supportive gadfly should have been associated with better ratings on each of these variables than her traditionalist, her sophisticate, and her sentimentalist. An inspection of Table 1 indicates that this is in fact the case. However, the data of one carefully selected student can hardly be regarded as substantial evidence in favour of the hypothesized findings! Claire's data only gain real meaning when they are considered in conjunction with the data of other students.

TABLE 1

THE RATINGS ASSOCIATED WITH EACH OF CLAIRE'S FOUR
TEACHER TYPES ON EACH OF THE FIVE DEPENDENT VARIABLES
(1 = best possible rating; 7 = lowest possible rating)

Teacher Type	Dependent Variables				
	Liking for Subjects	Amount of Work Done	Self- Perceived Ability	Teacher Prefer- ence	Amount of Learning
Supportive Gadfly	1	1	1	1	1
Traditionalist	5	5	5	6	6
Sophisticate	6	6	6	7	7
Sentimentalist	3	3	3	2	2

RESULTS

The statistic used in analysing the data as a whole was the sign test (Siegel, 1956). This method enables a comparison of the number of times members of a selected group (e.g., supportive gadflies) are awarded better ratings than members of another selected

group (e.g., traditionalists). The relevant comparisons of supportive gadflies with traditionalists, sophisticates, and sentimentalists, as rated by their Aboriginal students are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

RESULTS OF SIGN TEST COMPARISONS OF ABORIGINAL STUDENTS' SUPPORTIVE GADFLIES WITH THEIR TRADITIONALISTS, SOPHISTICATES, AND SENTIMENTALISTS ON FIVE DEPENDENT VARIABLES *

Dependent Variable	+	-	N	Probability (1-tailed)	Decision	As hypothesized?
<u>Liking for Subjects</u>						
1. SGs v. Trads	18	6	24	.011	Signif.	Yes
2. SGs v. Sophs	20	8	28	.019	Signif.	Yes
3. SGs v. Sents	10	12	22	.416	N.S.	No
<u>Amount of Work Done</u>						
4. SGs v. Trads	17	7	24	.012	Signif.	Yes
5. SGs v. Sophs	25	3	28	.00005	Signif.	Yes
6. SGs v. Sents	17	5	22	.008	Signif.	Yes
<u>Self-Perceived Ability</u>						
7. SGs v. Trads	15	9	24	.154	N.S.	No
8. SGs v. Sophs	18	10	28	.093	N.S.	No
9. SGs v. Sents	8	14	22	.143	N.S.	No
<u>Teacher Preference</u>						
10. SGs v. Trads	18	6	24	.011	Signif.	Yes
11. SGs v. Sophs	23	5	28	.0007	Signif.	Yes
12. SGs v. Sents	6	16	22	.026	Signif.	No
<u>Amount of Learning</u>						
13. SGs v. Trads	15	9	24	.154	N.S.	No
14. SGs v. Sophs	23	5	28	.0007	Signif.	Yes
15. SGs v. Sents	12	10	22	.416	N.S.	No
+ = number of higher ratings for first mentioned teacher type. - = number of lower ratings for first mentioned teacher type. N = number of comparisons. NS = not significant. SG = supportive gadfly. Trad = traditionalist. Soph = sophisticate. Sent = sentimentalist. p = .05 is taken as significant.						

* Although data were obtained from 30 Aboriginal students, the Ns appearing in Table 2 are generally lower than 30. This is because, using the graphing method described in the text, it was not always possible to allocate a teacher to each quadrant for each student.

Although the warmth-demandingness hypothesis is not totally supported by the data presented in Table 2, there is nevertheless very strong support for the predictions that Aboriginal students would perceive teachers who are warm and demanding (supportive gadflies) more favourably than teachers who are demanding but not warm (traditionalists) and teachers who are neither warm nor demanding (sophisticates). This interpretation is substantiated in Table 2, first by the statistically significant findings in lines 1 and 2 (supportive gadflies compared with traditionalists and sophisticates on "liking for subjects:), lines 4 and 5 (supportive gadflies compared with traditionalists and sophisticates on "amount of work done"), lines 10 and 11 (supportive gadflies compared with traditionalists and sophisticates on "teacher preference", and line 14 (supportive gadflies compared with sophisticates on "amount of learning"), and second, by trends towards significance in lines 7 and 8 (supportive gadflies compared with traditionalists and sophisticates on "self-perceived ability") and line 13 (supportive gadflies compared with traditionalists on "amount of learning").

The predictions which were not borne out by the research findings generally rest in the comparisons of supportive gadflies and sentimentalists. The warmth-demandingness hypothesis had suggested that supportive gadflies (warm and demanding) would achieve significantly better ratings than sentimentalists (warm but not demanding). This was found to be true on only one dependent variable, "amount of work done" (see line 6 of Table 2). On the question of "teacher preference", there was also a significant difference between supportive gadflies and sentimentalists (line 12 of Table 2) but the difference favoured the sentimentalists rather than the supportive gadflies. On the remaining three dependent variables ("liking for subjects", "self-perceived ability", and "amount of learning") there was no significant difference between the supportive gadflies and the sentimentalists.

O'Keefe (1989) suggests that many of the personal and professional attributes which Fanshawe (1976) associates with effective teachers of Aboriginal students are also characteristic of teachers in general. With regard to such personal characteristics as warmth and demandingness, O'Keefe's view is certainly supported by the data collected from the 190 non-Aboriginal students (see Table 3) who were the classmates of the Aboriginal students featured in the present report.

TABLE 3

RESULTS OF SIGN TEST COMPARISONS OF NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS' SUPPORTIVE GADFLIES WITH THEIR TRADITIONALISTS, SOPHISTICATES, AND SENTIMENTALISTS ON FIVE DEPENDENT VARIABLES *

Dependent Variable	+	-	N	Probability (2-tailed)	Decision
<u>Liking for Subjects</u>					
1. SGs v. Trads	88	31	119	.00006	Signif.
2. SGs v. Sophs	131	35	166	.00006	Signif.
3. SGs v. Sents	50	71	121	.0688	N.S.
<u>Amount of Work Done</u>					
4. SGs v. Trads	92	25	117	.00006	Signif.
5. SGs v. Sophs	142	22	164	.00006	Signif.
6. SGs v. Sents	78	42	120	.0014	Signif.
<u>Self-Perceived Ability</u>					
7. SGs v. Trads	86	32	118	.00006	Signif.
8. SGs v. Sophs	141	23	164	.00006	Signif.
9. SGs v. Sents	66	54	120	.3174	N.S.
<u>Teacher Preference</u>					
10. SGs v. Trads	109	10	119	.00006	Signif.
11. SGs v. Sophs	157	9	166	.00006	Signif.
12. SGs v. Sents	62	59	121	.8572	Signif.
<u>Amount of Learning</u>					
13. SGs v. Trads	95	24	119	.00006	Signif.
14. SGs v. Sophs	156	10	166	.00006	Signif.
15. SGs v. Sents	80	40	120	.00046	N.S.

p = .05 is taken as significant.

* For meanings of abbreviations in body of table, see Table 2.

The Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal findings are impressively similar. Comparison of Tables 2 and 3 indicates that both the Aboriginal and the non-Aboriginal students generally awarded better ratings to supportive gadflies than to traditionalists and sophisticates, but that opinions within these two groups of students (despite one or two exceptions, such as on the variable, "amount of work done") were much more evenly divided on the relative effectiveness of supportive gadflies and sentimentalists. It is true that the probability levels for the non-Aboriginal group are generally more extreme than those for the Aboriginal group, but this is largely a function of differences in sample size.

The unexpectedly high ratings awarded to sentimentalists by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students are confirmed when sentimentalists are compared with traditionalists and sophisticates. In 19 of the 20 lines presented in the body of Table 4, the sentimentalists either significantly outrank, or have a tendency to significantly outrank, the traditionalists and the sophisticates. The corresponding ratio indicating the superiority of supportive gadflies over traditionalists and sophisticates is 20 out of 20 (see Table 2 and 3). Thus the overwhelming evidence of the present study is that, for the majority of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, supportive gadflies and sentimentalists (i.e., teachers who are characterized by personal warmth) are generally preferred to traditionalists and sophisticates (i.e., teachers who are lacking in personal warmth. (See Table 4 p.45).

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study do not totally support the warmth-demandingness hypothesis. On only one measure of teacher effectiveness, "amount of work done", where supportive gadflies receive a significantly greater number of better ratings than traditionalists, sophisticates, and sentimentalists, do the data for Aboriginal students completely accord with the hypothesized outcomes. On all the other variables, at least one of the hypothesized relationships between teacher types fails to eventuate, frequently because the ratings of the sentimentalists match or even surpass those of the supportive gadflies.

At first glance, this finding appears to contradict Kleinfeld's (1972) report that sentimentalists, because of their failure to make appropriate demands of their students, tend to be failures as classroom teachers with both minority and mainstream students. However, the present results can also be interpreted as according quite nicely with Kleinfeld's broader view, quoted

TABLE 4

RESULTS OF SIGN TEST COMPARISONS OF BOTH ABORIGINAL AND
NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS' SENTIMENTALISTS WITH THEIR
TRADITIONALISTS AND SOPHISTICATES ON FIVE DEPENDENT VARIABLES *

Dependent Variable	+	-	N	Probability	Decision
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A. ABORIGINAL STUDENTS:

Liking for Subjects

1. Sents v. Trads	22	2	24	.001	Signif.
2. Sents v. Sophs	18	6	24	.011	Signif.

Amount of Work Done

3. Sents v. Trads	15	9	24	.154	N.S.
4. Sents v. Sophs	16	8	24	.076	N.S.

Self-Perceived Ability

5. Sents v. Trads	18	6	24	.011	Signif.
6. Sents v. Sophs	17	7	24	.032	Signif.

Teacher Preference

7. Sents v. Trads	23	1	24	.001	Signif.
8. Sents v. Sophs	20	4	24	.001	Signif.

Amount of Learning

9. Sents v. Trads	17	7	24	.032	Signif.
10. Sents v. Sophs	16	8	24	.076	N.S.

B. NON-ABORIGINAL STUDENTS:

Liking for Subjects

11. Sents v. Trads	87	26	113	.00006	Signif.
12. Sents v. Sophs	90	26	116	.00006	Signif.

Amount of Work Done

13. Sents v. Trads	59	52	111	.5686	N.S.
14. Sents v. Sophs	79	35	114	.00006	Signif.

Self-Perceived Ability

15. Sents v. Trads	78	34	112	.00006	Signif.
16. Sents v. Sophs	83	32	115	.00006	Signif.

Teacher Preference

17. Sents v. Trads	102	11	113	.00006	Signif.
18. Sents v. Sophs	100	14	114	.00006	Signif.

Amount of Learning

19. Sents v. Trads	71	42	113	.0086	Signif.
20. Sents v. Sophs	96	19	115	.00006	Signif.

p = .05 is taken as significant.

* For meanings of abbreviations in body of table, see Table 2.

in the introduction to the present article, that the most fundamental factor determining the effectiveness of teachers of minority children - even more fundamental than demandingness - is personal warmth.

It is important to note that in questioning the effectiveness of sentimentalists, Kleinfeld (1972) was using as her criterion of effective teaching the "intellectual level of students' verbal participation in the academic work of the classroom" (p.7). The effectiveness measures used in the present study were students' liking for their subjects, amount of work done, self-perceived ability, teacher preference, and amount of learning. Perhaps an explanation for variations in findings between the two studies lies in the selection of criteria.

Variations in outcomes may also relate to the contrasting perspectives emphasized in the two studies. Kleinfeld's (1972) data were gathered through the observations and interpretations of a trained ethnographer, whereas the data for the present study were obtained through questionnaires which sought the perceptions of the participants themselves. Perhaps Kleinfeld's warmth-demandingness model of effective teaching most aptly summarizes the happenings of the classroom from the point of view of a trained adult observer, while the predominantly warmth-centred teacher effectiveness model which evolves from the present study usefully represents similar kinds of classroom happenings from the perspective of the student. It is not necessarily the case that adult observers of and adolescent participants in the events of the classroom have the same perceptions of what is happening in that classroom, of what constitutes effective teaching, or even of what constitute "warmth" and "demandingness".

While it is important to acknowledge the differences in outcomes between Kleinfeld's research and the present study, it is even more important to note the similarities. The present study generally provides strong support for Kleinfeld's model of teacher effectiveness. The surprisingly good ratings given to sentimentalists by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students should not be permitted to obscure the very good ratings which were also achieved by Kleinfeld's preferred teachers, the supportive gadflies. Certainly there is no significant difference between supportive gadflies and sentimentalists on many of the dependent variables and, on "teacher preference" Aboriginal students actually award significantly greater numbers of better ratings to sentimentalists than to supportive gadflies. However,

supportive gadflies score a clear second on the Aboriginal students' "teacher preference" ratings by significantly outscoring traditionalists and sophisticates; and, offsetting the statistically significant superiority of sentimentalists on just that one variable, is the indication by a significant majority of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students that they work harder with supportive gadflies than with sentimentalists, and by a significant majority of non-Aboriginal students that they also learn more with supportive gadflies than with sentimentalists.

Taking all these findings into consideration, it would seem that teachers who want their Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students to like the subjects they are studying, to believe in their own ability to cope with those subjects, to achieve a high degree of learning in those subjects, to have relatively positive attitudes about their teachers and to maintain a high level of academic endeavour, will be likely to find the warm, demanding, supportive-gadfly approach more effective than the warm, non-demanding, sentimentalist approach. At the same time, the contrast between teachers who are warm and teachers who are lacking in warmth is much clearer than the contrast between supportive gadflies and sentimentalists. The present study seems to provide strong evidence that, for teachers of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students, the warm and friendly supportive-gadfly and sentimentalist approaches are considerably more effective than the cold, distant, and aloof traditionalist and sophisticate approaches.

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