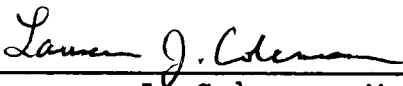


To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Judith H. Davis entitled "Gifted Students and Their Teachers: Influential Qualities." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Special Education.

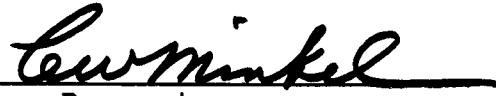


Laurence J. Coleman, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance:




Accepted for the Council:



Vice Provost
and Dean of The Graduate School

GIFTED STUDENTS
AND THEIR TEACHERS:
INFLUENTIAL QUALITIES

A Thesis
Presented for the
Master of Science
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Judith H. Davis

August 1990

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale

Teachers play an important role in the education of students throughout their school careers by providing avenues through which children can feel comfortable to explore. The relationship between students and teachers is crucial in developing positive attitudes and fostering the desire to succeed. Teachers of gifted children face a special challenge that requires them to use their talents in meeting the special education needs of intellectually gifted and talented students. The present study is an attempt to understand the relationship between gifted students and their teachers. The purpose of this study was to determine what qualities of teachers gifted children associate with effective teaching and which of those qualities and attitudes match the characteristics that research suggests effective teachers possess.

Importance of the Study

Very limited literature is available concerning perceived characteristics of effective teachers of the

gifted. (Gold, 1979). Research has been conducted using the perspectives of authorities in the field and the perspectives of gifted students. From the former viewpoint, Lindsey (1980), established a taxonomy of characteristics associated with quality teaching of the gifted. The taxonomy might be thought of as a pyramid of various layers. The bottom portion represents personal characteristics for teachers, the second portion includes the skills and attitudes necessary for teaching the gifted students, and the narrow portion denotes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes most necessary for teaching specific types of giftedness. For example, a teacher of scientifically talented children might be organized and creative, be able to teach problem solving, and have extensive knowledge of varied laboratory procedures.

Research using the student perspective has produced other results which tend to focus on the top layer of Lindsey's pyramid. Bishop (1968), asked gifted high school students to name the "best and most successful" teacher. Indications were that successful teachers of the gifted possessed particular personal and social traits, professional and educational viewpoints and varied teaching styles.

In another study, a panel of gifted students were

convened for a national symposium. (AAGC, 1978) The students were asked what were characteristics of an influential teacher. Students indicated that understanding of the subject matter, being sensitive to emotional needs, caring and taking time to talk, providing access to additional work, possessing a sense of humor, setting standards for students, providing constructive criticism, and accepting the student as an individual were the influential qualities they most desired. These results suggest that students are able to express their perceptions of what an influential teacher is like and that these perceptions are somewhat different from those of professionals.

The present study extends the body of research using the students perspective by broadening the representativeness of the sample. More specifically, the subjects represent students with varying talents from school districts with different demographic characteristics from across the state of Tennessee. The study provides a unique opportunity to advance our understanding of what gifted children want their teachers to be like. By doing so, gifted children in the state of Tennessee will benefit from the knowledge gained, standards of gifted education will be raised, and gifted education will prosper for society at large. Within the state, the results should

help administrators to match children with appropriate teachers. Further, in-service programs for teachers will be able to teach skills and attitudes which are related to the needs of gifted students. This should lead to more positive feelings of gifted students toward schooling because these students will be better satisfied with their instruction. Benefits for society can be easily seen when these gifted students living in Tennessee assist their own children in maturation.

The research questions to be answered from this study were: (1) What were the qualities gifted students looked for in a teacher? (2) Was concern more apparent for the academic association between student and teacher, or for the social relationship of the gifted students to their teachers? (3) Were the qualities of teachers from rural schools different from those in metropolitan areas? (4) What were the differences between the qualities desired by students attending the Governor's School for the Sciences, the School for the Arts, School of International Studies, School of Humanities, or the School of Tennessee Studies? (5) Were these influential teachers from the elementary, junior high, or high school level? (6) Did teacher gender make a difference in the qualities students admired?

Definition of Terms

ACADEMIC ATTRIBUTES

"Academic Attributes" refer to the characteristics listed by the students at the Governor's Schools as those having to do with the general education of the students. These characteristics are: knowledge, high expectations, teaching styles, creativity, individualized learning, flexibility, innovative teaching, and objectiveness in the classroom.

METROPOLITAN

"Metropolitan" refers to the geographical locations throughout Tennessee named in the questionnaires as being the cities of Bristol, Johnson City, Kingsport, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Jackson, and Memphis.

RURAL

"Rural" refers to the geographical locations throughout the state that are not determined to be metropolitan.

SOCIAL ATTRIBUTES

"Social Attributes" refer to the characteristics

listed by the students in attendance at the Governor's Schools as those having to do with the concern of human beings and their relationship with others. These characteristics are: caring, sincere, humorous, friendly, supportive and peer placement.

Design

The subjects of this study are seven hundred sixty-six (766) junior and senior high school students who were in attendance at the Governor's Schools for the state of Tennessee during the 1986-1987 school year. Of these numbers, thirty-nine (39) students attended the school for Tennessee Studies, one hundred forty-six (146) attended the School for International Studies, one hundred forty-eight (148) were enrolled in the School of Science, one hundred fifty (150) applicants were accepted into the School for Humanities, and two hundred seventy-one (271) applicants were accepted into the Arts School. Students were selected by independent panels of judges.

In the last week of attendance of the Governor's Schools, a questionnaire was issued to students asking for information concerning the teachers who had had the greatest impact on their lives, and why these teachers were so outstanding. The question stated:

Please list the teachers who have had the greatest impact on you. Do not consider teachers from the Governor's School. Please list the teacher's name, the school where they taught at, and the grade they taught. What is it about these teachers that make them so special to you? Please be specific.

Data Analysis

The responses to the questions were analyzed using qualitative research procedures (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984) in which themes are extracted from textual data. The questionnaires from the Governor's School were randomly read. These inspections proceeded until recurrent qualities or themes could be noted. The process continued until all possible themes had been exhausted. When this occurred, all the individual questionnaires were reread and responses placed in those categories. Responses were tallied on a form used for the investigation which made provisions for a number identifying the subject, school attended, gender of student, student's school district, gender and grade level taught of the outstanding teacher, and a listing of the themes or teacher qualities. After all questionnaires were read, tallies were computed for each of the categories. The results from the data were

summarized noting any striking similarities or detailed differences in the preferences of teacher attributes by gifted students as compared to the findings from the empirical research.

Limitations

This study has several limitations which effect the generalizabilty of the study. First, the students are only from Tennessee and may not be representative of gifted children in other states.

Second, while the students listed the characteristics of the teachers who had had the most impact on them, the decision to categorize each response by a student was at the discretion of this researcher. The categories derived from the attributes were nominal, therefore suggesting that other analyses could be made.

Third, the Governor's School students listed varying numbers of teachers. Some students listed only one teacher who had had an impact on them, while others listed from two to thirteen influential teachers. Due to this discrepancy, the statistics on the rural and metropolitan preferences, and the male and female preferences of the teachers may not represent a true picture. This report is based on all the information given by the students.

Lastly, some of the names of the students were unisex .

in nature, and therefore not distinguishable by gender. These could not be included in the statistics for the preferences of the male and female students.

Organization

Chapter I will include the statement of the problem, a definition of terms, the importance, the limitations, and the design of the study. Chapter II will review the literature which focuses on qualities and attitudes of gifted teachers and opinions and viewpoints from gifted students about teachers. Chapter III will describe the procedures used to gather and analyze data. Chapter IV will present the results of the study. Chapter V will encompass the summary, conclusions drawn from the study, and the recommendations for further investigation.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter II contains a review of published literature concerning viewpoints on qualities of teachers of the gifted and insights on particular impressions held by gifted students relating to themselves, peers, and teachers.

Survey of the Literature

In reviewing the literature, this researcher found limited research on the attributes of teachers of the gifted. Lindsey (1980), established a taxonomy of characteristics associated with quality teaching of the gifted. He indicated that while all teachers possessed some of the same characteristics for teaching, a smaller portion of these teachers possessed the skills and attitudes necessary for teaching the gifted. An even smaller portion of the teachers have the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for the specific types of giftedness.

From the student's perspective, research has produced results which are in concert with the top layer of Lindsey's pyramid. Bishop (1968), from his major study of

gifted and talented students from a Governor's Honor Program in Georgia, suggested that successful teachers of the gifted were mature and experienced teachers. Students listed their best and most successful teachers. Three groups formed the basis for study. The first group consisted of teachers selected as "the most successful" high school teacher. Another group was selected at random from teachers who had taught in the First Governor's Honors Program but not listed by any of the students, and the third group of teachers included 30 of "the most successful" teachers the students had named. Personal interviews and inventories were given, intelligence tests were administered and college transcripts reviewed.

These successful teachers were found to have superior intelligence. Effective teachers of the gifted pursued intellectual avocational interests and were in general, more involved in the cultural life in their community than teachers of non-gifted students. Preferred teachers of the gifted were high achievers and performed so in their teaching roles.

The attitudes of gifted teachers were more favorable towards the gifted students, were sensitive to the gifted student's needs, were objective, practiced encouragement and possessed more understanding of the gifted student. Competent teachers of the gifted planned curricula that

were exciting and creative, and considered student opinions in their planning. These teachers were enthusiastic and kept the student in mind in terms of planning successful units of study. Quality teachers were also supportive and possessed a desire to teach exceptional students.

More recently, gifted children met for a national symposium (AACG) in 1978. The gifted students listed eight qualities they most desired in teachers. These were: understanding of the subject matter, being sensitive to emotional needs, caring and taking time to talk, providing access to additional work, possessing a sense of humor, setting standards for students, providing constructive criticism, and accepting the student as an individual.

Sylvia Sarrett (1987), is a teacher of the gifted who exemplifies some of these qualities. Sarrett valued student opinion in her English classes in which she was teaching critical thinking skills. When her high school class of twenty-seven students was unimpressed by Charles Dickens' works, she promised them that by Book III of the Dickens novel, A Tale of Two Cities, they too would be enthralled in his masterful techniques. In writing their final compositions, twenty-two out of her class of twenty-seven chose to write on Why I Still Hate Dickens. In doing so, the students used their knowledge of all the techniques learned in the argumentation unit and gave sound reasons

for not studying Dickens. Sarrett commented that teaching the gifted was a two-way process.

In a study conducted by the Montgomery County Public Schools in Rockville, Maryland, (1984), we get another view of some qualities students might like. In this study, students reported that placement with gifted peers was indeed important in developing respect for one another socially as well as academically. Students reported that they liked teachers who used varied teaching styles as opposed to the lecture type of teaching. Group work and independent studies were also valued by those honor students.

Elementary as well as high school students have opinions on what constitutes an exemplary teacher of the gifted. Delisle (1984) asked children ages 5 to 13 to respond to a survey placed in several publications for gifted children across the United States. Students were asked what makes a teacher "a gifted teacher"? Students offered 110 characteristics for these teachers. These characteristics fall into categories much like Bishop's findings.

Related Studies

In addition to the few studies on students' perception of teachers, some information on the demographics and

gifted adolescents' attitudes toward their giftedness is noteworthy. Because of modern communication and improved transportation for students, many people view the rural gifted student and the urban gifted student with little difference. (Spicker, Southern, & Davis, 1987) However, because community rural values may differ from those values in the urban areas, rural gifted students may prefer different characteristics from their teachers. In addition, due to the geographic locations of such schools, population of the students, inadequate finances available for these schools, and in some cases, poor economic status of the residents, some curricula are limited to gifted students. Because of these reasons, rural gifted students may list varying characteristics of teachers based on their educational limitations.

Another factor to consider is that teachers trained in special areas, particularly those in gifted education, are limited in number and tend to use rural school districts as temporary stepping stones in their career. Rural gifted students may have varied impressions of their teachers if those teachers are novices and if instructional time is limited because of lack of gifted teachers.

In a recent study by Coangelo, Kerr, and Gaeth, (1988), gifted high school juniors were interviewed on their perceptions of their own giftedness and how they were

perceived by others. The results showed that gifted students felt positive about their own giftedness, but felt that others held a negative opinion about their giftedness. These students felt personally rewarded by their academic giftedness, but had negative feelings about their social advantages. This difference between academic giftedness and social giftedness may be reflected in the qualities gifted students prefer in teachers.

Summary

Little research has been conducted to determine just what are the qualities gifted students prefer in their teachers. The available research is dated. That research shows that students have viewpoints on academic and social characteristics of teachers. No recent studies have shown results from such a broad sample of gifted students from across a state or region. Given these circumstances, this study was conducted.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURES

This study was to determine which qualities and attitudes the gifted students associate with effective teachers and whether the characteristics match the research evidence. The chapter presents a description of the group of students who participated in the study including a description of how the students qualified for the Governor's Schools. The chapter also describes how the data were gathered and analyzed.

Subjects

Participating in this study were seven hundred sixty-six (766) rising junior and senior high school students who were in attendance at the Tennessee Governor's Schools during the summer of 1987. Each of the five Governor's Schools had both male and female students in attendance. The enrollment of the schools was thirty-nine (39) students at the School for Tennessee Studies, one hundred forty-four (144) students at the School for International Studies, one hundred forty-eight (148) students at the School for the Sciences, one hundred fifty (150) students at the School for the Humanities, and two hundred eighty-four (284)

students at the School for the Arts. Students attending the Tennessee Governor's School were selected by independent panels of judges. Students at the Governor's Schools did not have to meet the state guidelines for certification of the handicapped in the area of giftedness. Admission was determined using multiple criteria, i.e. by class rank, grade point averages, recommendations by teachers, and examples of student work. The School of Sciences, Humanities, and the School for International Studies tended to select high "aptitude"/high achieving students. In the selection for students at the School for the Arts, examples of students' work and auditions were sometimes used.

Data Acquisition

During the last week in attendance of the Governor's Schools, a questionnaire was given to the students asking for information and feedback as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the program. One question was presented to gather information on qualities of teachers who had had the greatest impact on students' lives. The question stated:

Please list the teachers who have had the greatest impact on you. Do not consider teachers from the

Governor's School. Please list the teacher's name, the school where they taught at, and the grade they taught. What is it about these teachers that make them so special to you? Please be specific.

The open ended question was used so that students would feel free to list any teachers they had had. The intent was realized because students nominated teachers who influenced them throughout their lives.

Reduction and Analysis

Qualitative research procedures (Goetz and LeCompte, 1984) were used in which themes can be extracted from textual data. In this study, the themes were the qualities the students associated with specific teachers. The questionnaires from the Governor's Schools were randomly read so that no single school might influence the generation of themes. The inspections proceeded until recurrent qualities were noted. When no new categories emerged, the themes were used to classify the responses. At that point, each of the seven hundred sixty-six (766) questionnaires was read and all possible themes were extracted from each response. The thematic categories were organized and recorded. A tally sheet was originated which provided for an identifying number for each student,

student gender, school district (rural or metropolitan), teacher grade and gender. Each student response was categorized separately. Thus, the seven hundred sixty-six (766) students listed one thousand, seven hundred teachers (1,700) and five thousand, one hundred twenty-five (5,125) responses as their preferences of teacher qualities.

Data were summarized using bar graphs and pie graphs. Percentages were obtained on all categories. Bar graphs were formulated depicting the differences in student gender, geographic locations, variances in preferences from the five Governor's Schools, student gender and grade level taught of the preferred teachers. Pie graphs were designed to indicate the grade level taught by the preferred teachers and to show the differences between the academic and social qualities desired by the students.

Research Questions and Data Analysis

These questions were developed to find out whether gifted and talented students at the Tennessee Governor's Schools in the summer of 1987 listed the same qualities for teachers of the gifted as the research suggests. Correspondingly, analyses were performed by making comparisons between the preferences of the students. Percentage scores and frequency of choice were used as the available statistics. These six questions were given

below. The appropriate rationale for each question is presented. The questions assumed that these qualities of effective teachers required fifty percent or more responses to be listed as preferred by students.

Question 1: What were the qualities gifted students looked for in a teacher?

Question 2: Was concern more for the academic association between student and teacher or for the social relationships between student and teacher?

Question 3: Were the qualities of teachers from rural schools different from those in metropolitan areas?

Question 4: What were the differences between the qualities desired by students attending the Governor's School for the Sciences, the School for the Arts, School of Humanities, School of International Studies or the School for Tennessee Studies?

Question 5: Were these influential teachers from the elementary, junior high, or high school level?

Question 6: Did teacher gender make a difference in the qualities students admired?

These questions were tested by obtaining the percentage of preferences by each subject and the percentages were then compared.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS AND DATA

This was a study to determine which characteristics of teachers were preferred by gifted students and if these characteristics match the research. The results are presented and organized by hypotheses to answer these questions.

Question 1: What were the qualities gifted students looked for in a teacher? After having randomly read the questionnaires from all of the Governor's Schools, characteristics of teachers were recorded until no more repetitions were found. Those teacher qualities were: caring, sincere, humorous, friendly, supportive, believing in peer placement, knowledgeable, having high expectations, uses varied teaching styles, possesses creativity, utilizes individualized learning, is flexible, innovative and objective.

Those qualities became the categories for subsequent categorization of the student responses. Each of the qualities is presented below with examples to illustrate what were typical responses included in that category.

The abbreviation used on the bar graphs for the characteristic caring is "CAR". Examples of responses placed in this category from the questionnaires included: "helped me believe in myself", "caring", "really cares about the students", "was concerned for me", "she showed me that I was really someone", "willing to go the extra mile", etc.

The abbreviation for the characteristic sincere is "SNC". Examples of responses placed in this category from the questionnaires included: "an incredibly loving woman", "took a personal in interest in me", "very sincere", etc.

"HMR" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic humorous. Examples of responses placed in this category from the questionnaires included: "funny", "humorous", "absolutely hilarious", etc.

"FRD" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic friendly. Examples of responses from the questionnaires placed in this category included: "was a friend to me", "friendly", "as friend as well as a good teacher", "more of a friend than a teacher", etc.

"PPL" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic peer placement. Examples of responses from the questionnaires included: "taught advanced level math", "AP English", etc.

"SUP" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic

supportive. Examples of responses from the questionnaires included: "supported me in my efforts", "was very supportive of me", "believed in my abilities", "she encouraged me", etc.

"KNW" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic knowledgeable. Examples of responses from the questionnaires placed in this category included: "knew her subject well", "extremely intelligent", "always knew his subject", etc.

"HXP" refers to the characteristic high expectations. Examples of responses placed in this category from the questionnaires included: "he is demanding", "she was strict", "a no-nonsense teacher", etc.

"TST" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic teaching styles. Examples of responses from the questionnaires included: "teaching styles", "style of teaching", "made learning fun", "kept the class moving at an incredible pace", "she makes history interesting for everyone", "classes are always exciting", "his intense, challenging approach", etc.

"MTV" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic motivating. Examples of responses in this category from the questionnaires included: "very motivating", "pushed me to do the best I can", "his enthusiasm", "his energy", etc.

"CTV" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic creative. Examples of responses from the questionnaires placed in this category included: "very creative teacher", "creative teaching" etc.

"ILR" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic individualized learning. Examples of responses from the questionnaires included: " gave me work to do on my own, so I wouldn't be bored", "helped me with independent projects", "helped me get ahead of the class in math", "they let me work at my own pace", etc.

"FLX" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic flexible. An example of a response placed in this category from the questionnaires included: "flexible in his teaching", etc.

"INV" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic innovative. Examples of responses from the questionnaires included: "open to new ideas", "uses new teaching methods", etc.

"OBJ" refers to the abbreviation for the characteristic objective. Examples of responses from the questionnaires included: " was fair to us in the classroom", "was objective", "was impartial", "treated everyone equal", etc.

From the total survey, the seven hundred sixty-six (766) students listed one thousand seven hundred (1,700)

teachers and five thousand one hundred twenty-five (5,125) responses. The most typical number of qualities attributed to a teacher was three.

The categories and percentages were:

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Percentages</u>
Teaching Styles	847	16.52%
Knowledgeable	592	11.55%
Caring	578	11.28%
Supportive	538	10.49%
High Expectations	526	10.26%
Motivating	482	9.40%
Peer Placement	292	5.69%
Friendly	243	4.74%
Sincere	216	4.21%
Objective	185	3.60%
Ind. Learning	167	3.25%
Creative	166	3.23%
Humorous	116	2.26%
Innovative	105	2.04%
Flexible	72	1.40%

Teaching styles was by far the most frequently stated characteristic for teachers with eight hundred forty-seven (847) responses. One can see from Figure 1 that the characteristics of knowledgeable, caring, supportive, having high expectations and motivating are in close proximity to each other. Students placed a similarly high value on these five attributes. The remaining categories are less valued. Peer placement, friendly, sincere, objective, individualized learning, and creative were

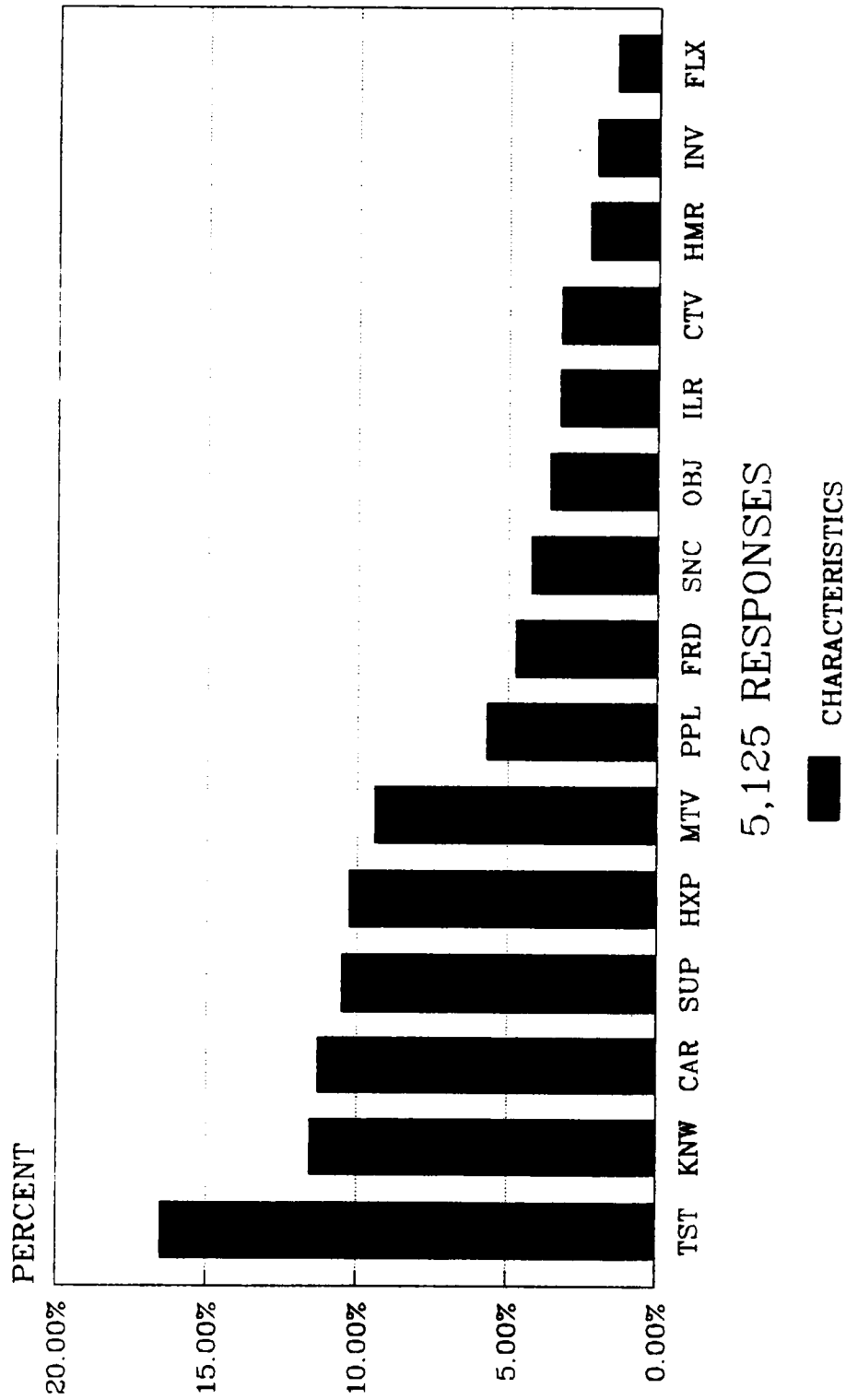


Figure 1. Teacher Preferences

attributes that closely related each other in the number of responses. The least frequently noted attributes were humorous, innovative, and flexible.

Question 2: Was concern more for the academic association between student and teacher or for the social relationships between student and teacher? Fifteen qualities were extracted from the questionnaires. Since research supports the theory that gifted students are concerned with the academic and social ramifications of their giftedness, (Delisle, 1984, American Association of Gifted children, 1978, Coangelo, 1988), these qualities were divided into two areas showing social and academic attributes. Social attributes are characteristics having to do with the concern for human beings and their relationship with others. Those qualities placed in the social category were: caring, sincere, humor, friendly, supportive and believing in peer placement. Academic attributes are characteristics having to do with the general education of the students. Those qualities listed in the academic category were: teachers who possessed knowledge, high expectations, varied teaching styles, creativity, individualized learning, flexibility, innovativeness, and were objective.

When these qualities were categorized into social and

academic areas, the academic attributes outnumbered the social attributes of a teacher, i. e. eight to seven. Figure 2 illustrates the number of students who listed each category. In comparing the social to the academic, the social qualities of caring (578), supportive (538), and motivating (482) were held in high esteem. The academic qualities of teaching styles (847), knowledge (592), and high expectations (526) were also considered valuable.

Question 3: Were the qualities of teachers from rural schools different from those in metropolitan areas? In evaluating this data, students named schools and cities where desired teachers had taught. Metropolitan areas were distinguishable from the rural areas. Metropolitan areas refer to the geographical locations throughout Tennessee named in the questionnaire as being the cities of Bristol, Johnson City, Kingsport, Knoxville, Chattanooga, Nashville, Jackson, and Memphis. Rural locations throughout the state are all areas that were not listed as metropolitan areas. It was assumed that the students attending the Governor's Schools also attended the schools where the desired teachers taught. There were eight hundred four (804) metropolitan teachers listed as having an impact on students and seven hundred sixty (760) teachers from the rural areas. One hundred thirty-six (136) teacher

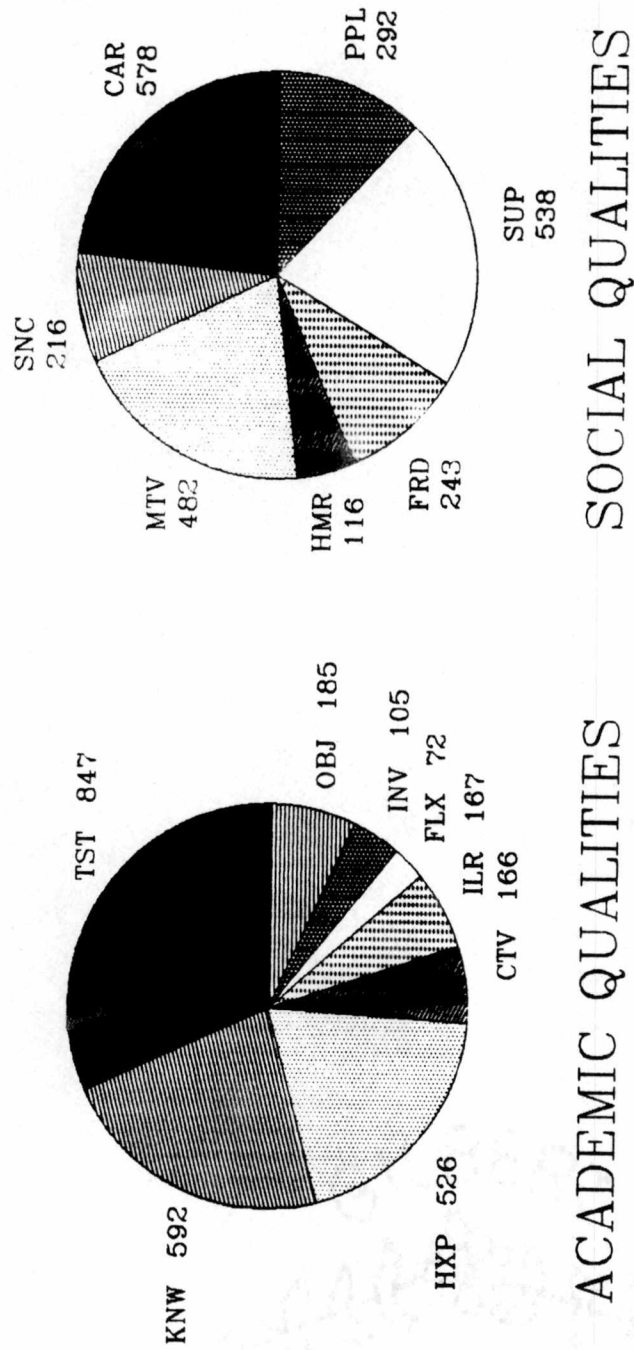


Figure 2. Teacher Qualities (5,125 Responses)

selections had omitted the school names or cities.

Percentages were calculated from the rural and metropolitan schools given and are reported in Figure 3.

Teaching styles again were mentioned as the teacher characteristic most preferred by the Governor's School students. Three hundred forty-one (341) students from the rural areas (16.45%) and four hundred fifty-two (452) students from metropolitan areas (16.44%) reported this attribute to be predominant. The similarities end here as the results indicate some varying choices. Rural students mentioned more social attributes than academic attributes. Fifty percent (50.11%) of the rural student choices (1,039 responses) and forty-seven percent (47.41%) of the metropolitan student choices (1,303) chose social attributes. Conversely, students from the metropolitan areas (52.11%) placed more emphasis on the academic qualities of a teacher, (1,446 responses) than did the rural students' qualities (43.89%), with 1,039 responses.

Question 4: What were the differences between the qualities desired by students attending the Governor's School for the Sciences, the School for the Arts, School of Humanities, School of International Studies or the School for Tennessee Studies? Differences in preferences between

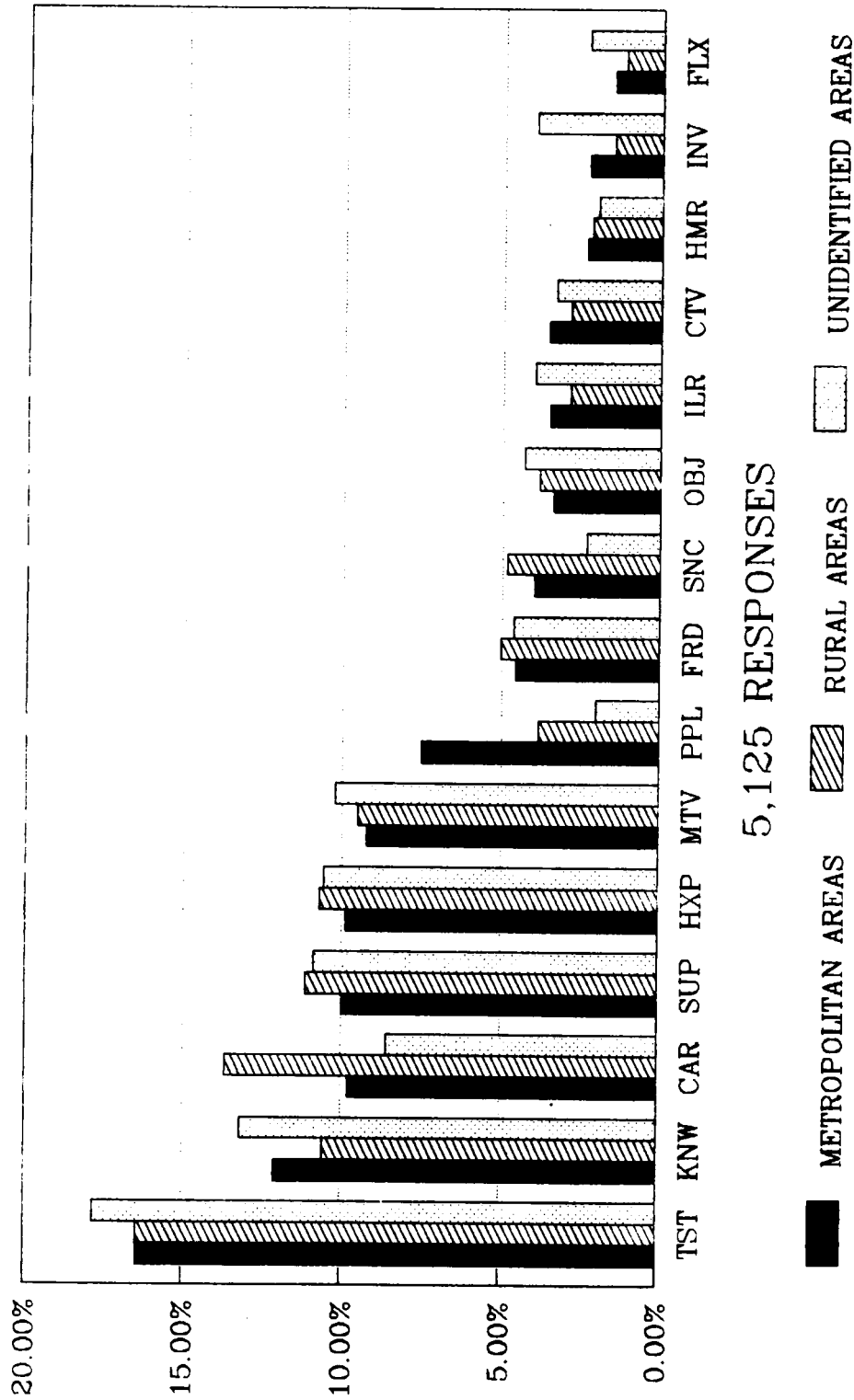


Figure 3. Geographical Preferences (by Percent)

the schools were few. An interesting difference was in the number of responses per school and the quality of those responses. From the surveys, students attending the Humanities School gave the most responses and also listed lengthy, interesting answers. Students from the School for the Arts responded with the least number of teachers and twice as many students from this school deleted this question from their survey. The schools and their preferences were:

	TN ST	HUMANITIES	INTERNATIONAL	ARTS	SCIENCE
TST	31	171	200	225	220
KNW	41	172	168	228	93
CAR	45	117	115	159	142
SUP	44	112	115	117	115
HXP	25	128	143	130	100
MTV	29	148	129	83	93
PPL	3	13	94	82	100
FRD	23	48	48	64	60
SNC	26	51	33	37	69
OBJ	21	54	44	32	34
ILR	6	24	21	61	55
CTV	12	50	44	32	28
HMR	16	27	32	20	21
INV	6	33	25	20	21
FLX	2	17	20	14	19
N=37		N=138	N=144	N=225	N=147

N equals the number of students from each school.

The greatest similarities in responses were seen in the School for Humanities, School of International Studies, and from the School of Tennessee Studies where the students

listed the attributes of caring and supportive. The students from the School for the Humanities, the International School and the School for the Arts preferred the academic attributes of knowledgeable and teaching styles to be dominant. The School for the Sciences students indicated teaching styles and caring were their favored teacher characteristics. Figure 4 reports the responses.

As was found in the first question, teaching styles dominated over any other teacher characteristic. Those students attending the School for Tennessee Studies were adamant in their choices of social attributes. Caring, sincerity, friendly, motivation, and being supportive were the areas listed as most preferred by these students. It was also important for the students in the School for Tennessee Studies to have a teacher who was humorous more so than any other school. The students in the Humanities School ranked motivating higher than any other school, while peer placement was held in high esteem by the students who attended the School for the Sciences, the School for the Arts, and the International School. Having high expectations was a characteristic that was predominant in four out of the five schools. The students in the School for Humanities weighed creativity heavier than did

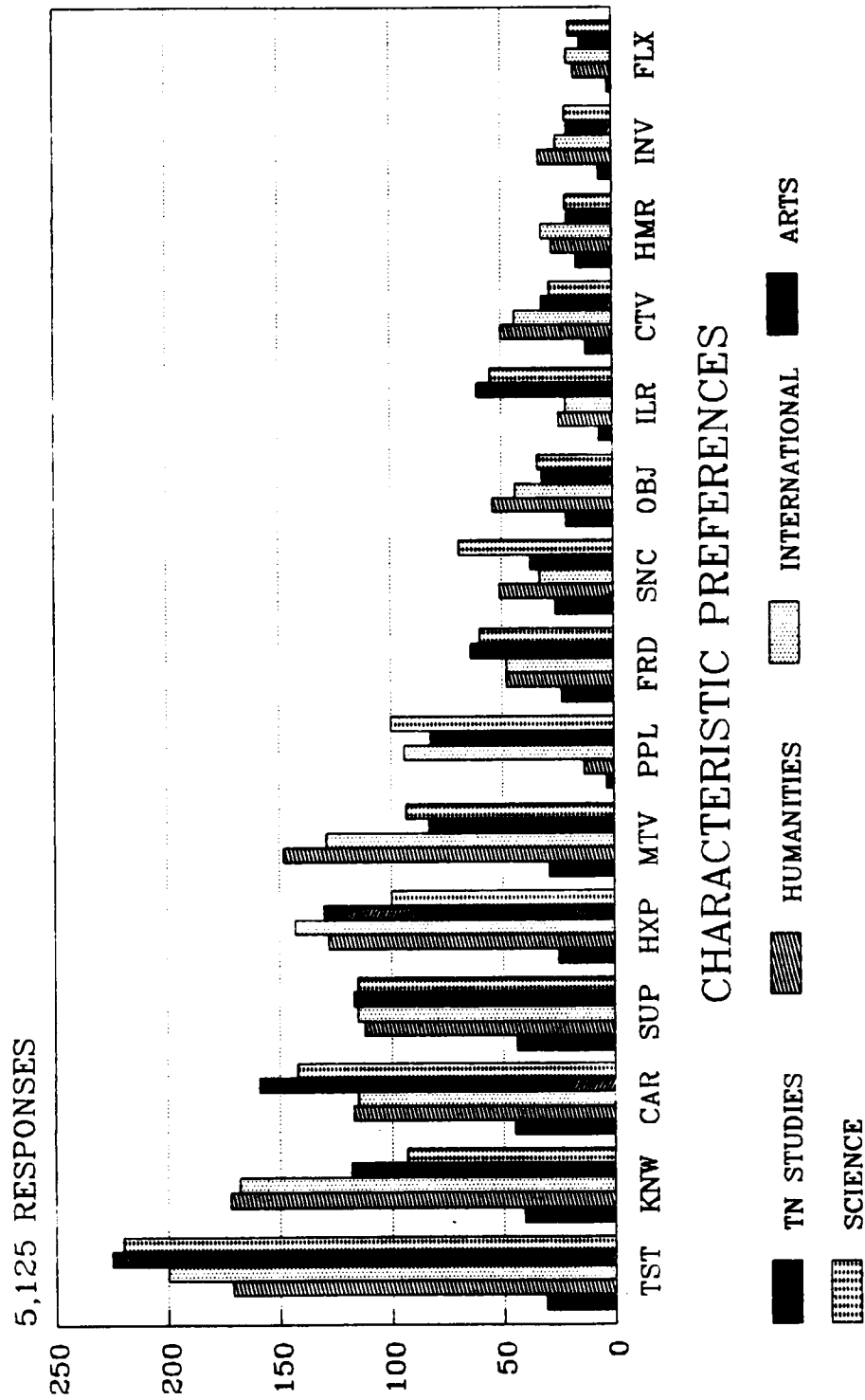


Figure 4. Preferences by Schools

students in the other four schools.

Interestingly, the students in the School for the Arts and students in the School for the Sciences ruled individualized learning to be significant for them due possibly to the individual projects in the School for the Sciences and due to the private lessons given to these students. Flexibility was rated highest by the School for the Sciences and the School for Tennessee Studies. Being innovative was valued higher in the School for the Humanities. The students in the International Studies and the Students for the School for the Humanities gave merit to a teacher who was objective.

Question 5: Were these influential teachers from the elementary, junior high, or high school level? Students from the Governor's Schools named teachers from all levels of their educational career. Teachers from the Kindergarten through the sixth grades were named as elementary teachers, those from the seventh through the ninth grade were named as junior high teachers, and teachers from the tenth through the twelfth grade were named as high school teachers. Figure 5 reports these findings. Of the seventeen hundred (1,700) teachers nominated from the Governor's School students, one thousand one hundred sixty-one (1,161) were nominated from the high

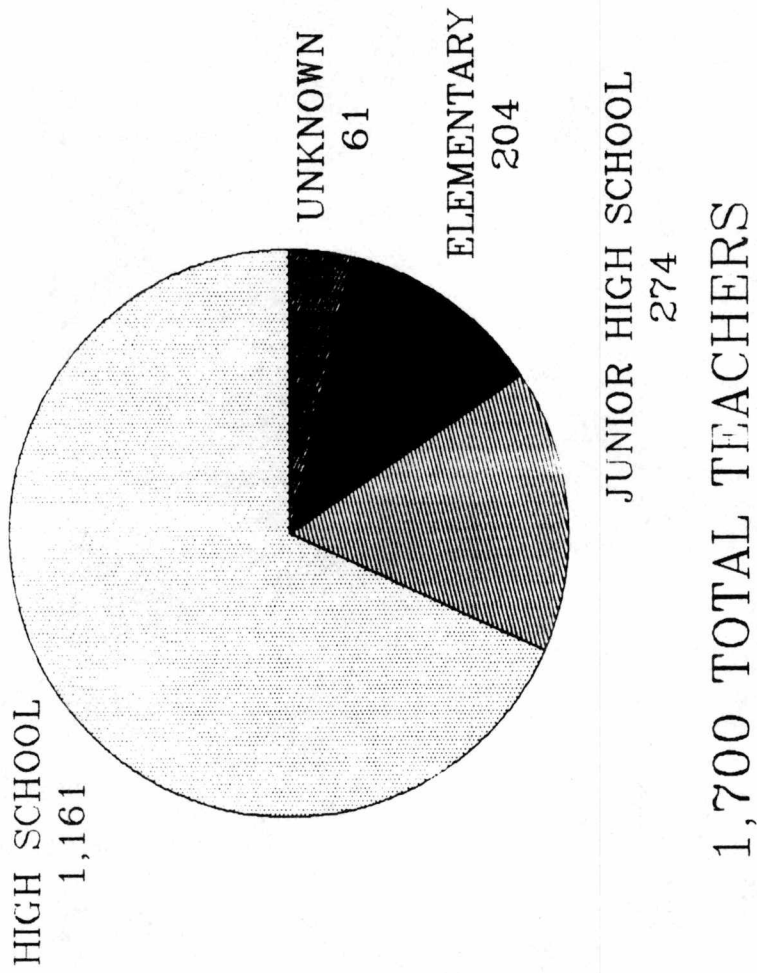


Figure 5. Preferred Teachers Grade Level

schools, two hundred seventy-four (274) teachers were favored from the junior high school level, and two hundred four (204) teachers were recorded to have been from the elementary school years. Sixty-one (61) of the Governor's School students' entries for preferred teachers was unknown.

Question 6: Did teacher gender make a difference in the qualities students admired? There were four hundred twenty-one (421) females and three hundred forty-four (344) male students attending the five Governor's Schools. They selected eight hundred ninety (890) female teachers and six hundred eighty-three (683) male teachers. One hundred twenty-seven (127) teacher selections were not discernible as to gender. Figure 6 shows the results. The most common preference by gender was in the area of teaching styles. Four hundred fifty-seven (457) female teacher selections, three hundred fourteen (314) male teacher selections, and seventy-six (76) of the unknown teacher selections showed that teaching styles were of great consequence. Both male and female teachers were thought of as being supportive and knowledgeable. In contrast, male teachers were more friendly and objective. The female teachers exhibited high expectations, peer placement and motivation.

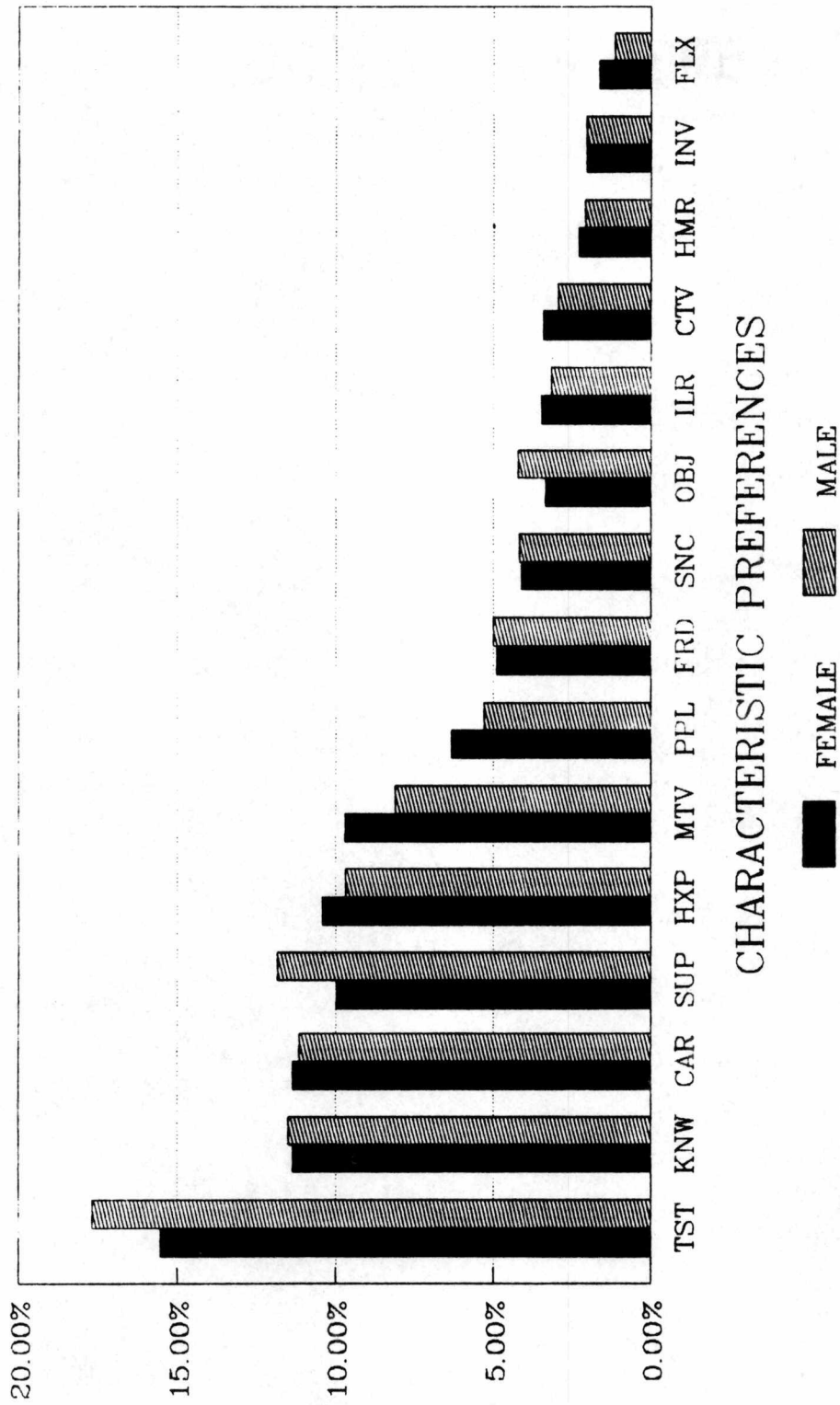


Figure 6. Preferences by Gender/Percent

Summary

The results of this study indicated that students could express the qualities they prefer in a teacher. With this in mind, the results of this analysis are summarized below.

The questionnaires revealed fifteen characteristics of teachers. The typical number of teachers listed from a student was three. These teacher characteristics could be placed into social and academic categories. When doing so, the academic qualities outnumbered the social attributes in number. Of all characteristics, teaching styles was named the most valuable attribute for a teacher. Other important academic qualities were knowledge, and high expectations. The social qualities that were notable were caring, supportive, and motivating. Most of the Governor's School students came from metropolitan areas throughout the state. The metropolitan students favored teachers with social attributes, while rural students preferred teachers with academic attributes.

Differences in preferences of teachers between the five Governor's Schools were few. Responses from the students in the School for the Humanities were interesting. These student responses seemed to be thoughtful and well organized. Students from the School for the Arts and the School for the Sciences

listed individualized learning to be valuable.

Most of the influential teachers came from the high school level. Of these teachers, both male and female students chose teachers who were knowledgeable and supportive.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Restatement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine what characteristics gifted students associate with effective teachers and whether these characteristics match those attributes cited in the research. This study described characteristics from gifted students across the state of Tennessee.

Summary of Procedures

The subjects of this study were seven hundred sixty-six (766) rising juniors and seniors from high schools across the state of Tennessee. A survey was given to these students which asked for teachers who had had an impact on them. The surveys were randomly read to establish patterns of response. Each questionnaire was then read to determine the characteristics listed by each student. A tally sheet was formed to record the answers. The survey determined the characteristics desired by the gifted students from the Governor's Schools for their teachers, student gender and geographical location, the teacher's

gender and grade level. The preferences of students for certain qualities of teachers were compared.

Results

The results of the survey indicated that gifted students from the Governor's Schools from the summer of 1987 valued fifteen characteristics in their teachers. These characteristics were caring, sincere, humorous, friendly, peer placement, supportive, knowledgeable, high expectations, teaching styles, motivating, creative, individualized learning, flexible, innovative, and objective.

These fifteen characteristics were placed into social and academic categories. From the results of the survey, the academic attributes of teaching styles, knowledge, and high expectations were listed as the most influential. The social attributes of supportive, caring, and motivating were of high value.

Both rural and metropolitan students, male and female, from all of the various schools, clearly were impressed by teaching styles. Metropolitan students desired their teachers to be knowledgeable, supportive, motivating and caring. Students from the rural areas of the state clearly preferred the social characteristics of their teachers above the academic qualities.

Students from the five Governor's Schools differed in the characteristics they preferred. Students from the School for Tennessee Studies listed social attributes above all else. These students also placed high value on the attribute of humor. Peer placement was important to the students in the School for the Sciences. The school for the Arts and the School of Sciences voiced preference for the area of individualized learning.

Most of the survey's preferred teachers came from the high school level. Male teachers possessed friendliness and objectivity. The female teachers selected exhibited the attributes of high expectations, peer placement, and motivation.

Conclusions

From this study of the Governor's Schools during the 1986-87 year, some conclusions can be made. Most gifted students preferred teaching styles as their favored characteristic of a teacher. These results support Bishop's theory that competent teachers of the gifted planned curriculums that were exciting and creative.

The review of the dated literature supports the theory that teachers of the gifted possess superior intelligence. The current data also indicates that students from the Governor's Schools favor teachers that are knowledgeable.

While the dated findings show that these teachers had avocational interests and were more involved in the community cultural life, the results of the present study offer no indications that this is true. Further, teachers from Bishop's study (1968), were found to be sensitive, objective, encouraging, and understanding. These aforementioned traits were also established to be positive qualities that the Governor's School students sought in their teachers.

The literature furthermore suggests that teachers of the gifted considered student opinions in their planning, (Sarrett, 1987), were enthusiastic and supportive. The findings of this study concur.

The research from the 1978 meeting of gifted students (AAGC) slightly contrasts with the preferences of the Governor's School students. While the students from the 1978 meeting placed importance on the social attributes, the Governor's School students preferred the academic attribute of teaching styles. It can, however, be surmised that the Governor's School students favored teachers who possessed the social qualities of caring, supportive, and motivating.

The students from Maryland (Spaline, 1984) concurred when they reported that their honors program courses were successful due to the varied teaching styles used by

teachers. It can also be concluded that standards for the high school students as well as elementary students have been found to be similar.

Delisle, (1984) reported 110 characteristics were listed by the elementary age students. This researcher, using the themes established in this study, placed the 110 characteristics into the same fifteen categories as those from the Governor's Schools. Varied teaching styles were listed as the significant quality most desired by these gifted students. Understanding and caring about the students was also found to be a high priority. Figure 7 reports the findings.

The preferences of the rural and metropolitan students offer some interesting differences. Obviously, more metropolitan teachers were recorded than rural teachers. Because the students from the metropolitan areas listed the academic qualities over the social qualities, it may be surmised that a metropolitan environment may offer more opportunities relative to an enriching environment. Rural students, on the other hand, chose the social attributes of a teacher to be paramount in their lives. Again, environment and geographical location tend to be the predominant factors. Additionally, due to the strong values of the students from rural area, (Spicker, Southern, & Davis 1987), it is conceivable that these students would

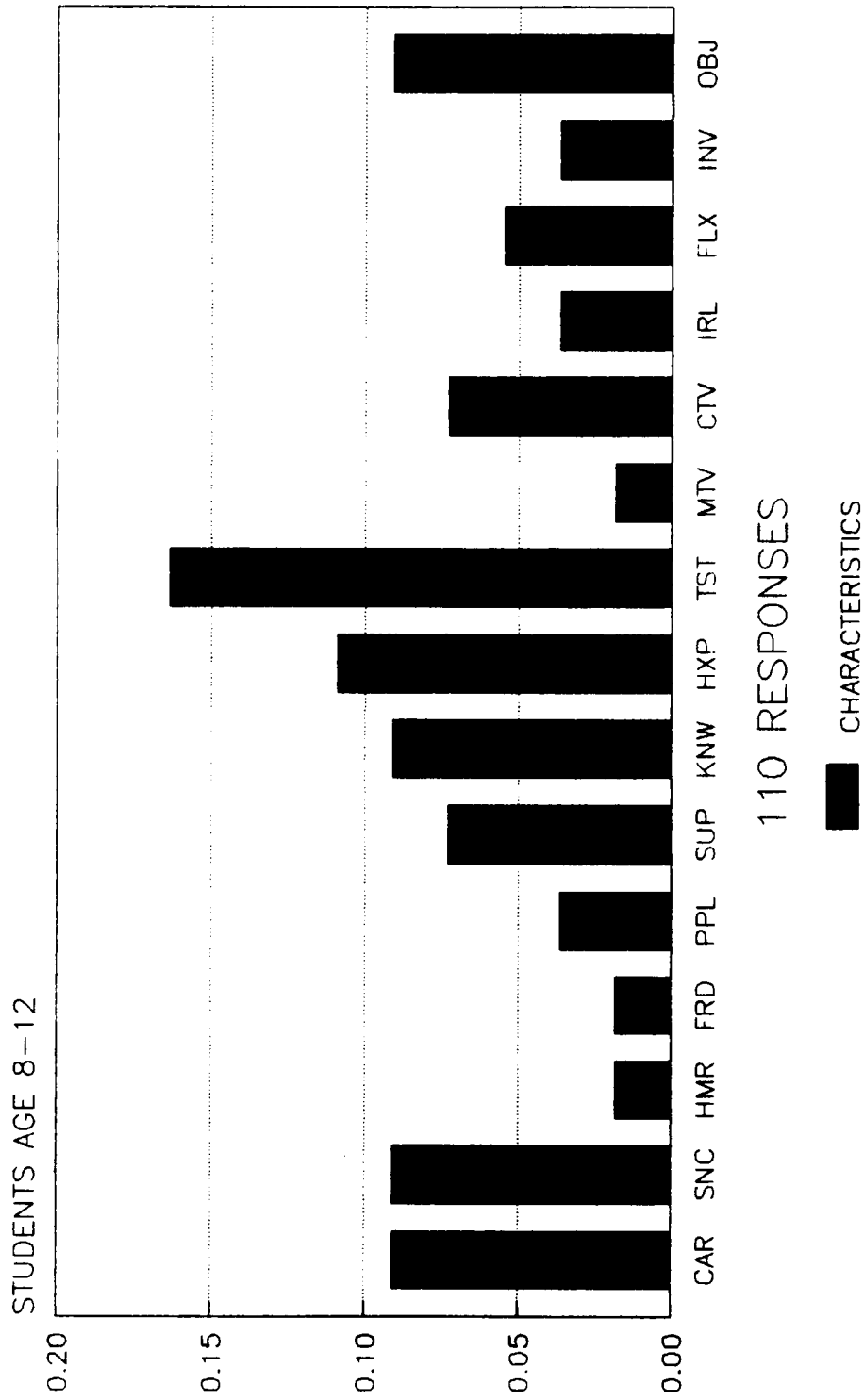


Figure 7. Gifted Children Speak Out

prefer teachers who are caring, supportive, and sincere.

The conclusion can be made that although the research on teachers of the gifted is dated, the attributes that gifted students desire in their teachers are basically the same.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further study are listed below. Modifications to the survey listing the student's town or city and the preferred teacher's town or city would have been beneficial. This would have eliminated any doubt as to the geographical location of either. Second, alterations in the design of the questionnaire would exclude any reason of doubt as to the gender of the students or teachers. Third, perhaps a list of characteristics could be included in the questionnaire so as to establish more concretely the academic and social attributes of the preferred teachers. This type of objective questioning could improve the statistical outcome but lose the spontaneity and originality of the students' opinions. A fourth recommendation is to perform this study annually to see if the results obtained are consistent.

The data point to a need for teachers with varied teaching styles for the gifted and talented students throughout Tennessee. The results also suggest that

teachers should be caring, sincere, have high expectations, and continue to be knowledgeable in their subject matter.

In conclusion, this study did underscore the characteristics of preferred teachers of the gifted. Teachers need to be aware that gifted students desire varied teaching strategies in the classroom. It is hoped that through this study, teachers in Tennessee will realize that gifted and talented students have a passion for academics in the classroom if stimulated by varied teaching styles of teachers.

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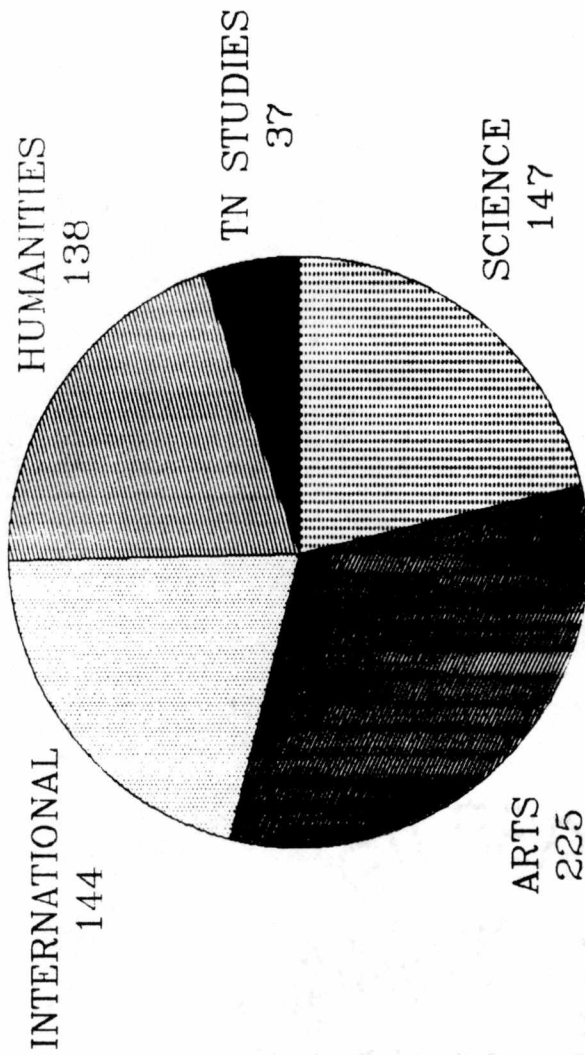
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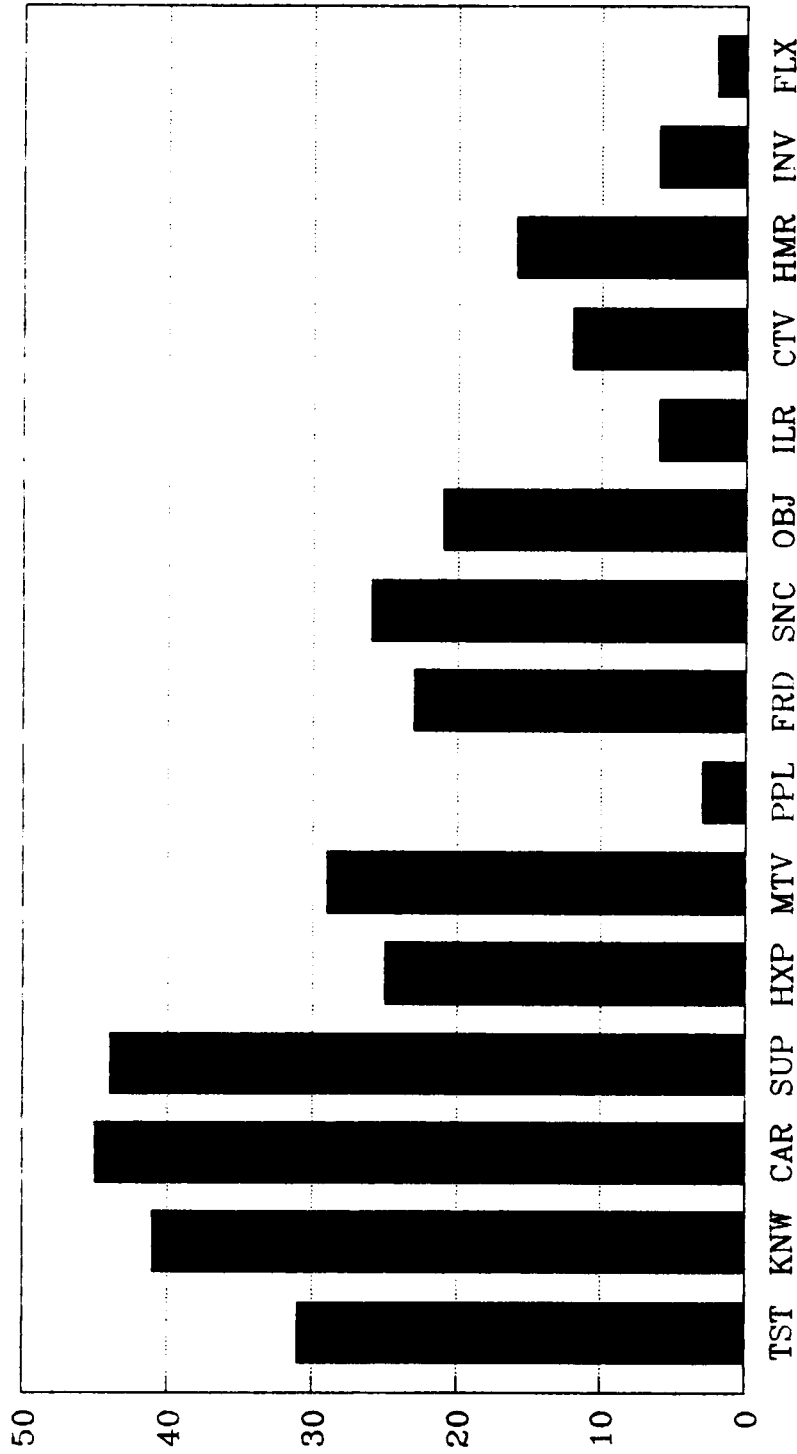
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APPENDIX



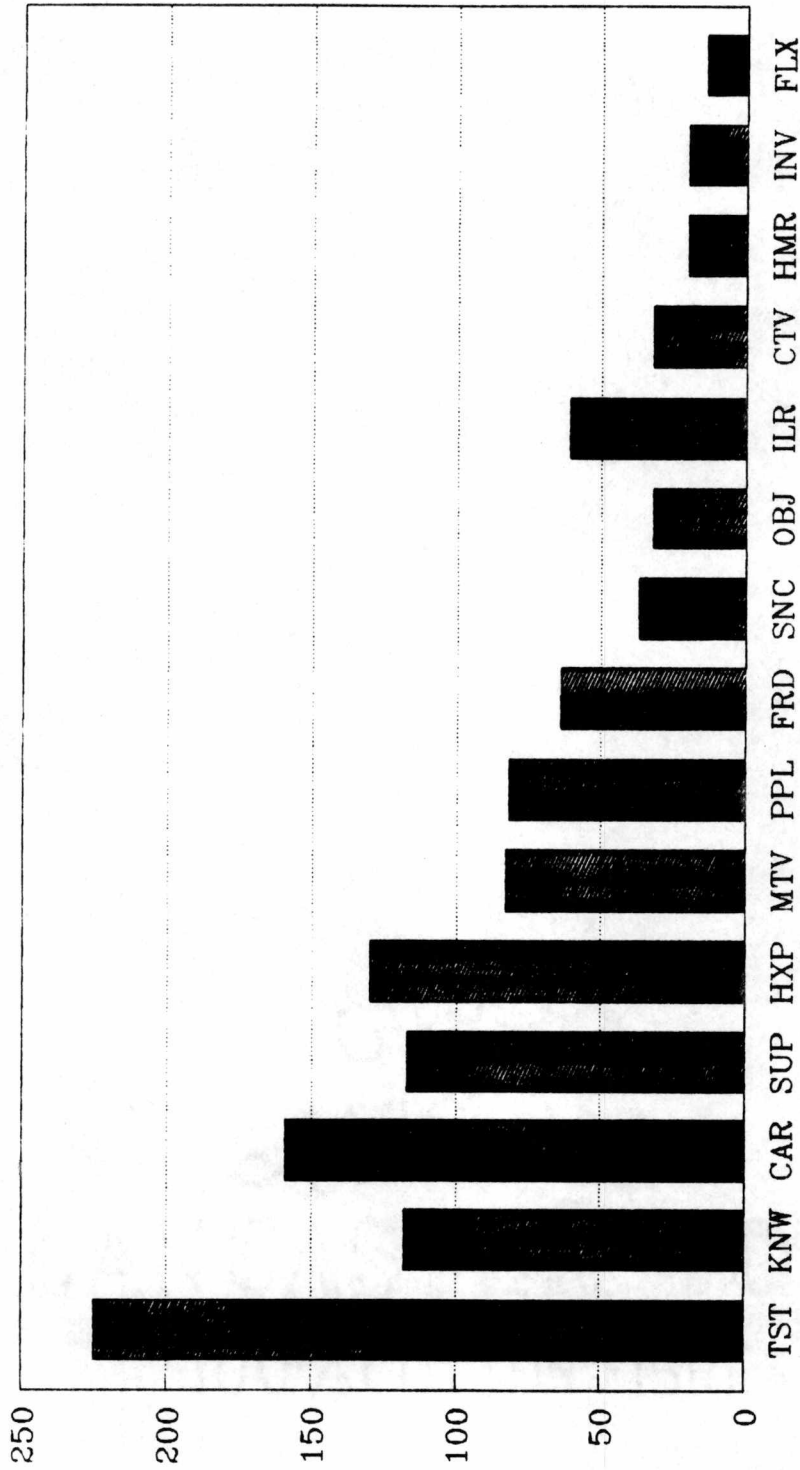
691 TOTAL REPORTING STUDENTS
1987 GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL
STUDENT CENSUS



CHARACTERISTIC PREFERENCES

■ TN STUDIES

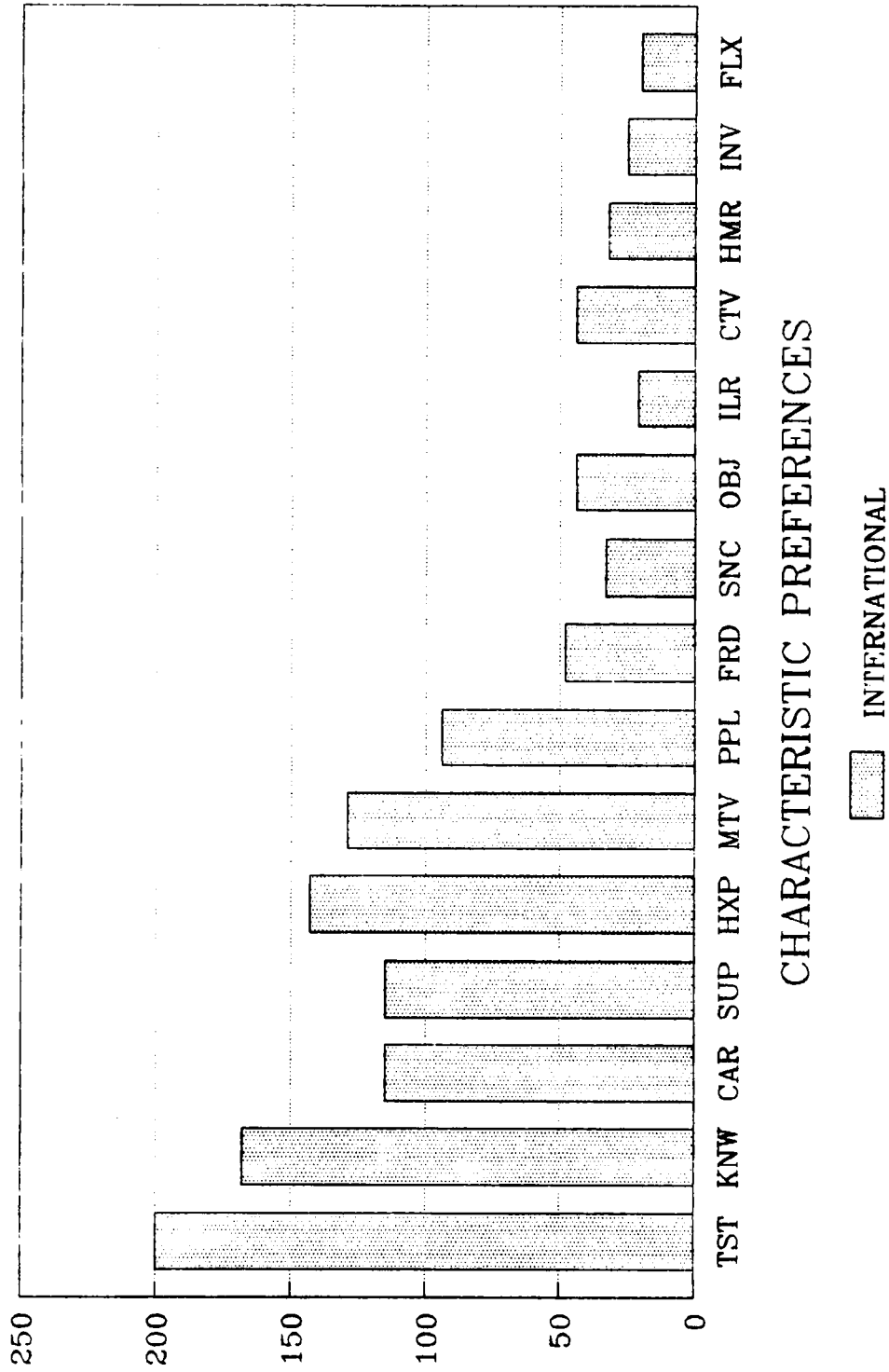
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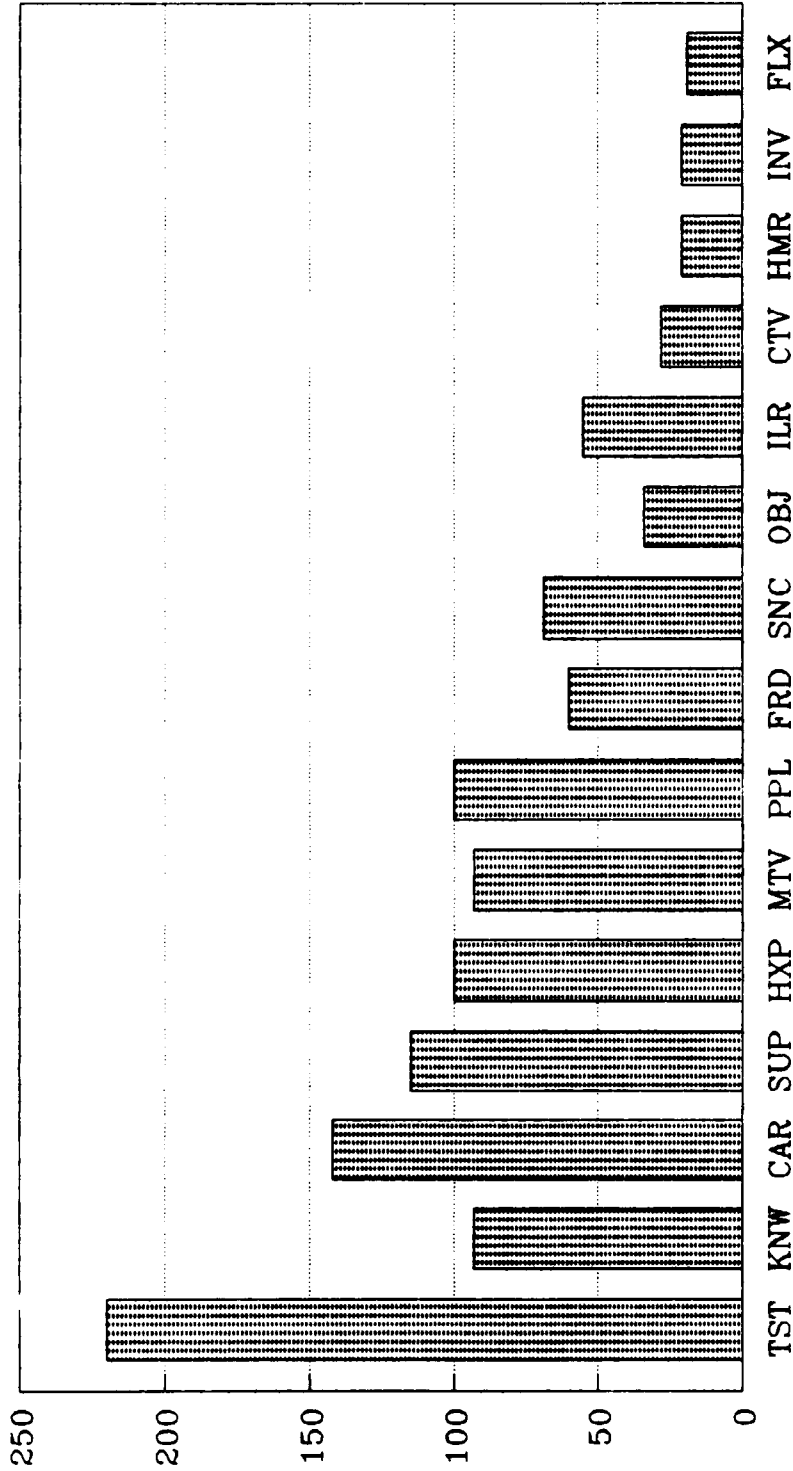
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1987 GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL PREFERENCES BY SCHOOLS



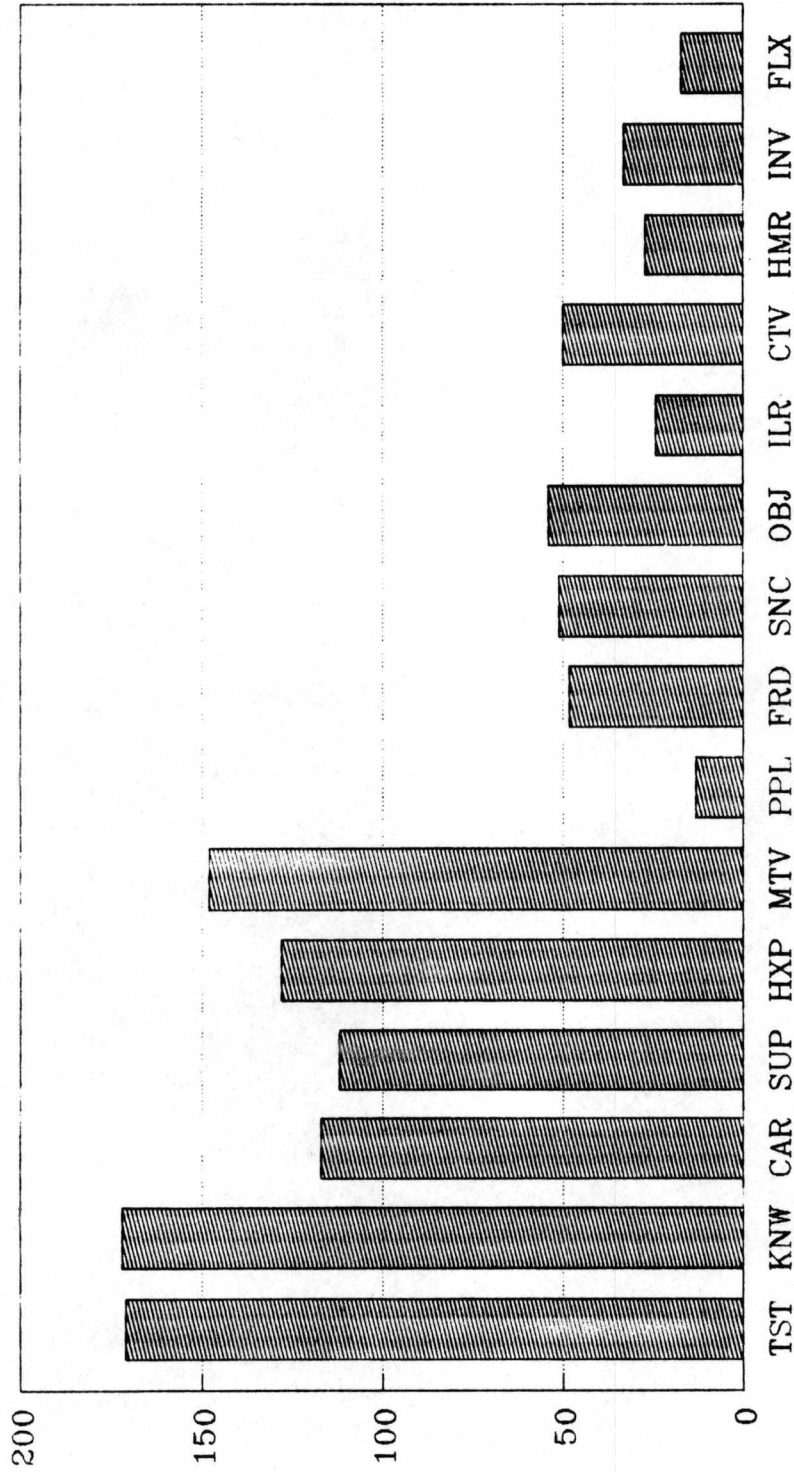
1987 GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL PREFERENCES BY SCHOOLS



CHARACTERISTIC PREFERENCES

SCIENCE

1987 GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL PREFERENCES BY SCHOOLS



CHARACTERISTIC PREFERENCES

■ HUMANITIES

1987 GOVERNOR'S SCHOOL PREFERENCES BY SCHOOLS

The following data lists the students from the metropolitan, rural areas, and unidentified areas by percent. Refer to Figure 3.

	METROPOLITAN AREAS	RURAL AREAS	UNIDENTIFIED AREAS
TST	16.44%	16.45%	17.82%
KNW	12.11%	10.56%	13.20%
CAR	9.79%	13.65%	8.58%
SUP	9.97%	11.14%	10.89%
HXP	9.89%	10.71%	10.56%
MTV	9.24%	9.50%	10.23%
PPL	7.53%	3.81%	1.98%
FRD	4.55%	5.02%	4.62%
SNC	3.97%	4.82%	2.31%
OBJ	3.38%	3.81%	4.29%
ILR	3.49%	2.85%	3.96%
CTV	3.53%	2.85%	3.30%
HMR	2.33%	2.17%	1.98%
INV	2.26%	1.50%	3.96%
FLX	1.49%	1.16%	2.31%

The following data represents the female, male and unknown teachers selected by the Governor's School students. Refer to Figure 6.

	FEMALE	MALE	UNKNOWN
TST	15.55%	17.69%	18.40%
KNW	11.36%	11.49%	13.08%
CAR	11.37%	11.15%	10.41%
SUP	10.00%	11.83%	8.23%
HXP	10.41%	9.69%	11.62%
MTV	9.70%	8.11%	12.83%
PPL	6.33%	5.30%	2.91%
PRD	4.90%	5.01%	2.42%
SNC	4.12%	4.17%	5.08%
OBJ	3.33%	4.23%	3.39%
ILR	3.47%	3.15%	2.18%
CTV	3.40%	2.93%	3.39%
HMR	2.28%	2.08%	2.91%
INV	2.04%	2.03%	2.18%
FLX	1.63%	1.13%	0.97%

VITA

Judith H. Davis was born on September 19, 1949, in Greeneville, Tennessee. She was privileged to have lived in many small towns in East Tennessee and southwest Virginia. She attended elementary school in Johnson City and Rogersville, Tennessee, and graduated from Giles High School in Pearisburg, Virginia in June 1967. In the fall of 1967, she entered Tennessee Wesleyan College in Athens, Tennessee. While there, she was the recipient of the Ann Puett Art Award, was a cheerleader for the Tennessee Wesleyan Bulldogs, and was a member of Sigma Kappa Sorority in which she held the office of historian. Judith graduated from Tennessee Wesleyan College in June 1971 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Physical Education. One year later, she returned to college to receive her endorsement in elementary education.

Professional experience since then has included classroom teacher for the non-graded Follow-Through Program in the Bradley County School System, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teacher for the McMinn County Schools, and teacher of the second grade in McMinn County Schools. She presently teaches in the Athens City School System at Ingleside Elementary School, a nationally recognized School of Excellence. In the fall of 1988, she entered the

University of Tennessee as a graduate student.

She is married to Charles McCrary (Cary) Davis, formerly of Loudon, Tennessee. The couple have one child, Margaret Elizabeth, (Molly), and reside in Athens, Tennessee.