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ABSTRACT

The study sought to define the Ethos of a classroom and its operating assumptions. The basic components of the Ethos variable are Authenticity (for individual students), Legitimacy (in terms of knowledge and societal disciplines), and Productivity (effectiveness of activities). This variable is referred to by its acronym, ALP. An international study and a Chicago-based study using the ALP instrument have been begun. Forty-nine classrooms in the Chicago area have been analyzed and findings reported to the teachers. A series of variables related to ALP-Ethos in these schools is now being investigated. (Author)

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Assessment of Classroom Ethos and Some of its Correlates

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This is a very preliminary progress report from the ALP-Ethos research team. This team is engaged in a two-year study, supported by the Spencer Foundation, for the purpose of assessing classroom Ethos and exploring its utility for research on educative activities in classrooms.

Our work is based on the following postulates: (Thelen)

1. Most of "teaching" is designed for rather limited objectives selected from all the possibilities of "learning" and/or "socialization."

2. What the teacher does and causes to happen in the classroom may have an impact on any part of the child's way of life.

3. The short and long range consequences of the accumulation of these impacts are the education the child receives and for which we are accountable.

4. The "whole way of life" may be understood through three paradigms: adaptation, as in the evolution of the species; participation, having to do with the tensions between person (or community) and society; and transcendence, having to do with the realization of potentials.

5. These aspects of life are in dialectical interplay and the educativeness of the integration that results depends on the cultural values and expectations in the classroom Ethos with respect to authenticity, legitimacy, and productivity--hereinafter referred to as ALP.

6. Authenticity, legitimacy, and productivity are operationalizable and may be assessed through perceptions of participants.

7. The educational interpretation of empirical relationships among achievement, demographic, and performance variables will depend very significantly on the ALP Ethos context within which they are measured. Thus we expect the assessed ALP Ethos variable to bridge between scientific and educational frames of reference for the examination of classroom activity.

Let us now present the ALP Ethos instrument and some of its correlates uncovered in a comparison of two contrasting classrooms. First, the instrument.

Table 1 - THE ALP ITEMS AND THE CATEGORIES THEY REPRESENT

	Item	Category
		Authenticity
A2 11	I felt really challenged by things others said.	Openness
A8 12	It made me think some new thoughts of my own.	Stimulation, personal cognitive
A9 13	I felt like rapping with the teacher and other classmates after the meeting.	Involvement, closure-seeking.
A11 14	I felt that during the activity I could be the sort of person I wanted to be.	Life-style congruence
A13 15	I felt the activity clarified some previous personal experiences.	Assimilation to past experience.
A17 21	I was excited by what was happening.	Affective arousal or mobilization.
A23 22	I felt the time passed quickly for me.	Unself-conscious absorption.
A24 23	I felt like contributing to the activity.	Participation during meeting.
		Legitimacy
L4 24	As a group we had good reasons for what we did.	Rationale, public
L6 25	Our meetings at times really exemplified good group process.	Model for activity
L7 31	We concentrated our activity on the significant aspects of the task.	Significance
L12 32	We understood the nature of our task and tried to see what it would require us to do.	Logical Requirements
L14 33	Some of the things we found out will be useful in other situations.	Future utility
L16 34	The problems we had of working together occur regularly in other groups as well.	Generalization, expectation

L21 35	Our shared purpose was strong enough to help guide our behavior.	Purpose and commitment as guides.
L22 41	The issues that troubled us in our group are also prevalent in the larger society.	Context, imbeddedness.
		<u>Productivity</u>
P1 42	We decided what we wanted to do and we did it.	Decision, control
P3	We accomplished a great deal.	Accomplishment
P5 44	We knew how well we were progressing in our task.	Knowledge of Progress
P10 45	One thing flowed from another.	Continuity, sequence.
P15 51	We ran into problems and solved them.	Problem-solving
P18 52	The diversity of our individual backgrounds aided the group.	Resource Utilization.
P19 53	We all helped each other.	Cooperation.
P20 54	We each contributed our special skills to make the meeting productive.	Role Coordination.

The ALP Ethos Instrument (Olson)

The instrument consists of 24 statements on slips of paper. Eight of the items are keyed to Authenticity, eight to Legitimacy, and eight to Productivity (Table 1). The 24 statements are intended to sample a very wide range of potentially salient expectations of classroom way of life.

Participants are asked to describe their class by ranking the statements from most descriptive (rank #1) to least descriptive (rank #24). To aid in the ranking process, it is suggested that they first sort the items into three groups: those that are clearly applicable, those that clearly do not fit, and those that cannot be decided easily one way or the other. Items within each group are placed in order and then combined to make a single 24-item rank order which is then recorded on machine-read answer sheets.

We have used this instrument to have teachers and students describe their actual class, their ideal class, and how they think others will describe actual and ideal classes. The instrument calls for fair reading ability; and we have not determined what reading level is required.

A Composite Picture of Classroom Ethos

This past year, the instrument was administered to 50 classes in five midwestern schools. From the combined results we arrived at the following summary of the various themes which describe a composite of these five schools. The themes are arranged in order of their importance or characteristicness in the composite classroom.

The most characteristic theme represents general expectations with-

in our culture: school is a place to learn things useful in the future, a place where one has new thoughts, participates in class activities, and copes with problems.

The next most characteristic theme describes the obvious explicit structure of classroom activity. There are tasks to be completed and one tries to meet task requirements. Students are aware of progress and accomplishments, and the tasks are arranged in sequence.

Somewhat less characteristic are perceptions centering around rationales, that is, reasons for activity. This is the domain of values, social principles, and policies. Whatever the reason, these are necessary in order to maintain social order for satisfactory completion of the activities.

Following this theme and middle ranked in the sequence is the theme of Group Morale. Satisfaction with group process and participation in decisions are neither characteristic nor uncharacteristic. The former feature is generally a matter of indifference: the latter varies so markedly in individual rankings that it cannot characterize the composite.

More uncharacteristic than characteristic is the theme of personal authenticity: support for self-aspiration, unselfconscious absorption in the activity, and acceptance of challenge by others.

Even more uncharacteristic is the theme of social orientation. Students tend not to perceive much connection or link between the classroom society and the larger society.

Least characteristic of all are perceptions related to individuality and involvement: that individual resources are utilized, that class-work

connects to private experience, that one becomes excited or involved in class activities, and that one has a sense of common cause with others in the class.

Two Contrasting Classes (Cichon)

The two classes in the following brief comparison have quite contrasting demographic characteristics. One, a French class, is from a university laboratory school, with a relatively high socio-economic clientele and quite a racial mixture consisti f more whites than blacks. The other, a Consumer Math class, is from an inner-city public school having a very low socio-economic clientele and being 100% black.

The comparison is based on each class's mean ranking of the A, L, and P items which provide the best description of "how the kids see the class" in terms of our instrument. Thus, we may infer that their description constitute the expectations that the students have of life in those classrooms.

The present comparison, for the sake of brevity, is based on the seven top-ranked items only for each class, which are listed in rank order in Table 2.

Two of the top seven items are similar: learning useful things and helping each other. Solving problems is ranked first in the math class and seventh in the French class. The remaining four items of the top seven are different. In French, the characteristics are wanting to contribute, focus on significant aspects, knowing progress, and meeting task requirements--basically a structure oriented to achievement. In Math, the characteristics are strong group purpose, sense of accomplishment, stimu-

Table 2

COMPARISON OF TWO CLASSES' MOST CHARACTERISTIC A, L, AND P ITEMS

I. Seven Top-Ranked Items for the French Class:

1. L14 - Some of the things we found out will be useful in other situations.
2. A24 - I felt like contributing to the activity.
3. L7 - We concentrated our activity on the significant aspects of the task.
4. P19 - We all helped each other.
5. P5 - We knew how well we were progressing in our task.
6. L12 - We understood the nature of our task and tried to see what it would require us to do.
7. P15 - We ran into problems and solved them.

II. Seven Top-Ranked Items for the Consumer Math Class:

1. P15 - We ran into problems and solved them.
2. L14 - Some of the things we found out will be useful in other situations.
3. L21 - Our shared purpose was strong enough to help guide our behavior.
4. P3 - We accomplished a great deal.
5. P19 - We all helped each other.
6. A8 - It made me think new thoughts of my own.
7. L4 - As a group we had good reasons for what we did.

lation of new thoughts, and having good reasons--basically a structure oriented to cooperative problem-solving.

The foregoing comparison, though brief, serves to indicate that the ALP instrument can describe some aspects of life in classrooms, aspects which allow for a variety of interpretations, depending on the conceptual framework of the interpreter. It also serves to illustrate that the dimensions of authenticity, legitimacy, and productivity are present in different classrooms in different ways. That is, the character of one class's authenticity may be very different than that for another class. Ditto for the dimensions of legitimacy and productivity. In sum, each class has an Ethos with its own special blend of cultural characteristics, and these are describable.

Sex Differences (Arisman)

As we continued to analyze the two classes, we were pleased to find that the instrument was sensitive to another aspect of classroom life--that is, how it is lived by different subgroups.

One of the more striking differences was revealed when rankings were obtained separately on the instrument for boys and girls. In the French class, only 25% of the items differentiated between boys and girls while in the Consumer Math class, there were differences on 67% of the items. Recalling that there was a great difference in socio-economic status between the two groups, with the Consumer Math made up of students from a lower socio-economic status than the French class, the amount of difference seems to be in keeping with the general finding of more sex differentiation

in lower socio-economic groups.

The pattern of differentiation in the Math class is also interesting. The boys see the conversational aspect as more characteristic; while the girls see the academic aspect as more prominent. The boys express and discuss their feelings about Consumer Math problems. They feel they help each other. The girls perceive this class as more concerned with the type of academic problems that they are used to in typical academic classes. They do not see themselves as actively helping make decisions about activities or supporting each other.

The items that show reversal patterns between the classes--items which are more characteristic of one sex in the French class and of the other sex in the Consumer Math class--are also revealing. Boys in the French class and girls in the Consumer Math class share a task orientation while the girls in the French class and the boys in the Consumer Math class share a supportive, orientation. What makes the finding so exciting is that it seems to reflect the achievement and affiliation needs of the different ethnic groups represented by the two classes with the black male students and the white female students perceiving the interpersonal, conversational aspect of the class as more characteristic and the white male and the black female students seeing the achievement or task oriented dimensions as more characteristic. This finding is in line with other work on achievement and affiliation needs.

Finally, in both classes, boys tend to perceive the class as problem-centered whether it is on their own personal achievement problems or the problems of their group. The instrument's sensitivity to these differences

in orientation between sexes and ethnic groups and the fact that these differences can be explained in terms of other research has encouraged us to pursue the question of classroom subcultures in our larger study of schools.

Achievement (David)

We were interested in determining (a) the pattern of ALP items which correlated significantly with achievement in the two classrooms; and (b) which ALP items were ranked distinctively different by the top six and lowest six achieving students in the two classes. Achievement was defined in terms of scores on a unit examination prepared and administered by the teacher. Other measures of achievement could yield quite different patterns--a possibility that we are studying in some detail.

Table 3 displays the items which correlated with achievement and which distinguished high and low achievers from another in the two classes. In this brief presentation we shall discuss only the latter.

For the French class, the six highest achievers ranked as more descriptive of their class the importance of individual special skills to the group (P20). They also tended to see the class as personally involving and absorbing: they felt like contributing to class activities (A24) and time passed quickly for them (A23).

The lowest six achievers in the French class ranked as more characteristic of the class the importance of a clearly specified task structure in determining activities (L12). Associated with this emphasis on structure was a sense of accomplishment (P3). Also ranked higher by the low achievers

Table 3 - Achievement

	French	Consumer Math.
Correlates:		
Positive	P20 L14	A11 L14 P5
Negative	L12 P15 P3 A13	P1 P18 P10 L16
Differences, favoring:		
High Achievers	P20 A24 A23	A11 L14 P5 L12 A17
Bottom Achievers	L12 P3 A17 A13	P1 P10 L22 L16 L13

Note: Item differences between high and low achievers are of at least six ranks.

(but in the lower half of their ranking) was the notion that class activities were exciting (A17) and personally meaningful (A13).

In the Math class, the top six achievers tended to characterize their class as one where they learned useful things (L14) and had a clear sense of progress in their work (P5). They also differed greatly from the bottom six achievers in that they felt the class was more of a place where they could be the kind of person they wanted to be (A11). They were also more conscious of a clear task structure guiding the class activities (L12) and felt more excited about what was going on (A17).

The bottom six achievers in the Math class tended to describe their class as one where "we decided what we wanted to do and we did it" (P1). They also characterized the class activities as having continuity (P10) and as relevant to issues in the larger society (L22) and in other groups (L16), as well as to their previous personal experiences (A13).

The measures of achievement were not the same for the two classes, and the classes were selected for study because of their uniqueness rather than their representativeness of some hypothetical population of French and Math classes, so the generalizability of these results is limited. What is important to note is that the ALP instrument is able to pinpoint such subgroup differences in perception, as well as permit correlational studies with a number of other measures--of achievement as well as other relevant variables.

Teacher Perception of Actual versus Ideal Class (Yonke)

In the French class of the Lab School the teacher ranks the following

ideal items higher than the actual items by eight ranks or more: challenge and openness (A2); participation and closure seeking after the activity (A9); self-congruence (A11); smoothness of the operation (P10); and a sense of shared purpose (L21). The theme is personal involvement and harmonious teamwork.

In his actual class the teacher ranks the following actual items higher than ideal items: thinking new thoughts (A8); profiting from diversity of backgrounds (P18) and clarifying previous personal experience (A13). These items form a pattern of meaningful cognitive stimulation.

In the Consumer Math class the teacher ranks the following ideal items higher than the actual items: concentration on significant aspects of the task (L7); shared purpose strong enough to help guide behavior (L21); students contributing special skills to the activity (P20) and helping each other (P19). The theme is effective, focussed cooperation.

In the actual Math class the teacher ranks the following actual items higher than the ideal: students rapping with each other and with the teacher (A9); learning useful things (L14); thinking new thoughts (A8); being concerned with issues and problems of the larger society (L16 and L22). The theme is cognitive involvement and generalization.

In general the actual-ideal tension of the French teacher is between cognitive stimulation (actual perception) vs. desire for greater personal involvement and teamwork (ideal). The actual-ideal tension of the Math teacher is between conceptual orientation (actual) vs. effective cooperation. The conventional wisdom is that discrepancies between views of the actual and ideal would generate tension and problems. It remains to be

seen to what extent and in what ways the ALP actual vs. ideal patterns diagnose dynamically meaningful tensions.

Comparison of Teacher Perception and Class Perception (Weiss-Handler)

In the French class, there are four items which the teacher finds to be more characteristic of the class than do the students: A8, the members think some new thoughts, A17, experience a measure of excitement, A13, the activity clarifies some previous personal experience, and P18, the diversity of individual backgrounds aided the group. In summary, the teacher perceives the activity to be more personally involving than do the students.

More than the teacher, the students perceive they are concentrating on the significant aspects of the task, L7, they know their progress, P5, they are helping one another, P19. Less characteristic of the classroom, but still more so than perceived by the teacher, the students perceive that the class is accomplishing a great deal, P3, functioning rationally, L4, and using good group process, L6.

The French class is more teacher than student directed. This may help explain why the teacher finds the class more personally involving than the students, and why the students see the class as a group exercise, in which they respond to academic demands.

In the Consumer Math class, the teacher perceives that the class encourages participation, A24, A9, makes use of individual differences, P18 (also noted by the first teacher), and meets the needs of their life styles, A11. Although the teacher ranks the following items as less characteristic, she perceives more than the students that there is some link to past experience, A13, the group is proceeding logically, L12, and somewhat effi-

ciently, L7, toward completion of the task.

The students see the class as more concerned with problem-solving, P15, accomplishment, P3, purposes, L21, and the group itself, L4. The students feel much more than the teacher does that they are helping each other, P19. Less characteristic but ranked higher by the students were group decision making, P1, and progress, P5.

Again we note that the teacher perceives the activity as more involving than do the students.

In the French class, the students see the group as more important than the teacher does, while in the Consumer Math class, the students focus more on the problem-solving aspect of the class than does the teacher. In both classes, the teacher is less concerned with group process and somewhat less concerned with productivity than are the students.

This data demonstrates the tensions that may exist between the teachers' and students' perceptions in two classrooms. The teachers may be aware and understand some of this tension, but likely not all. It raises the question of how teachers cope with such tension.

Table 4 - Similar and Different Ranks for Students and Teacher

Ranks of items are in parentheses--first teacher's, then students'. #1 = most; and #24 = least characteristic.

French Class

	Similar	More Char.: Tchr.	More Char.: Studs.
A	A2 (22,24) A9 (20,22) A11 (19,23) A24 (2,2)	A8 (3,16) A13 (6,20) A17 (5,18)	A23 (21,14)
L	L12 (7,6) L14 (1,1) L21 (14,15)		L4 (16,10) L6 (17, 8) L7 (8,3) L16 (15, 9) L22 (24,19)
P	P1 (23,21) P10 (13,13) P15 (10, 7) P20 (9,12)	P18 (4,17)	P3 (18,11) P5 (12, 5) P19 (11, 4)

Consumer Math Class

	Similar	More Char.: Tchr.	More Char.: Studs.
A	A2 (11,12) A8 (8, 6) A23 (15,17)	A9 (3,8) A11 (2, 19) A13 (10,23) A24 (1, 16)	A17 (23,15)
L	L14 (4,2) L6 (20,20) L16 (12,10) L22 (5,9)	L7 (17,22) L12 (9, 14)	L4 (19, 7) L21 (14, 3)
P	P10 (13,13) P20 (21,24)	P18 (6, 21)	P1 (22,18) P3 (24, 4) P5 (16,11) P15 (7,1) P19 (19, 5)