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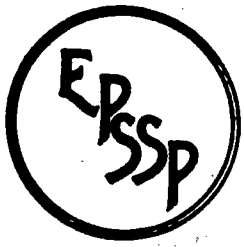
ABSTRACT

This document reports on an inquiry into elementary school students' perceptions of important classroom rules and of the teacher's authority. Chapter 1 provides an overview to this verification inquiry, part of a larger study, Ecological Perspectives for Successful Schooling Practice. The next chapter reports on the findings on children's social-cognitive understanding of rules and authority. Students' perceptions of rules are analyzed by individual classroom and across classrooms, and students' perceptions of teacher authority are studied and reported on in two phases. Chapter 3 presents information on study participants (75 elementary school students), data collection methodology (interviews and questioning techniques), and analysis of data on rules and authority. A list of references is included, along with 18 tables presenting study data. (CJ)



Ecological Perspectives for SUCCESSFUL SCHOOLING PRACTICE

VERIFICATION INQUIRY

Volume V

An Exploration of Elementary Students' Perceptions of Classroom Rules and Teacher Authority at a Successful School

John R. Mergendoller
Susan Y. Osaki
Donald W. Swarthout
Beatrice A. Ward
William J. Tikunoff

Report EPSSP-81-14

FAR WEST LABORATORY FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
1855 FOLSOM STREET · SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94103

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following document reports the results of an inquiry into students' perceptions of the important rules in their elementary school classrooms and of their understanding of the authority of the teacher. The study was conducted in a successful elementary school located in the San Francisco Bay Area.

The purpose of the research reported here was (1) to describe the perceptions of important classroom rules held by children in kindergarten through sixth grade, (2) to describe the perceptions of children in kindergarten through sixth grade regarding the authority of the teacher, and (3) to reflect on what these findings suggest for provisions of successful classroom experiences for all children.

Such inquiry has important implications for successful schooling because, like all societies, the classroom has appropriate standards for conduct of its members. Students, for example, are expected to eschew many types of physical and social behavior, and to complete academic tasks in specific ways. These standards of conduct define normative expectations, and, in successful classrooms, they are shared by the teacher and students. Knowing what common expectations are held and how teachers establish them is an important future of successful schooling practices.

Analysis of open-ended interviews with a total of 75 elementary school students in kindergarten through sixth grade revealed that:

1) The rules deemed "most important" and perceived as most salient across all classrooms were rules which regulated student mobility and talking in the classroom and which encouraged ethical behavior among students.

2) Students' understanding of the authority of the teacher grew more sophisticated with age. Younger children tend to regard the teacher's authority as based on the teacher's ability to punish students. Older children understand the teacher's authority as based on the teacher's superior competencies and ability to help the students learn and develop.

3) In addition to the age trends referred to above, students' levels of authority understanding varied considerably within the same class.

4) The ways in which teachers sanction students, establish rules, and carry out other disciplinary and reinforcement

acts, can influence students' development of authority understandings.

Implications of this inquiry for the provision and maintenance of successful schooling practices include:

1) Consistency of rules across classrooms may well be the work of a successful school. We believe that such coordination should be encouraged. When students know that they are expected to behave in the same way in in any classroom, these expectations may facilitate successful performance of the student role.

2) Teachers need to realize that different students view their legitimacy as authority figures in different ways and take these different levels of understanding into account when exercising authority and disciplining students. The type of control strategies that will be most successful vary depending upon the level of understanding the student has developed.

3) Teacher explanation of the reasons for specific disciplinary actions to individual students, or a group of students (depending upon the focus of the action), based upon higher level authority understandings, appears to be warranted. Such explanations may help students identify and apply these understandings to their own situations.

4) Assessment of students' rules and authority understandings and perceptions appears to be an important feature of a successful instructional program. Consideration should be given to expanding existing assessment programs to include this, as well as academic skills data.

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William J. Tikunoff
Director, Programs on Schooling

FAR WEST LABORATORY
FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
1855 FOLSOM STREET · SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94103

PREFACE

This volume is one in a series of reports of a multi-faceted study which examines and describes the successful schooling practices at a single elementary school in the San Francisco Bay Area. It reports the work conducted by the Ecological Perspective for Successful Schooling Practice Program at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. Other volumes in the series include:

Volume I:	Overview of the Verification Study
Volume II:	An Analysis of the Activity Structures at a Successful School
Volume III:	An Analysis of Teachers' Ideal Students at a Successful School
Volume IV:	An Analysis of Teachers' Rule Systems at a Successful School
Volume V:	An Exploration of Elementary Students' Perceptions of Classroom Rules and Teacher Authority at a Successful School
Volume VI:	Case Studies of Classroom Instruction and Interactions in a Successful School
Volume VII:	Successful Schools and Classroms: A Summary of the Findings of the Verification Inquiry and Implications for the Provision of Successful Schooling Experiences for All Students

The goal of the Ecological Perspectives for Successful Schooling Practice Program is to analyze school settings where successful instruction and educational practices are occurring, and describe these settings so that they may be implemented by other educational practitioners. In addition, the Program seeks to work in collaboration with school people to improve students' educational experiences and make less successful schools more successful.

The ecological perspectives for Successful Schooling Practice Program is one of a series of long-term, innovative efforts to improve the educational opportunities for all children funded by the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education. William J. Tikunoff and Beatrice A. Ward are the Co-Principal Investigators. Other professional staff members include John R. Mergendoller, Project Director, Alexis L. Mitman, Associate Research Scientist; and Thomas S. Rounds, Associate Research Scientist.

We wish to thank Virginia Koehler, and Michael Cohen, Teaching and Learning Division, National Institute of Education for their support of this program, and their willingness to explore innovative ways of approaching the problems which confront educators and encouraging eduational excellence.

Many individuals helped in the preparation of this report, and we wish to thank them for their efforts: Donald Swarthout, now of the Charlotte, North Carolina School District, and John R. Mergendoller conducted the interviews; Susan Osaki, of the University of California, Santa Cruz, did the initial coding and data analysis; John R. Mergendoller supervised and completed the analysis and took primary responsibility for writing and conceptualizing this volume. Charlie Ray Altizer, Paul Halley, and Barbara Murray prepared this manuscript. To all, thank you.

Finally, we wish to thank the teachers and students at Central School for sharing their time and their opinions with us. Without their important collaboration, this research could never have been conducted.

Beatrice A. Ward
Co-Principal
Investigator

William J. Tikunoff
Co-Principal
Investigator

John R. Mergendoller
Project Director

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Verification Inquiry, of which the findings regarding children's social-cognitive understandings of rules and authority that are reported herein are one part, is an activity of the Ecological Perspectives for Successful Schooling Practice Program. The program is designed to identify, describe, and develop indicators of successful schooling practices by developing an ecological theory of teaching, developing research methods appropriate for studying schooling practices from an ecological perspective, and developing strategies for implementing the successful practices in a manner that attends to the complex contexts that exist in schools and classrooms.

In the traditional view that has long prevailed in education, teaching has been defined, researched, and promulgated largely on the basis of the psychology of individual learning. The study of motivation, feedback, learning style, work rate, and reinforcement, to name but a few, have been approached largely from the perspective of the individual learner. While the contributions of such a view cannot be omitted from any comprehensive statement of teaching, they do not suffice as an explanation of what teaching is or as a guide to the practice of teaching.

In the institution of the school, the teacher instructs a group of students in the classroom, and the student learns in proximity with other contemporaries. Teaching and learning are social experiences, introducing a host of forces beyond the purview of individual learning psychology. As Bossert (1977) observed, "The collective nature of instruction is one of the most apparent but little examined factors of classroom life affecting the teacher" (p. 19). Reliance on the psychology of individual learning also has been inadequate because it "has produced primarily theories and data dealing with questions of learning, and these are considerably different from and less applicable to the classroom than theories and data relevant to problems of teaching" (Brophy, 1974, p. 48).

The traditional view, moreover, has been concerned with teaching behavior as the stimulus for individual learning outcomes, assuming direct teacher causality while generally ignoring student responses and environmental variables and linkage processes (for example, see Doyle, 1977). As a growing number of critics have pointed out, this is an unmerited and uninstructive assumption.

What is needed is theory which takes into account the group nature of instruction as well as the psychology of individual learning. Such theory must attend to the sociological nature of teaching, as

well as the interrelationships among the complex set of components that constitute the environment of teaching.

Such an ecological perspective, while relatively new to research on teaching, has been part of the thinking in educational research for some time. For example, researchers have agreed that we need to attend to more "things" in the classroom in order to understand even the simplest phenomenon. Most prominently, the works of Barker (1968) and two of his colleagues, Kounin (1977) and Gump (1967), focused attention on factors beyond the teacher-student dyad. In terms of requisite methodology, Barker (1968), and more recently, Bronfenbrenner (1976), Doyle (1977, 1979a, 1979b), Charlesworth and Bart (1976), and Rhodes and Paul (1978), among others, discussed procedures and processes whereby ecological research may be conducted.

Based on review of the above work and preliminary investigations undertaken by the Ecological Perspectives staff, the Verification Inquiry was designed to incorporate and test the following parameters of an ecological view of classroom-based teaching and learning.

1. An ecological theory of teaching is meant to connote theory that is grounded in the multiple realities of everyday classroom life as it occurs in a variety of natural settings and is perceived by a variety of participants. Thus, given a particular classroom setting, the theory must be meaningful for teachers and others involved with day-to-day life in that setting. The power of such theory rests with its capability to provide a variety of perspectives useful for analysis of the ecology of classrooms, taking into consideration the multiple elements of classroom interaction and how these interrelate. Further, analysis using perspectives of the theory should provide a teacher with information useful for planning, monitoring, and evaluating instruction -- information which is not included in or provided by traditional theories of teaching.

In order to tap these multiple factors, the following premises for development of an ecological theory seem appropriate:

- First, the forum for conduct of ecological research is the natural environment. This focus primarily is on the classroom and aligns with what Bronfenbrenner (1976) calls "ecologically valid" research. By this he means research that is conducted in settings that occur in the culture or subculture for other than research purposes. Such research maintains the ecological integrity of the setting while conducting the research. In addition, the data-collection methodologies do not alter the natural behavior of individuals in that setting, or alter it to the smallest degree possible, to ensure the internal validity of the research. For a further treatment of this premise see Tikunoff and Ward (1978).

- Second, the focus of ecological data collection and analysis in this natural environment is on environment-behavior relationships. As Doyle points out, ecological

analysis requires a two-stage process: (a) defining the dimensions of the environment, in this case the classroom; and (b) identifying teacher and student strategies that are successful and not successful in that environment. Embedded in this dimension is the notion of a third facet of environment-behavior relationships, reciprocal causality.

- Third, ecological research is concerned with the functional value or adaptive significance of behaviors in an environment. Among these are those mediational behaviors students use to "navigate" or perform within classroom environments (Doyle, 1979a). Such a view of classrooms, which focuses on adaptive behaviors in conjunction with the reciprocal analysis of environment-behavior relationships, can provide a systemic view of classroom life. If the ecological theory is to be useful to teachers, it will have to provide information that shows how students function, given changes in elements within the classroom environment.

2. Development of an Ecological Theory of Teaching requires a multi-disciplinary approach. Thus, theory is grounded in classroom practice, while, at the same time, it is infused with knowledge from multiple disciplines.

For purposes of the Verification Inquiry, three perspectives from different disciplines have been applied. These are: (1) the activity structure perspective taken from the field of sociology, particularly the work of Bossert (1979), Dreeben (1967), and Bidwell (1972); (2) the student participation perspective building from the work of sociolinguists such as Philips (1972) and Mehan (1979a,b); and (3) students' cognitive understandings relative to various aspects of schooling which build from the work of cognitive psychologists and sociologists such as DeSoto (1979), Weiner (1979), Damon (1977), Furth (1978), and Hoffman (1977). Each of these is discussed later in this report as they apply to the specific research findings reported herein.

3. In addition to developing the proposed Ecological Theory of Teaching, it is necessary to devise ways of implementing its operation in classrooms and schools. Traditionally, this function has been seen as one of translation or adaptation from research into practice. However, findings from the Interactive Research and Development on Teaching (IR&DT) study conducted by Tikunoff, Ward, and Griffin (1979), suggest ways whereby implementation of the theory might be facilitated by the manner in which the research is conducted. Among these are:

- To understand classroom teaching-learning ecologically, it is more productive to inquire into these aspects with the teacher. This partnership serves to provide information which is not otherwise available, such as (a) a teacher's intent, as embodied in the selection and utilization of curriculum and instructional materials, and (b) a teacher's expectations

for student behavior. Jackson's (1968) term "observant participators" describes well how the teacher participates in this enterprise.

- Understanding classroom teaching-learning ecologically is both more productive and more complete when (a) individual classrooms are observed for full days at a time across time (in contrast to isolated, drop-in observations), and (b) all classrooms at a given school are involved in observation. The first condition ensures that an isolated, observed event is not unusual, and gives additional perspectives of that event in relation to what else goes on at other times during the day or week or across a month or year. The second provides for observation of the whole school as a social system and allows the analyst to begin to separate "school-wide effects" from "classroom effects." To understand the ecological impact of schooling for a given student, it is necessary to understand not only each of the social-instructional classroom systems through which the student will matriculate, but how these are orchestrated into the "whole" experience. This can be done best when an entire school is involved.

- Participation of teachers in conducting the research adds both to defining constructs and to considering the usefulness of the constructs to classroom teachers. In some instances in the Verification Inquiry, constructs taken from fields of inquiry unusual to education, such as the three listed above, were given concrete classroom-based definitions based on the form(s) in which they were observed in classrooms and the language (terms) teachers used to describe those events. In other instances, "research" terms were explained in more detail to the teachers. In a sense, this represented the development of a working lexicon between teachers and researchers not unlike the process reported by Smith and Geoffrey (1968). In addition, the ability of teachers to utilize the constructs, in order to analyze events in their own classrooms, and to plan instructional events to achieve the predetermined goals inherent in the events, lends credence to their inclusion in the emerging theory.

- The nature of reciprocity in the ways teachers and researchers work greatly contributes to the success of the research. Rist (1970) used the term, reciprocity, to describe how he behaved as a nonparticipant observer in classrooms while conducting his research. Like Rist, reciprocity during the Verification Inquiry has included project researchers offering technical assistance in curriculum matters, lending instructional materials, working with individual students in instruction in the classroom, and offering workshops for all the teachers in particular instructional strategies. In return, teachers

have offered their classrooms as data sources, but, additionally, have given generously of their recess and lunchtime to clarify behavior for the observers, and have participated wholeheartedly in the research enterprise, placing great trust in the researchers.

Within the above framework, the Verification Inquiry was conducted as an in-depth case study in a single elementary school nominated by several educational constituent groups as a successful school. As noted above, the purposes of the Inquiry were to develop an Ecological Theory of Teaching that builds upon the three perspectives listed above, develop research methods appropriate to such ecological inquiry, and develop strategies for improving teaching and learning, using the ecological perspectives. More specifically, the Inquiry sought to answer the following sets of questions:

1. What activity structures are utilized in elementary school classrooms? In a single successful elementary school, what differences, if any, occur in the structures that are utilized at various grade levels (K-6)? Are activity structures and teacher behaviors interrelated? If so, in what ways? What effect(s) do activity structure characteristics have upon the ways students behave successfully in classrooms? How do these latter requirements relate to school-level goals and expectations?

2. What are teacher expectations for student performance as represented in the teacher's perceptions of an ideal student?

3. What rules systems are established in the classrooms in a successful elementary school? Are these rules consistent with teacher expectations, activity structure demands, school goals?

4. What are students' perceptions of classroom rules and teacher authority in a successful elementary school? What are the implications of these perceptions for successful classroom practice?

5. When instructional events are studied from the ecological perspectives, what relationships appear to produce more successful outcomes for students?

The findings reported in this volume focus on Question 4. The chapters that follow report the findings related to students' perceptions of rules and teacher authority, and the implications of these findings for successful schooling practices. Following the presentation of findings, the study participants and the methods used to obtain and analyze the data are discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-COGNITIVE UNDERSTANDINGS OF RULES AND AUTHORITY

Like all societies, the microsociety of the classroom has appropriate standards for the conduct of its members. Students are expected, for example, to eschew many types of physical behavior (walking from assigned seats to various places in the classroom, rough-housing, getting into lines, etc.), and to complete academic tasks in specific ways (do their own work, collaborate and help other students, demonstrate their ability to answer discussion questions by raising their hands and answering correctly if called upon by the teacher, etc.). These standards of conduct define normative expectations, and, in successful classrooms, they are shared by the teacher and students. Such cultural standards specify the student role requirements within each individual classroom.

As the classroom social and instructional leader, the teacher is primarily responsible for establishing these normative expectations and communicating them to students. Communication may occur in various ways. Teachers may announce that certain types of behavior are inappropriate, thus stating explicitly the classroom standards for appropriate conduct. Frequently, however, teachers must do more than tell students what to do; they must use the authority inherent in the teaching role to punish students for misbehavior and reward them for appropriate behavior.

The concept of authority is inextricably linked with the assumption that there are rules or a normative or "moral" order which specify appropriate conduct (Durkheim, 1961). As R. S. Peters has noted in an essay entitled "Authority and Education" (1967:150):

> The concept of authority is inseparably connected with a rule-governed form of life. It is only appropriately applied when there is a question of something thought, said, or done being correct or incorrect . . . "Authority" thus presupposes some sort of normative order that has to be promulgated, maintained, and perpetuated . . . [people in positions of authority are given] the right to decide . . . [and] to lay down what the substantive rules are [within any social organization].

This chapter is an exploration of elementary schoolchildren's social-cognitive understandings of the rules which structure their classroom interactions, and the authority of the teacher to direct student behavior and to reward or punish appropriate or inappropriate

classroom participation. In the following sections of this chapter, we will explain the purposes of the research, present the results of our investigation, and draw conclusions regarding its significance for making school experiences successful for all children. Later, in Chapter Three, we will describe the data collection procedures used and the sample of children with whom the research was conducted.

Purposes of the Research

The exploratory research reported here had the following purposes:

1) to describe the perceptions of important classroom rules held by children in kindergarten through sixth grade;

2) to describe the perceptions of children in kindergarten through sixth grade regarding the authority of the teacher; and

3) to reflect on what these findings suggest for the provision of successful classroom experiences for all children.

The discussion that follows presents the findings in each of these areas.

Children's Perception of Rules

The perceptions of students in nine classrooms, all housed within a single elementary school, form the basis of the findings reported here. To facilitate discussion, children's perceptions of rules initially are presented in a classroom-by-classroom fashion. Then the trends in children's understandings of rules across the entire elementary school are identified and discussed. Finally, conclusions are presented concerning the relationship between children's understandings of rules and the organization and maintenance of successful classroom instructional environments.

Classroom-by-Classroom Analysis

As explained in Chapter Three, selected students from each of the nine classrooms at Central School were interviewed by Far West Laboratory staff. The interviews were open-ended so that topics, understandings, etc., presented by a particular student could be pursued by the interviewer. In all cases, information was obtained regarding the rule(s) the student considered most important in his or her class. Student responses in this regard are presented below along with a discussion of why particular rules might have been important in each classroom.

For purposes of analysis and discussion, seven categories of rule types were employed. These were identified in an earlier study of the initiation of students into three classroom social systems (see Tikunoff & Ward, 1978) and include:

1) Mobility Rules, or norms about what restrictions are placed on the students' physical movement in the classroom;

2) Talking/Noise Rules, or norms which refer to the boundaries the teacher sets on talk in the classroom as well as other sanctionable noises;

3) Ethical Rules, or norms referring to students' rights or responsibilities;

4) Procedural Rules, or norms which define, describe, or delimit the students' behavior in other than specifically instructional situations. These rules are concerned primarily with classroom management rituals as well as scheduling and use of materials;

5) Academic Rules, or norms which define, describe, or delimit the students' behavior in instructional situations;

6) School-Imposed Rules, or formal rules enforced as part of school or district policy; and

7) Miscellaneous Rules, a residual category of teacher concerns for which students are sanctioned that are distinct from the above categories.

Beginning with findings obtained through interviews with nine students in Teacher M's kindergarten/first-grade class, four students told the interviewer that rules about not running were the most important in that class. (These results are displayed in Table 2.1.) Mentioned just as frequently was the rule that only four people at one time might play in the tower. (The tower was a multilevel construction built for the children to use as a workplace.) The only other rules mentioned with any frequency concerned doing physical harm to others and were summarized under the blanket statement, "Don't hurt others."

Thus, in Teacher M's class, students' perceptions of the rule system focused upon regulations which affected their own mobility within the classroom and their ethical behavior toward others. We would hypothesize that the salience of these rules to the students was associated with the necessity to sanction these behaviors frequently in Teacher M's class. For example, Teacher M's instructional system was a variant of the "open classroom." During part of each day, students were allowed to move about the classroom and engage freely in various activities. During this time children could work with whomever they wished on whatever activity they desired. Such an instructional

Table 2.1

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher M's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't run	Mobility	4	44
Limit of four people in tower	Mobility	4	44
Don't hurt others	Ethical	3	33
Don't talk back to teacher	Ethical	1	11
Sit down at beginning of film	Procedural	1	11
Don't talk	Talk/Noise	1	11
Don't go potty on bathroom floor	Miscellaneous	1	11

Nine students were interviewed in this class.

* Based on a seven-category coding system including (1) mobility, (2) talk/noise, (3) ethical, (4) procedural, (5) academic, (6) school-imposed, and (7) miscellaneous rules.

** Reports number of times the rule was mentioned by students when asked an open-ended interview question related to "What's the most important rule in [name of teacher]'s class?"

system, which encouraged student mobility, also may have encouraged disruptive or overly exhuberant student behavior. Thus, Teacher M may have been put in the role of counteracting, with her rule system, potential excesses in student behavior which could occur as a result of her instructional system. Regardless of whether the students' actual classroom behavior reflected their awareness of the mobility rules, they appeared to be conscious of how they should behave in this regard. They also were conscious that they should act in an ethical manner toward other children.

Table 2.2 presents the results obtained from talking with eleven students in Teacher N's class, also a kindergarten/first-grade classroom. Once more, students consistently mentioned that the most important rule was a mobility rule: Don't run in class. They also mentioned that not talking out of turn and not hurting other students were important. In addition, Teacher N's students cited rules necessary for completion of academic work, e.g., "Don't fool around." Thus, there appeared to be a beginning concern for "academic" goals in this classroom.

While one must be careful not to over-generalize from a very small sample, it is interesting that there were more rules mentioned in Teacher N's class which had to do with completing schoolwork. Although Teacher M and Teacher N both taught a mixed K/1 class, Teacher N's class contained a preponderance of first-graders, while Teacher M's class contained mostly kindergarteners. In terms of instructional program, while both Teacher M and Teacher N used an "open classroom" type of organization, Teacher N's instructional activities were more academically demanding. In Teacher N's class students participated in reading groups. They had "Read and Write" workbooks, and their journals contained their own writing -- not just something that had been written for them. This difference in academic emphasis appeared to be mirrored in the children's perceptions of the important classroom rules.

Table 2.3 presents the results of the analysis of responses given by students in Teacher S's second-grade classroom. Seven of the nine students with whom we spoke mentioned that rules about not running and not disturbing others were most important. Slightly fewer mentioned ethical rules pertaining to not hitting other students, not hurting their feelings, and not throwing things which might injure others. The predominant pattern of results thus replicated the findings for Teacher M and some findings for Teacher N. It is worth noting that attention to academic rules did not continue into second grade. At the same time, it is important to note that the data were collected in late fall and spring of the school year. By this time academic procedures may have become so routine that Teacher S (and other teachers) seldom needed to sanction students for not conforming to an academic standard or rule. On the other hand, sanctions for running, etc. may have continued. If so, the students may have been more aware of the latter types of rules, due to frequent sanctioning, and thus judged them to be more important than they would have early in the school year when academic procedures and expectations were being established.

Table 2.2

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher N's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't run in class	Mobility	7	64
Don't talk out of turn	Talk/Noise	3	27
Don't hurt others	Ethical	3	27
Don't fool around	Academic	2	18
Don't make fun of others (on lower ability level)	Ethical	1	9
Don't argue	Procedural	1	9
Don't write on other students' papers	Academic	1	9
Don't bring things to story time (e.g., toy cars)	Miscellaneous	1	9
Don't bring cars to school	Miscellaneous	1	9
Don't steal	Ethical	1	9

Eleven students were interviewed in this class.

Table 2.3

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher S's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't run	Mobility	7	78
Don't talk out of turn or disturb other students	Talk/Noise	7	78
Don't hurt others	Ethical	6	67
Don't leave before teacher excuses you	Procedural	1	11
Don't goof-off	Academic	1	11
Don't bring dangerous things to school (e.g., knife)	Miscellaneous	1	11

Nine students were interviewed in this class.

* Based on seven-category coding system including (1) mobility, (2) talk/noise, (3) ethical, (4) procedural, (5) academic, (6) school-imposed, and (7) miscellaneous rules.

** Reports number of times the rule was mentioned by students when asked an open-ended interview question related to "What's the most important rule in [name of teacher]'s class?"

Turning to the responses of the nine students interviewed in Teacher O's class (see Table 2.4), talking and noise rules were mentioned more frequently than any other category of rule. Rules about running in the classroom were mentioned nearly as frequently, and rules concerning ethical conduct with others were mentioned next most frequently. The responses from these third- and fourth-grade students thus are similar to those in the classrooms described previously.

Table 2.5 displays the responses given by the six students who were interviewed in Teacher R's fourth-grade classroom. These responses are especially interesting because, although most of the students with whom we spoke mentioned rules concerning talking and noise as being among the most important, mobility rules were mentioned much less frequently by these students than the students in the previous classes. Although this result could be artifactual, it is intriguing to speculate whether it reflects a true difference in children's perceptions. If so, it could be explained by the fact that Teacher R conducted a more structured instructional program than the preceding teachers. Although Teacher R sometimes assigned group projects which involved collaboration and interchange among students and movement of students about the classroom, her typical assignments were more structured. It may be that because of the nature of Teacher R's social-instructional system, there was less chance for student mobility to get out of hand, and thus less frequent need for sanctioning of student movement, in turn making such rules less important to the students. At the same time, however, student enthusiam -- as manifested in loud talking and general disturbance of others -- can slip beyond bounds in most settings and may need to be heavily controlled in structured situations, hence the preponderant number of students who mentioned rules about talking in this classroom.

The responses which were given by the children who were interviewed in Teacher Q's fifth-grade class are listed in Table 2.6. These responses showed much the same trend as we have seen in the other classrooms. The most salient rules for students were rules concerning talking and making noise, running in the classroom, and acting ethically toward others. At the same time, these students also mentioned rules which focused on the completion of academic work, e.g., "Don't fool around, do your work," with some frequency.

Although the students in Teacher Q's classroom were fifth-graders, the instructional program was quite similar to the "open classroom" arrangements found in the earlier grades. Thus, we again might hypothesize that such an instructional approach leaves room for students to disrupt the classroom by running from one activity to another, giving the rule, "Don't run," considerable saliency in this classroom as well as others. Further, the additional demands of fifth-grade assignments relative to the quantity and complexity of assigned tasks might explain the reappearance of academic rules. On the other hand, the lengthy list of rules mentioned as most important by only one student raises doubts about how well the students understood the standards for conduct in the classroom.

Table 2.4

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher O's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't talk out of turn or disturb other students	Talk/Noise	8	80
Don't run	Mobility	7	70
Don't hurt others	Ethical	3	40
Don't goof-off; finish work	Academic	2	20
Don't lean back in chair	Miscellaneous	2	20
Don't pass secret notes	Miscellaneous	1	10

Ten students were interviewed in this class.

Table 2.5

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher R's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't talk out of turn or disturb other students	Talk/Noise	5	83
Do work	Academic	2	33
Obey the teacher	Ethical	1	17
Don't run	Mobility	1	17

Six students were interviewed in this class.

Table 2.6

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher Q's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't talk out of turn or disturb other students	Talk/Noise	9	69
Don't run	Mobility	7	54
Dont' hurt others	Ethical	3	23
Don't fool around	Academic	3	23
Do your work	Academic	2	15
Don't be a poor sport	Ethical	1	8
Obey the teacher	Ethical	1	8
Don't swear	Procedural	1	8
Don't bounce balls in class	Procedural	1	8
Don't come in late from recess	Procedural	1	8
Don't make a mess	Procedural	1	8
Don't get up when someone is talking	Mobility	1	8
Applaud after a presentation	Miscellaneous	1	8
Don't switch desks around	Miscellaneous	1	8
Don't wear hat in class	Miscellaneous	1	8
Don't play tackle football	School-Imposed	1	8

Ten students were interviewed in this class.

* Based on seven category coding system including (1) mobility, (2) talk/noise, (3) ethical, (4) procedural, (5) academic, (6) school-imposed, and (7) miscellaneous rules.

** Reports number of times the rule was mentioned by students when asked an open-ended interview question related to "What's the most important rule in [name of teacher]'s class?"

Table 2.7 presents the results of interviews with eight students in Teacher U's classroom. Again, rules concerning talking and noise and ethical conduct predominated. However, there was less mention of mobility rules in this class compared with most other classes, a fact which may be attributable to Teacher U's instructional organization. Teacher U's program relied on workbook-type activities conducted individually at the students' desks. Rules against running from activity to activity, although part of the rule system of Teacher U's class, did not need to be as salient to students, inasmuch as there was limited opportunity for movement to occur. On the other hand, since Teacher U explained assigned activities to the class as a whole group, talking out of turn was disruptive and resulted in sanctioning by the teacher. Disturbing other students as they worked on the seatwork assignments also was sanctioned by the teacher. As a result, not talking and not disturbing others were recognized by the students as important rules of conduct.

Various other rules were mentioned as important by one or two students. For the most part these rules could be viewed as refinements of the general concern for disruption of the class. Some, e.g., not talking back to the teacher and not swearing, appear to be aligned with sixth-grade students' willingness to "confront the system."

The rules which were most salient to the students in Teacher T's classroom are reported in Table 2.8. These data should be approached with great caution, as only four students in this class were interviewed. All of the students mentioned rules which regulated student talking and prohibited students from disturbing each other when they were working. Two students mentioned rules concerning student conduct in the playground/ball room. (Note: At Central School the term "ball room" referred to a room where balls that were used on the playground were stored.) This latter result was interesting because it showed the impact of recent school events on student perceptions. A few days before this interview was conducted, an incident occurred concerning several students' vandalism of the playground/ball room. The principal of Central School took punitive action and closed the ball room to students. This action was proclaimed unfair by most of the student body and occasioned discussions and outcry. This incident was apparently on the mind of the two students who mentioned the rule, "Don't go in the ball room," as the most important rule in Teacher T's class. It thus seems that day-to-day events can have an impact on students' perceptions of the moral order of the school and change the aspects of student behavior perceived as important and appropriate at a given point in time.

Table 2.9 presents students' perceptions of the important rules in Teacher V's classroom. Teacher V instructed students whose grade placement varied from the first to the sixth grade. Thus the results, unlike those reported on previous tables, were derived from children whose chronological ages varied across the entire elementary school age span. Further, the students were children who had been identified as educationally handicapped and had been placed in this classroom for special instruction for a major part of each school day. Nevertheless,

Table 2.7

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher U's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't talk out of turn or disturb others	Talk/Noise	5	63
Don't hurt others	Ethical	4	50
Do have respect for others	Ethical	2	25
Don't talk back to the teacher	Ethical	2	25
Don't bounce balls in the classroom	Procedural	2	25
Don't swear	Procedural	2	25
Don't write on the walls	Procedural	2	25
Don't run	Mobility	2	25
Don't get up without being excused	Procedural	1	13
Don't play tackle football	School-Imposed	1	13
Don't pop milk cartons	Miscellaneous	1	13

Eight students were interviewed in this class.

* Based on a seven-category coding system including (1) mobility, (2) talk/noise, (3) ethical, (4) procedural, (5) academic, (6) school-imposed, and (7) miscellaneous rules.

** Reports number of times the rule was mentioned by students when asked an open-ended interview question related to "What's the most important rule in [name of teacher]'s class?"

Table 2.8

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher T's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't talk out of turn or disturb others	Talk/Noise	4	100
Don't go in Ball Room	School-Imposed	2	50
Don't get up before being excused	Procedural	1	25
Don't bounce ball in classroom	Procedural	1	25
Don't copy	Ethical	1	25
Don't goof off	Academic	1	25

Four students were interviewed in this class.

* Based on a seven-category coding system including (1) mobility, (2) talk/noise, (3) ethical, (4) procedural, (5) academic, (6) school-imposed, and (7) miscellaneous rules.

** Reports number of times the rule was mentioned by students when asked an open-ended interview question related to "What's the most important rule in [name of teacher]'s class?"

Table 2.9

Student Perceptions of Important Rules in Teacher V's Class

Paraphrase of Rule	Type of Rule*	Number of Times Mentioned**	Percent of Students Interviewed Who Mentioned Rule
Don't hurt others	Ethical	2	40
Don't talk out of turn or disturb others	Talk/Noise	2	40
Don't fool around	Academic	2	40
Don't run	Mobility	2	40
Don't talk back to teacher	Ethical	1	20
Don't throw tanbark	School-Imposed	1	20
Don't play tackle football	School-Imposed	1	20
Only four people allowed in Ball Room	School-Imposed	1	20

Five students were interviewed in this class.

the three consistent rule categories mentioned in other classrooms -- rules pertaining to ethical conduct with other students, not talking out of turn, and not running in the classroom -- were mentioned more frequently than other rules in this classroom, as well as the others. Of equal frequency of mention were academic rules concerning the competent completion of work, or, as one student said, "Don't fool around." One student in Teacher V's class also mentioned a rule having to do with student conduct in the playground/ball room, thus echoing a theme found in Teacher T's class. It is important to note that none of the rules were mentioned by a predominant number of students in this class. This suggests that the students, as a group, might be unclear about standards of conduct. It also could be an artifact of the multiple age and developmental levels of the students.

In sum, when asked what was the most important rule in their respective classrooms, students at Central School tended to respond with rules concerning the regulation of talk, the regulation of movement, or the regulation of behavior which was harmful or disturbing to other students. The consistency of this finding, even though there were some variations among classrooms, is noteworthy. Whether a student was a kindergartner in an open classroom, or a sixth-grader in a more structured classroom which relied a great deal on workbooks and worksheets, the essential limits to the role of the student emphasized being quiet, or at least not talking out of turn, moving about the classroom with decorum, and treating others with kindness and respect.

This research thus supports the work of others, such as Jackson (1968), Blumenfeld and her colleagues (forthcoming), and Block (1980), who speak of a monolithic student role requiring specific types of behavior from all students. The social organization of the school and the culture of the classrooms where our observations took place demonstrated little variation in the requirements for competent participation -- at least as perceived by the students themselves. These general findings, coupled with the lower saliency of academic rules, suggest that Central School placed high emphasis on children learning how to learn in a group, including how to ignore those around them, or as Jackson (1968, p. 16) stated, "be alone in a crowd." Added to this was concern for the rights of others in the group. Apparently, students perceived academic issues as important only when these other standards were in place, inasmuch as in those classes where academic rules were identified, with the exception of Teacher R's class, they consistently fell below mobility, ethical, and talk/noise rules in percentage of students who mentioned them.

Given that classrooms and schools require large groups of students and adults to work together for extended periods of time, such priorities in standards of conduct are not surprising. In fact, they most likely are necessary. However, the possible influence upon the findings of the time of year during which the interviews were conducted also must be considered. As noted earlier, by late fall or spring, students may conform to academic rules more consistently than mobility, talking, etc. rules and thus may not be as aware of the significance of these rules, due to less teacher sanctioning.

Across Classroom Analysis

The preceding analysis was conducted on the level of individual rules within classrooms. The following discussion focuses on categories of rules as opposed to the rules themselves. The categories were taken from previous work by Tikunoff and Ward (1978), and also reflect the categorization system used in the above discussion and in Volume II of this Verification Inquiry Report.

Table 2.10 presents a summation of rules mentioned by students in each category. Results are presented by classroom. The numbers in each row represent the percentage of total responses which were categorized under a single rule type. Thus, all student responses which mentioned rules about mobility in a particular classroom were lumped together in the mobility category on Table 2.10.

Inspection of the table reveals several interesting points. First, as would be expected, based on the previous classroom-by-classroom analysis, taken across classrooms, mobility rules, talking and noise rules, and ethical rules accounted for 71 percent of all student responses. However, at the same time this general trend of salience was obvious, there were substantial variations within classrooms concerning the percentage of responses appearing in each category. For example, 57 percent of the student responses in Teacher M's classroom were categorized as mobility rules, while only 8 percent of the responses in Teacher U's class were categorized there. Similar differences appeared in the talking and noise category. Fifty-six percent of the responses in Teacher R's class were categorized as talking or noise rules, while only 7 percent of the responses in Teacher M's class were talking and noise rules. Thus, although there was a general trend in responses, individual variations warrant consideration. In particular, the response pattern of Teacher R's students differed markedly from that of the other classes and the responses of Teacher U's students gave less emphasis to mobility and more emphasis to ethical and procedural norms than those of students in other classes. As noted earlier, the organization of these classes called for somewhat different standards of participation than the other classes (for more detail in this regard see other volumes of the Verification Inquiry Report). If teacher sanctioning helps build students' awareness of certain conduct requirements versus others, we then expect that Teacher R sanctioned more for digressions in talking/noise and academic conduct than other teachers and that Teacher U gave greater emphasis to ethical and procedural conduct.

Second, student responses categorized as school-imposed rules constituted the least frequently mentioned category. The relatively large number of school-imposed rules mentioned by students in Teacher T's and Teacher V's classrooms pertained to regulations concerning the ball room and thus were a response to recent school events. If one ignores these ball room-related, school-imposed rules and looks across the table, it is evident that school-imposed rules were not very salient to most students.

Third, students on the average gave relatively few responses which could be categorized as academic rules. Although this may be

Table 2.10

Categorization of Rules Mentioned by Students in Each Class

Class	Grade Level	Number of Students Interviewed	Percent of Total Responses for Each Rule Type							Total Number of Responses	Number of Important Rules Mentioned	Mean Number of Important Rules Mentioned by each Student	Range of Number of Important Rules Mentioned by Students
			Mobility	Talk/ Noise	Ethical	Procedural	Academic	School Imposed	Miscellaneous				
M	K/1	9	53	7	27	7	0	0	7	15	7	1.6	1-3
N	K/1	11	33	14	24	0	14	0	14	21	10	1.9	1-3
S	2	9	30	30	26	4	4	0	4	23	6	1.8	2-4
O	3/4	10	27	42	12	0	8	0	12	23	6	2.6	1-4
R	4	6	11	56	11	0	22	0	0	9	5	1.5	1-2
Q	5	13	23	26	14	11	14	3	9	35	16	2.7	1-4
U	5/6	8	8	21	33	29	0	4	4	24	11	3	1-5
T	6	4	0	44	9	18	9	18	0	10	6	1.8	2-4
V	1-6	5	17	17	25	0	17	25	0	12	8	2.4	2-4
		75	24	26	21	9	9	3	7	172	75		
		TOTAL	MEAN PERCENT							TOTAL	TOTAL		

considered strange, since an important purpose of school is to encourage academic learning, we assert that it is for this very reason that academic rules were not salient to students. That is, academic rules such as, "Get your work done" or "Don't goof off" are simply part of the taken-for-granted fabric of school. Because they are taken for granted, they would not necessarily be considered most important. Since everyone knows the academic rules, there is no need to state them. When a teacher tells a student, "Stop talking," or informs the class, "I want it quiet during silent reading," the implicit messages are, "Stop talking and start working," and, "I want it quiet during silent reading so the class can read." From this standpoint, most of the rules mentioned by students might be called implicit "academic" rules. By following these rules, an environment conducive to academic achievement was established. Those rules mentioned by students in the interviews, therefore, would be expected to be only the explicit rules for which the teacher regularly sanctioned students. As this inquiry took place in successful classrooms, that is classrooms whose social-instructional systems were successful in engaging the attention and efforts of the students, we hypothesize that by late fall or spring there was little need to remind students continually that they were to work on their academic assignments. It was assumed that if a student were sitting at his or her seat and was not talking to friends, then that student would be working on an academic task. Although social conversation might be sanctioned, few reminders were necessary that students were to "do their work." This was understood by teachers and students alike.

Fourth, student responses related to procedural rules, with the exception of three classes (Teachers R, Q, and U), were unexpectedly low. Previous research conducted at the beginning of the school year (see Tikunoff & Ward, 1978) and beginning-of-school data collected at Central School (see Volume IV of this Verification Inquiry Report) indicated that teachers established large numbers of procedural rules. For example, in the Tikunoff and Ward study, classes ranged from a low of 9 to a high of 50 procedural rules. Since the student interviews reported here were conducted in late fall and early spring of the school year, by that time classroom procedures appear to have been in place and operating smoothly with little attention on the part of students or sanctioning by the teacher. If so, as noted previously, students would not be expected to be as cognizant of the importance of procedural rules as those rules that required continued sanctioning by the teacher.

Relative to other data reported in Table 2.10, differences in the total number of rules named by students in the various classes also are of interest. Teacher Q's students identified the most rules that they considered important; Teacher R's the fewest. The average number of important rules identified by students was comparatively small in all classes; a maximum of three, a minimum of one and a half. Likewise, the range of important rules mentioned by a student indicates that no student identified more than five. Hence, in a successful school it appears that only a few important rules are required to establish acceptable standards of participation in the various classrooms.

Summary

Based on the perceptions of the students we spoke with at Central School, three general rules were most salient and served as important regulators of student conduct. These rules were: 1) Don't run; 2) Don't talk out of turn or disturb others; and 3) Don't hurt other students. These rules were perceived by students to be important across all classes, from kindergarten through sixth grade. When categories of rules, as opposed to individual rules, were examined, rules which regulated students' mobility in the classroom, their talking with other students and the teacher, and their ethical conduct with other students accounted for over 71 percent of the responses given by students.

The role of the student as defined by these rules was thus similar in each class at Central School. It well may be that this uniformity of expectation contributed to making Central School successful. If students knew that they were expected to be quiet, to not disrupt others, and to concentrate on their school work, these perceived expectations might facilitate successful performance of the student role. Rutter and his colleagues (1979) and other successful schools' researchers have demonstrated that teachers in successful schools expect their students to do well and to achieve academically. Successful schools are characterized by a businesslike orientation toward academic work. From a student's point of view, this businesslike academic orientation might be perceived as a number of implicit and explict rules which regulate and prohibit inappropriate classroom behavior in order to facilitate academic engagement. At Central School, academic engagement was facilitated by students' perceptions of the most important rules in each classroom.

Children's Perceptions of Teacher Authority

Children's understanding and perceptions of the authority of the classroom teacher were investigated in two separate inquiries conducted at Central School. The first inquiry -- the Phase I Study -- examined whether children demonstrated the same levels of authority understanding when asked about the naturally occurring classroom situation as they have been shown to demonstrate in the psychological laboratory when asked about hypothetical dilemmas or contrived experimental games (cf., Damon 1977). It also investigated whether children can utilize such modes of thought and reflected upon the implications of such thought processes for the exercise of teacher authority in the classroom. The relationship between students' levels of authority understanding and successful schooling practices also was considered.

The second inquiry -- the Phase II Study -- was a more open-ended examination of children's perceptions of teacher authority and the role of the teacher. In the Phase II Study we did not seek to replicate the work of other investigators but rather to examine, in an open-ended, exploratory way, how children perceived the functions of the teacher, the attributes which they associated with the teaching

role, and the reasons they gave as explanations for the teacher's authority. The findings from this inquiry are presented after the Phase I discussion.

Phase I Study

The Phase I Study was conducted in the classrooms of Teachers M, O, T, U, and V. The central question in the Phase I Study was simply, "Why can the teacher tell you what to do?" or, alternatively, "Why do you do what the teacher tells you to do?", since the legitimacy of the teacher's authority and the reasons given for obeying that authority define two important aspects in children's understanding of authority relationships in the classroom.

The students with whom we spoke demonstrated an increasingly sophisticated conception of the nature of interpersonal authority, which was distinctly related to their increasing ages and levels of cognitive maturity. Students' understanding of authority progressed from a primitive identification with the person in authority at level 0A to a differentiated, consensually agreed upon, and temporally limited relationship of authority established at level 2B.

Table 2.11 outlines the thinking that is typical of various authority levels. It can be seen that thinking and understanding of authority grows more sophisticated as an individual progresses from level 0A to level 2B. Children interviewed in the current study responded to questions such as those listed above with levels of thinking and understanding which ranged from 0A to 2A. No students responded at the 2B level.

The discussion that follows presents the findings for the five classes that participated in the Phase I Study. A summarization of the findings across the classes, including implications for successful schooling practices, is presented after the individual class discussions.

In Teacher M's kindergarten/first-grade classroom, students demonstrated authority levels which ranged from 0A to level 1A (see Table 2.12). At level 0A the student perceives that the teacher can tell students what to do because the teacher always tells students to do what the students want to do. That is, there is "a primitive association between authority's commands and the self's desires" (Damon 1977, p.178). At the next authority level, level 0B, the child has differentiated him or herself from the person of the authority figure and realizes that his or her own desires may conflict with the commands of the authority. Obedience to the authority is seen as a matter of pragmatism. "Commands are followed as a means of achieving desires or to avoid actions contrary to desires" (Damon, 1977, p. 178). Finally, at level 1A, the authority figure is seen not merely as someone who has the ability to punish, but as someone who has the authority to punish as a result of the "authority figure's social or physical power" (Damon, 1977, p. 178). At level 1A, students typically say that they cannot get away with misbehavior, even if the teacher is not

Table 2.11

Brief Descriptions of Early Authority Levels*

Level 0A: Authority is legitimized by attributes that link the authority figure with the self, either by establishing affectional bonds between authority figure and the self or by establishing identification between authority figure and self. The basis for obedience is a primitive association between authority's commands and the self's desires.

Level 0B: Authority is legitimized by phyisical attributes of persons -- size, sex, dress, and so on. The specific attributes selected are those which the subject considers to be descriptive of persons in command. These legitimizing attributes may be used in a fluctuating manner, since they are not linked logically to the functioning of authority. The subject recognizes the potential conflict between authority's commands and the self's wishes, and thinks about obedience in a pragmatic fashion: Commands are followed as a means of achieving desires or to avoid actions contrary to desires.

Level 1A: Authority is legitimized by attributes which enable authority figure to enforce his commands (physical strength, social or physical power, and so on). Obedience is based upon subject's respect for authority figure's social or physical power, which is invested with an aura of omnipotence and omniscience.

Level 1B: Authority is legitimized by attributes that reflect special talent or ability, and that make the authority figure a superior person in the eyes of the subject. This special talent or ability is no longer associated simply with power, but is rather indicative of the authority figure's ability to accomplish changes that subordinates cannot. Obedience is based on reciprocal exchange: one obeys because the authority figure takes care of him, and because the authority figure otherwise "deserves" his obedience.

Level 2A: Authority is legitimized by prior training or experience related to the process of commanding. The authority figure therefore is seen as a person who is able to lead and command better than subordinates. Obedience is based on subject's respect for this specific leadership ability and on the belief that this superior leadership ability implies a concern for the welfare and the rights of subordinates.

Level 2B: Authority is legitimized by the coordination of a variety of attributes with specific situational factors. The subject believes that a person might possess attributes which enable him to command well in one situation but not in another. Authority, therefore, is seen as a shared, consensual relation between parties, adopted temporarily by one person for the welfare of all. Obedience is seen as a cooperative effort which is situation-specific rather than a general response to a superior person.**

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* Taken from Damon (1977, pp. 178-179)

** No students in this study demonstrated this level of authority understanding.

Table 2.12

Levels of Authority Understanding Demonstrated by Children in Classroom M

STUDENT	Level of Understanding*					
	0A	0B	1A	1B	2A	2B
Cherryl		X				
Cleo		X				
Ricky		X				
Joan			X			
Rico		X	X			
Stan			X			
Genna	X					
Claudette	X	X				
Ralph	X	X				

* Taken from Damon (1977, pp. 178-179)

in the room, thus expressing a certain reverence for the omniscent surveillance of the teacher. It is at this level that the students first realize that the teacher can tell them what to do and punish them for misbehavior because the teacher is a part of the social organization of the school; that is, the teacher is given the right to direct and punish student actions because he or she occupies the role of teacher, and thus is legitimately granted the right to direct student behavior as a result of occupying that social role. As indicated in Table 2.12, a majority of the children who were interviewed demonstrated Level 0B understanding of authority. Fewer students were at the 0A or 1A levels.

Given these findings, what conclusions can be drawn concerning the manner in which children's understanding of authority in Teacher M's classroom might interact with the control strategies that might be used most successfully by Teacher M? First, students who demonstrate authority understanding at the 0B and 1A levels perceive that they should obey the teacher because the teacher can punish them. They do not yet understand that the teacher has something to give them which will benefit or stimulate their own development. Rather, the teacher

is a powerful and imposing figure who, because of his or her size or social power, can enforce directives. At level 0A, the situation is even more complicated because the student has not yet differentiated the authority figure from him or her self. At this level of understanding, it may be that frequent physical and verbal reminders of the limits of acceptable behavior are required. Since the children in Teacher M's classroom are probably in the late sensory-motor period of cognitive development, few children, if any, will have achieved concrete operations. Because of this, much of the time they can be expected to employ logic and reasoning in a fluctuating and idiosyncratic manner. They cannot be expected to conceptualize sophisticated rationales for obeying the teacher, but they can be expected to be cognizant of the fact that the teacher distributes effective rewards and/or punishments.

Table 2.13 and 2.14 indicate the levels of authority understanding demonstrated by students in Classrooms O and T. Table 2.15 reports the levels of understanding demonstrated by the students in Classroom U. These are grades 3 and 4, grade 6, and grades 5 and 6 classrooms, respectively. No students in these classes were at the 0A level of understanding of authority. Only one student in Classroom O was at the 0B level. The majority of students demonstrated Level 1A understandings. Some, particularly students in Classroom O, demonstrated Level 1B understandings. A few demonstrated 2A understandings.

Thus, in moving from a kindergarten/first-grade classroom to classrooms with older students, higher levels of authority understanding were identified. This is to be expected, given that most students in these classrooms will have attained the cognitive capabilities of concrete operational thought and thus be able to think about the teacher's authority in a more sophisticated manner than the kindergartners and first-graders in Teacher M's class. It will be remembered that at Level 1A authority is legitimized by the physical or social power of the teacher. At Level 1B, authority is not simply associated with power, but with the fact that the authority has capabilities superior to those of the student. In these classrooms then, some students are aware that the teacher can accomplish things denied to the student and has knowledge that the student does not have. In addition, the relationship of authority now is seen as a relationship of reciprocity. As Damon (1977) writes, "Obedience is based on reciprocal exchange: one obeys because authority figures take care of him, because the authority figure otherwise deserves his obedience" (p. 178). At Level 2A, the highest level demonstrated by any student in these classrooms at Central School, students' perceptions of authority widen to include the idea that the authority is concerned about the rights and welfare of the subordinates. An authority, therefore, is not only someone who has more skills and abilities than the subordinates, but someone who is concerned about their well-being. While few students demonstrated this level of understanding, those who did could be expected to respond to the teacher in different ways and carry different expectations for teacher behavior than the other students.

Table 2.13

Levels of Authority Understanding Demonstrated by Children in Classroom O

STUDENT	Level of Understanding*					
	0A	0B	1A	1B	2A	2B
Boris			X	X		
Sandy			X	X		
Margaret				X		
Baxter		X	X			
Cyrus				X	X	
Annette			X	X		
Sienna			X	X	X	
Farnham			X			

Table 2.14

Levels of Authority Understanding Demonstrated by Children in Classroom U

STUDENT	Level of Understanding*					
	0A	0B	1A	1B	2A	2B
Blythe			X		X	
Cathie				X		
Sandi			X			
Garry					X	
John			X	X	X	
Janet			X			
Candy			X	X		

* Taken from Damon (1977, pp. 178-179)

Table 2.15

Levels of Authority Understanding Demonstrated by Children in Classroom T

STUDENT	Level of Understanding*					
	0A	0B	1A	1B	2A	2B
Sara			X		X	
Cynthia			X			
James				X		
Robin			X	X		
Bruce			X			
Randy			X			

* Taken from Damon (1977, p. 178-179)

Although students in Classes O, T, and U demonstrated the same range of authority understanding, the modal level of understanding differed in these classrooms. In Classroom O, a third- and fourth-grade class, the modal level of authority understanding was 1B. In contrast, the modal level of authority understanding in Classroom T was 1A, even though this class included older students. The modal level of authority understanding in Classroom U was at 2A. This variation is interesting because it indicates that students who are chronologically older may, nevertheless, demonstrate levels of authority understanding which are less sophisticated intellectually. Thus, the preponderance of students in Teacher T's class say that they obey the the teacher because the teacher has the power to punish them, while the preponderance of students in Teacher O's class say that they obey the teacher because the teacher has superior ability and can help them to do things which they cannot do by themselves.

The present study was not designed to examine whether individual differences in the teacher's style or classroom organization influenced the modal level of authority understanding manifested by students, but this is an interesting hypothesis. If, for example, Teacher T were extremely punitive and relied on continual demonstrations of his legitimate right to punish students, this could account for the 1A modal level of authority understanding demonstrated by the students in his class. On the other hand, students in Teacher O's class predominantly mentioned that the teacher could help the students and was concerned about the students' welfare. The students exchanged obedience

for this help and assistance. Frequent explanation of disciplinary actions by Teacher O, based on a rationale which outlined for the students the necessity to behave in a certain way so the teacher could teach the students and they could develop their intellectual, emotional, and social capabilities, might build such a modal 2A level of understanding of authority. Further, the modal level of authority understanding demonstrated by students in Teacher U's class might have been influenced by the teacher's frequent reference to the fact that she was concerned about the students' development as individuals and learners, and her role as a teacher was to help them develop.

In terms of the control strategies which would prove successful in the classrooms of Teachers O, T, and U, we hypothesize that these teachers should stress the reciprocal nature of the authority relationship and emphasize the idea that the teacher must establish rules and sanction rule violators so that all students are able to learn. Inasmuch as students in these classes were beginning to understand that they benefited from following the teacher's directives, successful teachers would exploit this understanding and make their (the teachers') contribution to the students' development explicit.

The range of authority understandings demonstrated by students in Teacher V's class was much wider than that demonstrated by the students in Classes M, O, T, or U (See Table 2.16). Since Teacher V instructed students whose grade level ranged from the first to the sixth grade, this was not surprising. Within the wide range, the distribution of authority levels was bimodal with student understandings clustered at the 1A and 1B levels.

Table 2.16

Levels of Authority Understanding Demonstrated by Children in Classroom V

STUDENT	Level of Understanding*					
	0A	0B	1A	1B	2A	2B
Lila				X	X	
Mathew			X			
Art		X	X			
Billy		X				
Paul			X			
Brent			X			

* Taken from Damon (1977, p. 178-179)

The students in Teacher V's class generally spent part of the day in their homeroom and part of the day with Teacher V. This suggests that whatever "teacher effects" were found probably resulted from the influence of both Teacher V and the homeroom teacher. It is interesting to note that, although the students in Teacher V's class were considered learning-handicapped, this did not seem to retard the level of authority understanding that they were able to demonstrate. Their understandings were congruent with those of their "normal" peers. The same discussions presented above, then, concerning strategies of classroom management, would serve to apply to these learning-handicapped youngsters.

Moving to a consideration of the relationship between children's understandings of teacher authority and successful schooling practices, it is apparent that children at different levels of social-cognitive development understand the teacher's authority in different ways. Those students who believe they should obey the teacher only because the teacher has the legitimate right to punish them may respond to teacher direction and sanctioning in a different way than students for whom obedience is a matter of reciprocal exchange; i.e., you obey me, and I will teach you, and help you become a more capable individual. The within-classroom range of authority understanding demonstrated by students in classrooms M, O, T, U, and V encompassed at least three levels. This suggests that in order to be successful, these teachers might be required to explain their actions to different students in different ways. Moreover, since with the younger students, or students who typically demonstrated lower levels of authority understanding, authority was based on the "might makes right" principle, discipline which was fair and backed up with reasonable deprivations and punishments also would have an important place in the teachers' control strategies. At the same time, however, the teachers should explain the reason for their disciplinary actions, whatever they may be, and emphasize that they have the authority to direct and punish because they are charged with the students' developing capabilities. This is particularly important, because it can be hypothesized that the students who demonstrated higher levels of authority understanding may have internalized the norms for competent participation more strongly than students who demonstrated lower levels of authority understanding. This hypothesis rests on the observation that students at the lower levels referred to the possibility of punishment when asked why they should obey the teacher, while students at higher levels referred to the implicit purposes of schooling -- to develop student competency -- and the desire to learn from the teacher as teasons for doing what the teacher said. These latter reasons suggest the student obeyed the teacher's dictates because he or she recognized that it was in his or her own interest to do so, rather than merely to avoid being punished. Explanation by the teacher of the reasons for specific disciplinary actions, based on the higher level authority understandings, may help students identify and apply these understandings to their own situations.

Phase II Study

The Phase I Study demonstrated that all the students with whom we spoke recognized the teacher as a legitimate authority figure, although they may have offered differing interpretations of the reason for that legitimacy, or suggested different rationales for obeying the teacher. In the Phase II Study, we utilized a different approach to investigation of teacher authority. Here we sought information regarding the attributes of the teaching role as perceived by the students and attempted to determine their perceptions of its breadth and limitations.

The Phase II interview procedure was open-ended and unstructured. Such a free-floating approach, although required to evoke and understand the phenomenology of student perceptions, made comparisons between individual students and classes difficult. As we did not ask comparable questions to all students, we could not count and compare their responses in a consistent fashion. Thus, in the discussion that follows, we present a thematic analysis of the Phase II interviews. Our intention is to paraphrase the perceptions expressed by children on a classroom-by-classroom basis and note trends and commonalities. We first discuss responses of children in Classroom N (a mixed kindergarten/first grade), and then proceed to Classrooms S (second grade), R (fourth grade), and Q (fifth grade). We end the discussion by considering the common themes which appear across the classes and reflect upon the meaning of these themes for the provision of successful schooling experiences for all children.

The students in Teacher N's kindergarten/first-grade classroom consistently spoke of the role of the teacher as being to tell students what they could and could not do. Teacher directives that centered on the management of academic instruction and the maintenance of social order were mentioned frequently. For example, the children indicated that the teacher told students "what page to work on in their workbook," or "what book to read." In addition, the students said that teachers enforced general safety regulations, such as, "Don't run in class," or "Don't hit." Students accepted, without question, that it was the teacher's right to punish students; more specifically, to bench students, or withdraw recess privileges from students when they misbehaved. On the other hand, students felt it was not the right of the teacher to restrict the students with whom they could play on the playground or to tell them how to conduct themselves when they were at home. When we asked one student to describe the difference between a teacher and a "mom," he replied, "A teacher teaches and a mom's a mom," thus suggesting conceptually distinct realms of authority for these two individuals. Teachers "knew what work to assign" while a mom did not. The teacher was "the boss of books" and "worked at school." In addition, the teacher had to "learn how to be a teacher" and "practice to be a teacher." This preparation was seen as helping the teacher know more than the students, especially when it came to the academic subjects and to tying shoes. The students in this class further stated that teachers taught children "how to read, count, do the alphabet, and not to be bad." Teachers

"know how to be kind and mean." This superior knowledge, however, did not automatically grant teachers the right to be obeyed. Even with all their capabilities, teachers were not parents. They did not have the authority to tell students "what to do after school," "not to hit brothers," "not to eat ice-cream at home," or "what to wear." Thus, the students perceived the teacher's authority to be limited, although the teacher was "half-boss of the school" with the principal recognized as the other half. Teacher N was not, as another boy observed, "his dad." However, this student indicated that teachers and dads did share one salient characteristic; they both were older, "at least 29."

The students in Teacher S's second-grade classroom described the role of the teacher in ways that were similar to their younger peers. They were nearly unanimous in describing the teacher as someone who "tells you what to do," and who can "bench you," should you not follow the teacher's directives. The teacher was recognized as having academic responsibilities and also as being the one who maintained social order and "made good rules." Teachers told students "what page to do" and "how to draw." In addition, they "knew more" than students, and thus "knew what [they] should learn." Teachers had to "know math, words, reading, writing" and the mysteries of "timesing" (multiplication). In addition, they had to know "how to handle and take care of kids." There was the suggestion in these interviews that students were increasingly aware of the fact that the classroom was a social organization of individuals who took specifically defined roles and fulfilled specific organizational functions. The teacher was increasingly spoken of as "the boss" or "boss of what our duty is," or "boss of the classroom." The teacher was, as one student remarked, "in command." These references to the teacher as boss suggest a growing understanding of the nature of classroom interactions. While the kindergarten and first-grade students spoke of the teacher as telling them what to do and clearly recognized that they were in a subordinate role to the teacher, they did not characterize the teacher as having an explicit role within the classroom other than that of teacher. The word "boss" suggests the second-grade children had recognized parallels between the functioning of the teacher within the classroom and the functioning of any superordinate member who directs subordinates in an organization.

Like the kindergarten and first-grade students, the second-graders in Teacher S's class were nearly unanimous in noting that the teacher did not have the authority to tell children with whom to play on the playground, unless "the teacher was being mean." This comment indicates another advance in the second-graders' understanding of authority in that it implicitly recognizes that, although teachers have the power to coerce children through rewards and punishments, such coercion may exceed the bounds of legitimate authority. When such coercion does occur, the teacher has gone beyond the institutional mandate of the teaching role and is acting like an individual "being mean." Other boundaries of the teaching role were the same for the second-graders as they were for the younger children. Teachers did not have the right to tell children what to eat when they were at home. They could not tell children what to wear, and they could not tell them what to

do when they were at home. The teacher was "responsible for kids at school," while parents acted in caretaking and supervisory roles outside of school.

The fourth-grade students in Teacher R's class described the role and authority of the teacher in ways which by now are familiar. The role of the teacher was to "tell you what to do" and keep the class "under control." Teachers "knew more than kids" and had "gone to school and taken classes to be a teacher." Teachers learned what to do by going to college and "studying hard." These students expressed more detailed knowledge of the credentialing process, and commented that teachers were required to "pass tests," "get a driver's license," and "get a teacher's permit." One student also suggested that teachers learned how to teach by first being substitute teachers. The fourth-grade students listed the same competencies a teacher must have to successfully enact the teaching role as the younger students. Teachers needed to know "math, spelling, fractions, history, addition, subtraction, how to write stories," and how to handle situations of interpersonal conflict. For the first time, there was explicit mention of it being necessary for teachers to understand students' feelings, especially "how they'll react if you yell at them." Several students mentioned that it was important to "know how kids act," and to remember that they were not adults. "Understanding kids" thus assumed more importance in the fourth-grade students' definitions of the teacher's role than it had been given by the younger students.

At the same time, the teacher's realm of legitimate authority was limited for the fourth-graders as it was for the younger students. The teacher had the right to direct their actions at school, while parents were the authority figures outside the school. Teachers could not tell students how to behave at home or what to do when they were at home. Teachers could not demand that students eat certain things when they were at home or dress in certain ways. One student commented that if the teacher was over for dinner and told him not to hit his sister, he would think the teacher was joking. This comment, like the second-graders' comment that teachers cannot tell you with whom to play on the playground unless they are being mean, again suggests the students were setting boundaries of legitimate authority within the school, as well as the home setting.

When asked about the limits of the teacher's classroom authority, one student made the comment that teachers shouldn't tell students what to draw during art because it "prevents the kid from expressing his mind." This comment, like the earlier comments indicating that teachers should be aware of and take into consideration students' feelings, suggested that these fourth-grade students were increasingly aware of their own existence as distinct individuals. It appears that the students were conscious that they had rights, talents and abilities, opinions, and feelings, which defined who they were and separated them from others. The role of the teacher was now defined interactively and respected the rights, feelings, and perogatives of the student. It was not merely that students wanted to avoid having their feelings hurt by the teacher -- a characteristic of the younger students. The fourth-grade students expressed the right to

not have their feelings hurt. They began to define the role of the teacher and the legitimacy of the teacher's authority as if it were based on respecting the rights of the student. This concept of authority as a relationship between individuals who both have rights is one of the defining characteristics of level 2A authority understanding. It is interesting to see that Damon's authority levels thus were verified in the current phase, even though it was not intended to focus on these levels, per se.

Fifth-grade students in Teacher Q's class also responded to the interview questions in characteristic ways. They spoke of the teacher as a person who "tells you what to do," and "assigns work." The teacher was older, "at least 20," and was the "boss at school." As boss, the teacher had an unquestioned right to "bench" students. At the same time, however, the teacher had the obligation "to be fair" whenever he or she enforced the rules. The students acknowledged that the teacher knew a great deal more than students, and this knowledge was both academic (science, geology, math, spelling, Indian history, local history, writing, etc.) and moral; that is, the teacher "knows what's right and wrong." The students indicated teachers displayed their skill by knowing how to "cope with kids," and "explain things so they understand." They took courses in college to become a teacher and did practice teaching to learn how to fulfill the teaching role. Teachers also knew how to handle children and punish or nurture them when necessary. They learned to "talk their language" and "get them to do well." Thus, they "understood kids."

The above responses echo the responses received from the fourth-grade students. Again, one of the requirements of the teacher's role was to respect and nurture children as individuals who have their own rights and feelings. Other limits to the role of the teacher also were familiar. Teachers could not tell students with whom to play on the playground, they could not tell them what to eat at lunch, or what to wear. Teachers could not tell students to do things when they were away from school, such as go to the supermarket. Teachers could not tell students how to draw or what to do when they were at home. Finally, teachers could not tell students to do something which was irrational, or which would cause harm to the student, such as jumping off a bridge. Students stated that it was the parent who supervised the student's conduct at home, and in general, had more authority than the teacher. As one student said, your mother "bore you and brought you up." Another student elaborated, "My mom's my mom, and my teacher is just somebody that works at school, and is nobody real, real important." Although teachers "teach you what you need to know to get a job," students perceived that it was the parents who had the ultimate responsibility for supervising and nurturing the growth of children.

What conclusions can be drawn based on the responses given by children in these four successful classrooms? First, it seems that no matter what age the child, a sharp distinction was made between the responsibilities and authority of a teacher and the responsibilities and authority of a parent. Even kindergarten and first-graders had a sharp sense of these distinctions. Although they did not articulate the fact that the school was a social organization which had

roles and statuses of its own (e.g., teacher as boss), they implicitly stated this experiential understanding when they commented that the teacher could not tell them what to do when they were at home or on the playground. Second, as students became older, their perceptions of the role of the teacher changed slightly. This suggests that teachers must take into consideration the needs, preferences, opinions, and feelings of students as developing individuals.

Summary

As they get older, children's perceptions of authority expand beyond the exercise of power and influence by a superordinate and the obedience of a subordinate, to encompass a relationship in which the superordinate takes into consideration the needs and development of the subordinate. In a provocative book about the exercise of authority in desegregated junior high schools, Mary Metz examined this theme at some length. Metz (1978) gave compelling examples of the differences between the exercise of legitimate authority and proto authority. She pointed out that teachers, because of their institutional status, could attempt to coerce students into behaving as the teacher desired. However, such an exercise of proto authority was resented and resisted by the students. Although Metz studied eighth-graders, the fourth- and fifth-graders in this study expressed the same underlying assumptions. For teacher authority to be legitimately exercised, the teacher must take into consideration the needs, desires, and opinions of the students. The children in this study spoke of the playground and the art class as being domains in which they could associate with whom they wanted and draw what they wanted.

Based on these findings, we propose that it is important for teachers to consider when to give students autonomy and when to be more directive. Further, combining data from the Phase I study with the Phase II findings, it is apparent that the ways in which teachers sanction students, establish rules, and carry out other disciplinary and reinforcement acts need not only to be adapted to the students' levels of authority understanding, but also can influence students' development of understandings. Hence, assessing and designing the instructional program to respond to the levels of students' authority understandings and perceptions may be as important a feature of a successful instructional program as assessment of and adaptation of the program to students' academic skill levels.

CHAPTER THREE

STUDY PARTICIPANTS AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a brief description of the students who participated in this study of social-cognitive understanding of classroom rules and the authority of the teacher and discusses the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. A more detailed discussion of both the sample and methodology is included in Volume I: An Overview to the Verification Inquiry. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section describes the students and the school they attended. The second section discusses the methodology of open-ended interviewing and presents examples of the sorts of questions used to evoke student perceptions of rules and authority. The third section details the analysis strategies used to understand children's perceptions of rules and authority.

Study Participants

Interviews were conducted with all the students at Central School whose parents granted written permission for their child to participate in the social-cognitive portion of the Verification Inquiry. This comprised a total sample of 75 children in grades K through 6.

Central School is an open-plan elementary school which had a total student population of 245 at the time of the Verification Inquiry. It is located in a rural-suburban town of approximately 33,000 people, in the San Francisco Bay Area. The students at Central School are predominantly white and come from middle-class homes.

Table 3.1 describes the grade level of the children who participated. Classroom V differs from the other classrooms in that it serves the needs of learning-handicapped children. Classrooms M, N, S, O, R, Q, U, and T make no unusual provision for special-needs children.

Data Collection Methodology

Data collection employed an open-ended interview procedure which sought to adapt the questions asked to the responses of the interviewee. Different students thus were asked slightly different questions. The commonality of the interviews was in their focus on the

Table 3.1

Students Who Participated in the Study

Classroom	Grade Level	Number of Students Participating
M	K/1	15
N	K/1	5
S	2	9
O	3/4	8
R	4	6
Q	5	13
U	5/6	7
T	6	6
V	1-6	6
		75

conceptual domains of classroom rules and teacher authority, rather than in use of a prespecified question format. Interviews were conducted by two members of the program staff. Both had extensive previous experience in open-ended interviewing. Although the length of the interviews varied somewhat from child to child, most interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes.

Interviews were conducted either in a quiet anteroom immediately adjacent to the classroom, or outside the classroom on a playground bench. They were conducted with one student at a time. The data collectors began the interviews by talking briefly with the child about what had been happening in the classroom, the school, at home, etc., to establish rapport. Once the interviewer determined that the child appeared to be comfortable in the interview situation, the purpose of the interview was explained, the tape recorder turned on, and the initial question was asked. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

As the focus of the interviews was on children's understandings of classroom rules and the authority of the teacher, there were two sections to the interview: the "rules" section and the "authority" section. These sections are described below.

Rules Section of Interview

The approach taken during the "rules" section remained the same throughout all interviews. Data collectors tried to understand what the student perceived as the most important rule in the classroom. The justification for that rule was then discussed, and the student's

willingness to follow that rule was probed. Examples of the sorts of questions posed to students during the "rules" section of the interviews include:

- What's the most important rule in your classroom?
- How do you know that's a rule?
- Why is that a rule?
- Is it a good rule?
- Who made the rule?
- Can it be changed?
- Would you [insert prohibited behavior] if the teacher didn't see you?
- What happens if you break that rule?

Authority Section of Interview

The authority sections of the interviews differed according to the phases of inquiry. These are described below.

Phase I. The interviewing approach taken during Phase I was largely derived from the work of Damon (1977), and sought to elicit the student's most elaborated understanding of the teacher's authority. According to Damon, children's understanding of authority develops along two dimensions. First, children come to understand in more sophisticated ways the reasons for an individual's legitimacy as an authority figure. Second, they demonstrate increasingly mature reasons for giving obedience to the authority figure. The interviewer's desire to understand children's perceptions relative to these two developing themes guided the interviewer's questioning strategy.

While Damon has conducted his research within a laboratory setting and focused on hypothetical dilemmas and carefully orchestrated games, the Verification Inquiry interviews probed the student's understanding of authority within the ongoing, real-life setting of the classroom. Questions focused on the student's justification for the teacher's authority and the student's rationale for obeying the teacher. Examples of questions used during the Phase I "authority" section of the interview include:

- How did [Mrs. Green] get to be a teacher?
- Do you have to know anything special to be a teacher?
- Do you do what the teacher tells you to do? Why? What happens if you don't?

- Why can the teacher tell you what to do?
- Can you tell the teacher what to do? Why not?
- What's the difference between a teacher and a student?
- Does [Mrs. Green] ever make a mistake?
- Can the teacher bench you? How come?

Phase II. The questioning strategy was modified for Phase II in order to better understand students' conceptions of the particular authority relationships embodied in the interaction of teachers and students. Examples of the questions that were posed to students during these interviews include:

- How did [Mrs. Green] get to be a teacher?
- Do you have to know anything special to be a teacher?
- Can I be a teacher? Can you? Why?
- Can the teacher tell you what page to do in your study book? Make you draw pictures in a special way? Tell you what colors to use? Why?
- Can the teacher tell you to [make you] play with certain kids on the playground? Why?
- Can the teacher tell you not to hit other kids? Your sister? Why? Can your mom? Is that fair?
- Can your mom tell you not to run in the classroom? Why?
- Can your teacher tell you not to eat ice cream?
- When you see your teacher in the grocery store, is she [he] still a teacher?
- What's the difference between a mom and a teacher?
- Do you do what the teacher tells you to do? Why? What happens if you don't?
- Can the teacher bench you? How come? Can [Mr. Smith] [the janitor] bench you? Can I? How come?

Data Analysis

The analysis strategies employed for the "rules" and "authority" sections of the interviews are discussed below.

Rules

Following transcription of the interview audiotapes, all sections of the interviews which dealt with students' understanding of classroom rules were read by one of the senior members of the EPSSP staff who had conducted approximately 50 percent of the interviews. This was done to get a better feeling for "just what was there." Based on this initial read-through and some preliminary coding and categorization, two important decisions were made. First, it was decided to focus the analytic effort on students' perceptions of the rules which were most important within each classroom and omit consideration of subsidiary issues, such as whether these were good rules, who made them, or if they could be changed. This decision was reached because questions of this type had not elicited information from the students that was judged to be significant. The interviewers perceived that questions which asked students whether the rules were good rules or who made them were of much greater salience to the interviewer than to the student. Thus, it was suspected that the student's responses to such questions might be artifactual and reflect strongly the "demands" of the interview situation rather than the student's own perceptions and understandings. The "goodness" of rules or the mechanisms for changing them did not appear to be particularly important to the students. Classroom rules were simply "the way the world was." This impression was solidified by the fact that nearly all students reported that the rules in their classrooms were "good" rules. When asked who made the rules and if they could be changed, students described the mechanisms (or lack of mechanisms) the teacher had established for classroom governance. In short, students perceived accurately the nature of the classroom governance procedures established by individual teachers and accepted the rules operating within their classrooms.

What appeared to be more salient for students was the nature of the rules which were most important in setting boundaries for acceptable student behavior. This impression was formulated during the interview process and was strengthened after perusal of the transcripts. Students appeared to be quite aware of the sorts of actions which evoked sanctions from the teacher. Hence, it was decided to tabulate the rules students thought most important, regardless of who made them, etc.

To enable comparisons to be made between classes, a "paraphrase" and categorization procedure was selected as the major analytic strategy. First, all rules mentioned by students were culled from the transcripts. Second, rules which were similar in intent but stated in different words by different students were paraphrased into a single rule statement. Thus, "Don't hit," "Don't kick," and "Don't throw things" were paraphrased under the single rule statement, "Don't hurt others." This was done after careful reading and analysis of the transcripts and was done only after considering all the statements a student made about a rule. For example, "Don't throw things" was included in the rule statement, "Don't hurt others" because the student told the interviewer "Don't throw things" was a good rule because "You might hit somebody's eye."

Once all the rules expressed by students were paraphrased, they were categorized according to the type of rule they represented. Two categorization schemes were tried. First, the scheme employed by Much and Schweder (1978) in their research with kindergarteners was used. This categorization scheme was abandoned because it did not differentiate sufficiently between rule types. The final scheme -- and the one on which the preceding findings were based -- was taken from previous work by members of the program staff (Tikunoff & Ward, 1978). This categorization scheme divides the universe of rules into the following types:

1) Procedural Rules, or norms which define, describe, or delimit the students' behavior in other than specifically instructional situations. These rules are concerned primarily with classroom management rituals, as well as scheduling, movement in and out of the classroom, and use of materials;

2) Academic Rules, or norms which define, describe, or delimit the students' behavior in instructional situations;

3) Talking and Noise Rules, or norms which refer to the boundaries the teacher sets on talk in the classroom as well as other sanctionable noises;

4) Mobility Rules, or norms about what restrictions are placed on the students' physical movement in the classroom;

5) Ethical Rules, or norms referring to students' rights or responsibilities;

6) School-Imposed Rules, or formal rules enforced as part of school or district policy; and

7) Miscellaneous Rules, a residual category of teacher concerns for which students were sanctioned that were distinct from the above categories.

While the number of rules within each category varied for each teacher, all rules identified in the nine classes fell within these seven categories.

Authority

Different analysis strategies were employed for Phase I and Phase II data. A discussion follows of each strategy.

Phase I. The conception of authority utilized in the study was strongly influenced by Damon's (1977) research. The interview transcripts were subjected to a modified version of Damon's scoring procedure.

Since the interviews were exploratory and open-ended, a technique which might be termed "statement matching" was employed as the scoring procedure. Under this approach, individual coherent statements made by a single student about authority were compared with the criterion expressions of authority understanding contained in the scoring manual for Damon's research (see Damon, 1975). Table 2.1.1 in Chapter Two summarized these levels of authority understanding. As a result of comparing a student's utterances (coherent statements) with the exemplary quotations and idealized descriptions which appeared in the scoring manual, a decision was made concerning which level of understanding best "matched" each individual response. Because the unit of analysis was the "coherent statement" rather than the "child," some students were coded as demonstrating more than one level of authority understanding. This issue of "level dispersion" is dealt with briefly at the end of this discussion.

Some examples may help the reader understand the scoring process. The examples focus on students' responses at each level of authority understanding. The interviewer's questions appear in uppercase letters. The student's responses are in upper-and-lower case.

Level 0-A. Children identified with the teacher, believing that the teacher would never tell them to do something they didn't want to do. From the child's viewpoint, the teacher had authority because the child liked the teacher. The following excerpt from an interview with a kindergartner demonstrates this level of authority understanding.

WOULD YOU DO ANYTHING IF THE TEACHER DIDN'T TELL YOU TO?

No.

HOW COME?

Because I like to mind Mom's and Dad's.

IS THE TEACHER A MOM AND DAD?

No.

NO, BUT YOU DO WHAT THE TEACHER TELLS YOU TO, RIGHT?

Uh-hunh.

SO WHY DO YOU DO WHAT SHE TELLS YOU TO?

Because I like to mind her.

Level 0-B. This level represents a slight advance in understanding of authority, although the child remains confused as to why the teacher has authority. Rules are seen as an obstacle to get around, and are obeyed to avoid punishment, rather than because it is right to do so. An excerpt from an interview with a second-grader demonstrates a Level 0-B understanding of authority.

DO YOU KNOW HOW MRS. X BECAME A TEACHER?

Yeah, she just 'came a teacher.

JUST BECAME A TEACHER? DO YOU HAVE TO DO ANYTHING?

No, you just go . . . up to the . . . janitor, 'n go, "I wanna be a teacher."

JUST GO UP TO MR. SPRATT [e.g., the janitor] AND SAY, "I'M GONNA BE A TEACHER"?

Yeah, first . . . if there's a place left over, you can.

The third-grader quoted below also demonstrated Level 0-B authority understanding when he informed the interviewer that the dictates of the teacher are to be obeyed because of the teacher's ability to punish misbehavior.

WHY DO THE KIDS DO WHAT THE TEACHER TELLS THEM TO DO?

Probably, cuz if they didn't, they think they'd get in trouble, 'n they don't wanna get in trouble.

ARE THERE ANY OTHER REASONS WHY THEY DO WHAT THE TEACHER TELLS THEM TO?

I don't think so!

Level 1-A. Children at this level express a fatalism that their misdeeds will always be observed by the teacher and attribute a certain omnipotence to the teacher. The following excerpt from a third-grader suggests this level of authority understanding.

SHOULD YOU ALWAYS DO WHAT THE TEACHER TELLS YOU TO DO?

Yes.

HOW COME?

Um, you'll get in trouble.

YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE. UMM, ARE THERE ANY OTHER REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD DO WHAT SHE TELLS YOU TO DO?

Because she's your teacher 'n it's like, um, she made you and if you don't do what she says or sump'n, then you'll die, but you won't really die, but sorta like that.

Level 1-B. This level of authority understanding represents an advance in students' social-cognitive capacities. The teacher is now recognized as someone who can help students and thus deserves to be obeyed. This is the first time that the authority figure's power is recognized as resting on competence and ability, rather than upon

his or her physical status or social power. An excerpt from an interview with a fourth-grader illustrates this level of understanding.

WHAT GIVES THE TEACHER THE RIGHT TO TELL YOU WHAT TO DO?

Well, she really doesn't boss us around. She just says, well if you want to get a good job when you're grown up, you have to listen to me and learn how to do this thing or else you won't get a good job, a good pay job. It's like you're helping yourself when you listen. It's not when you come to school and you just disobey every single thing that somebody says to you or says, oh could you do that? and then you just disobey it, you're not helping yourself learn, you're just kinda wandering off. But, if you listen, then you're helping yourself learn.

Level 2-A. At this level, children's understandings of authority continue to focus on the capabilities of the teacher; capabilities resulting from the teacher's prior training and experience. Authority understanding at this level also reintegrates the nascent concerns for reciprocity first expressed at Level 1-B; the student now expects that an authority figure will be concerned about the welfare of those individuals expected to follow the authority figure's dictates. Should unfair demands be made by the authority figure, children assume that they will be rescinded, and the children's rights respected. An excerpt from an interview with a sixth-grader illustrates a concept of authority that was scored at Level 2-A.

SHOULD YOU DO EVERYTHING THE TEACHER TELLS YOU TO?

More or less, if you know that it's right; if you know it's wrong, no.

. . . SO, IT'S ALMOST ALWAYS RIGHT TO DO WHAT YOUR TEACHER OR YOUR PRINCIPAL TELLS YOU TO DO?

Yeah, I do it.

WHY?

'Cause I don't want to get in trouble.

OK, THAT'S ONE REASON. CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER REASONS WHY IT'S RIGHT TO DO THAT? TO DO WHAT YOUR TEACHER AND OTHER TEACHERS TELL YOU TO DO?

Well, more or less, because, see, you might, you can get in trouble and you know adults are a lot smarter than we are, so they know what's right and wrong and the difference, so if they tell you to do something, it must be right. You know, no one's perfect, but 9 out of 10 times they're right.

Dispersion of levels of authority. The responses of individual students often demonstrated authority understandings at more than one level. When this occurred, both levels of understanding were scored. Thus the coded responses of individual students as presented in Tables 2.12, 2.13, 2.14, 2.15, and 2.16 indicate that many students' understandings are dispersed across two or three levels. Damon (1977, p. 202) reports a similar result.

Table 3.2 indicates the number and percentage of students whose responses fell into one or more levels. Inspection of this table reveals that, overall, 54 percent of the students interviewed gave responses at a single level, while 35 percent and 11 percent gave responses which showed a dispersion of two and three levels, respectively. Both the younger students in kindergarten and first grade and the older fifth- and sixth-graders tended to demonstrate the least dispersion. Third- and fourth-graders demonstrated the most.

Table 3.2

Dispersion of Levels of Authority Understanding

Classroom	Grade	Number of Students Interviewed	Number (Percent) of Students Whose Responses Fell in One or More Levels of Understanding		
			1 Level	2 Levels	3 Levels
M	K/1	9	6 (67)*	3 (34)	0
O	3/4	8	2 (25)	5 (63)	1 (13)
U	5/6	7	4 (57)	1 (14)	2 (29)
T	6	6	4 (67)	4 (67)	1 (17)
V	1-6	6	3 (50)	3 (50)	0
TOTAL*		36	20 (53)	13 (36)	4 (11)

* Percent total greater than 100 because of rounding.

Although these results should be approached with caution because of the small number of students in the sample, it could be hypothesized that, since levels of authority understanding are thought to be sharply correlated with Piagetian stages of cognitive development (Damon, 1977, p. 299 et passim), the greater dispersion of authority levels demonstrated by third- and fourth-grade students resulted from their lack of cognitive consolidation into the stage of Concrete Operations. If these children were transitional in their logical thinking

capabilities and demonstrated both operational and pre-operational thought, the degree of dispersion that occurred in this study would be expected. However, we have no way of testing this hypothesis, and thus the explanation remains speculation. Nonetheless, no attempt was made to "jam" all of a student's responses into a single level of understanding.

The dispersion of levels of authority understanding which appeared in the data generally was greater than that reported by Damon (1977). However, it will be remembered, Damon used a more standardized research procedure and questioned children about hypothetical dilemmas. Since the research approach used here was more open-ended, the greater dispersion of authority levels may result from the fact that children were asked about real-life situations. The complexity of these stimulus situations may have led to greater dispersion in the levels of understanding displayed in their responses. In addition, because the students were participants in these situations, their responses may have vacillated from the pragmatic to the philosophic. That is to say, on the one hand, children described "how they acted with the teacher." On the other hand, they described "why the teacher could tell them what to do." Answers to questions about why one obeys the teacher probably were tinged with the students' classroom experiences, while responses to questions about why the teacher is a legitimate authority figure drew more upon the philosophic and interpretive capacities of the youngsters.

Nonetheless, the fact that nearly half (47) the students who were interviewed displayed authority understandings dispersed over two or three levels casts serious doubt on the notion that the levels of authority understanding delimited by Damon meet Piaget's (1970) criteria for stages of cognitive thought. We suspect that the issues of obedience and legitimacy, which Damon places at the center of authority understanding, are differentially influenced by the context in which the child encounters authority, and propose that the relationship of the understanding of these issues to each other, as well as to real-world experience, be the subject of future inquiry.

Phase II. A four-step procedure was used to analyze the Phase II authority interviews. First, the interviews were read by a senior member of the program staff to get a "feel" for the data. Second, gross coding categories were defined to isolate information about students' perceptions of the role of the teacher and the boundaries of the teachers' authority. These categories were:

1) Role attributes, or statements about the impersonal characteristics which define the teacher's role;

2) Preparation, or statements about how individuals become qualified to assume the role of teacher;

3) Duties, or statements about what the teacher's role requires the incumbent to do;

4) Expertise, or statements about the skills and capabilities required to exercise the teacher's role;

5) Limitations to authority, or statements about the boundaries of the teacher's role;

6) Reasons for following the teacher's dictates, or statements about why students obey the individual enacting the role of teacher; and

7) Other, or miscellanous statements thought to be provocative or otherwise significant.

Third, individual interviews were re-read on a classroom-to-classroom basis. By this we mean that all student interviews that discussed the teacher (or teachers) in a particular classroom were read and compared. Salient parts of the interviews were excerpted and noted below the appropriate category on specially prepared coding sheets, one for each classroom. Sometimes students' remarks were transcribed verbatim; other times, when the student was vague or excessively wordy, the remarks were paraphrased. Finally, a senior member of the program staff read through the coding sheets and attempted to pull together the most common themes to present a collective portrait of the perceptions of the students in each class. The descriptions of student perceptions which appeared in Chapter Two of this volume thus represent the unification of data from disparate students. The unit of analysis was the class, not the individual.

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