Multicultural Classroom Climate Research Theoretical Issues Relevant to Bilingual

by Dr. Rudolfo Chavez Chavez

Dr. Chavez is an Associate Professor of Education and the Coordinator of the Bilingual/Cross Cultural Program at California State University, Fullerton.

Introduction

In the past few years several reports focusing on effective schools around the country and national studies focusing on American education haw made many take a critical look at how children have been educated and what has been done to make sure that all children have an equal opportunity and access for schooling. These studies revealed that ethnic and linguistic minorities have been, in short, devastated by the American school experience. Characteristic of this dilemma are the reports that illustrate the drop-out rates of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Native Americans, and other minorities. Also, the present demographics coupled with the projections of increasing numbers of minorities going through public schools add to the questions of quality and equality in the pedagogy of all students (See Arciriiega, 1985; Aspira Report, 1983; B.I.A. Report, 1988; Bachman, Green & Wirtanen, 1971; Fine & Rosenberg, 1983; Morrow, 1986; Pallas, 1987; Peng & Takai, 1983; Richardson & Gerlach, 1980; Rumberger, 1983).

Soltis (1984) has described pedagogy as the human activity of teaching and of helping others to learn. He says pedagogy is 'as basic and universal a human social activity as is communicating or having a kinship system" (Soltis, 1984, p. 7).

> Whether it is considered a basic sociobiological adaptive function passed on genetically or a universally learned social practice necessary to the continuity of culture reproduction, development, and transformation, pedagogy is an essential ingredient in the development of a socialized human being. We all teach, and we are all taught (Soltis, 1984, p. 7).

It is argued that pedagogy by its very nature must be investigated. Re searchers should not try to investigate every dimension but should be interested that every dimension be investigated. This paper will first pre sent the theoretical underpinnings of classroom climate followed by some present theoretical issues that should be seriously considered when investigating the human activity of pedagogy within bilingual multicultural classroom climates.

Theoretical Issues

Lewin (1936) asserted that environment' is sometimes psychologically understood to mean the momentary situation of the child and at other times to mean the permanent situation. Therefore, an individual's characteristics in regard to predisposition and momentary state should be defined not "phenotypically" but "genotypically." Phenotype refers to the simple appearances of an individual and genotype refers to the underlying determining tendencies of an individual. That is, '. . in order for one individual characteristic (Pa) to be differentiated from another (Pb) it must be associated with different modes of behavior (RI in the same situations (El, E2, En (p 721. Furthermore, because a group of people may behave in a similar way, the similarity of possible behavior does not imply similarity of the individuals, because different situations may bring out approximately similar behavior. 'Inference of an individual characteristic (1') is possible only when the environmental situations (El agree, inference of the situation only when the individuals agree (Lewin, 1936, p. 72).

When focusing on a child, an analysis of environmental factors must begin from a consideration of the total situation. At birth, the child's life space is limited. Gradually, the child's !ife extends. The child gradually controls his environment; social relationships (e.g., child-to- parent or child-to-child communications become an essential part of his life-space. As the child matures physically and mentally, the child's social relationships become more significant for his psychological environment.

To understand the child's psychological behavior IB), Lewin contended that one's behavior must be determined for every kind of psychological event (actions, emotions, expressions), for the momentary structure and the state of the person (P), and for the psychological environment (E)- B = F(P,E). In this equation behavior (B) equals the frequency of the momentary structure and both the state of the person (P and the psychological environment (E). In brief, Lewin (1936) reasoned that environment be defined not only physically, but psychobiologically as well, that is, according to a quasi-physical and quasi-mental structure.

Keeping in mind Lewin's rationale, Murray (19381 attempted to maintain his focus on the lives of people. Additionally, Murray was also interested in the internal determinants of behavior. Murray concluded that Lewin j1936 and others were interested only in the external determinants of behavior, never systematically developing a theory of drive or need. Murray's need-press model corrected that omission. Murray makes a distinction between 'needs" (the? component) and "press" (the E component Murray defined "need" as 'a force (the physico-chemical nature of which is unknown) in the brain region, a force which organizes perception, apperception, intellection [sic] conation, and action in

such a way as to transform in a certain direction an existing, unsatisfying situation" (1938, p. 1244.) He defined "press" as "a temporal gestalt of stimuli which usually appears in the guise of a threat of harm or promise of benefit to the organism."

Stern 1970) refined Murray's ideas by simplifying those definitions. To Stern, 'needs refers to organizational tendencies that appear to give unity and direction to a person's behavior. In contrast, "press" refers to the phenomenological world of the individual, the unique and inevitable private view that each person has o the events in which the individual takes part (Stern, 1970).

Although scholars in the field were seriously considering the dynamics of classroom climates few were developing theoretical backdrops in order to systematically continue the inquiry of the interaction of students within formal classroom structures. Getzels and Thelen's (1960) socio-psychological theory is specifically tailored to groups within classroom structures. They argue that the nature of the learning process is affected by the nature of the social interaction; the compulsory process is affected by the nature of the social interaction the compulsory and random selection of pupils wilt have an effect on what is learned, and the compulsory and random nature of the classroom group can be considered one of many distinctive features of the classroom as a working group (Getzels and Thelen, 1960). The main elements of Getzels and Thelen's conception of the classroom group are illustrated in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Social System Model
(GetzelS and Thelen 1960)
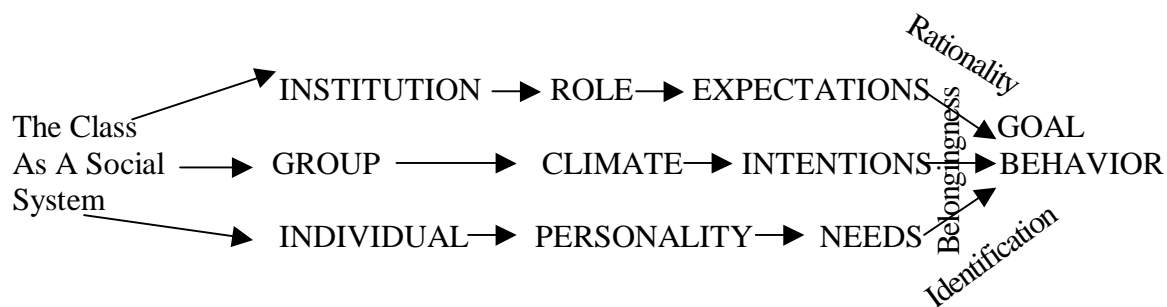
The upper line is the sociological or nomothetic dimension of action F are defined in terms of established institutional expectations obligations, prerogatives and powers. The lower line or the idiographic dimension pertains to the unique, personal behavior dispositions. The middle line or the transactional dimension mediates between the institutional and the individual dispositions. On the one hand, this mediation can support
the institution by imposing, if necessary, certain normative role- expectations on the group members; on the other hand, it can support the individual in expressing certain idiosyncratic personalitY.di5p05iti01 In working out this balance between the institution and the individual the group develops a culture or, better yet, a 'classroom climate" that may be analyzed into the constituent intentions of the group. In effect the group climate represents another general dimension of the classroom as a social system (Getzels and Thelen, 1960).
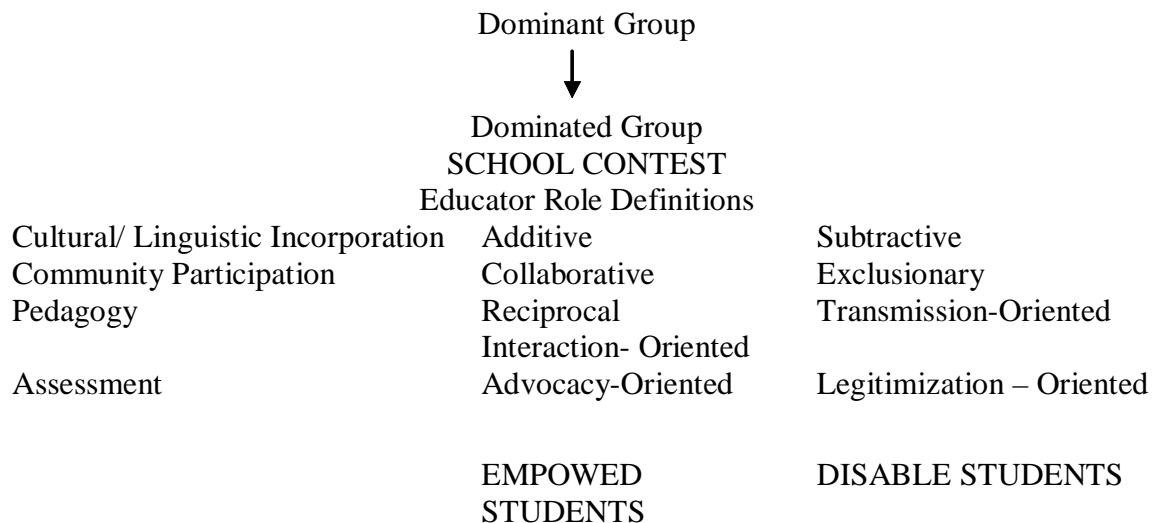
The Study of Bilingual Multicultural Classroom Climates

Earlier in this paper reference was made to how ethnic and linguist minorities have been devastated by the American school experience (Cortes 1986; Sue & Padilla, 1986). The drop-out rates of Hispanics Black and other minorities have been characteristic of the devastation. Moreover, the existing research data on minority students' academic performance under diverse social and educational settings is indicative of the complexity of factors involved (Cummins, 1986; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986; Wong Fillmore & Valadez, 1986). Cummins (1986) holds that students from 'dominated societal groups are 'empowered' or 'disabled' as a direct result of their interactions with educators in the schools" (p. 21). Similar to Getzels and Thelen's (1960) model, Cummins (1986) speaks to implicit and explicit 'role definitions" that educators assume in relation to four institutional characteristics of schools that reflect the extent to which

(1) minority students' language and. culture are incorporated into the school program; (2) minority community participation is encouraged as an integral component of children's education; (3) the pedagogy promotes intrinsic motivation on the part of students to use language actively in order to generate their own knowledge; and (4) professionals involved in assessment become advocates for minority students rather than legitimizing the location of the 'problem' in the students (p. 21).

A compelling case can be made for re-examining the dynamic role of pedagogy (See Figure 2). Teachers must differentiate between dominant group students and dominated group students. Dominated group students may have, for example, bicultural and/or Li language ambivalence and less effective cultural transmissions associated with historical patterns of colonization and subordination by the dominant group (Cummins 1986).

Figure 2: Empowerment of Minority Students:
A Theoretical Framework (Cummins, 1986)

Dominant Group
↓
Dominated Group
SCHOOL CONTEST
Educator Role Definitions

Cultural/ Linguistic Incorporation	Additive	Subtractive
Community Participation	Collaborative	Exclusionary
Pedagogy	Reciprocal Interaction- Oriented	Transmission-Oriented
Assessment	Advocacy-Oriented	Legitimization – Oriented
	EMPOWED STUDENTS	DISABLE STUDENTS

Additionally, teachers and researchers alike must realize that the interactional styles useful with students from the same ethnic group may not be appropriate simply because of the dominant/dominated group differences found within the same ethnic group (Cummins, 1986; Ogbu & Matute 1986). Empowering students to develop the ability, confidence, and motivation to succeed academically should be an integral part of the school experience and utmost in the minds of all. Within the instructional dimension, cognitive/academic and identity factors should incorporate the notion of "student empowerment" (Cummins, 1986).

Furthermore, "1anguage students' educational progress is strongly influenced by the extent to which individual educators become advocates for the promotion of students' linguistic talents, actively en courage community participation in developing students' academic and cultural resources, and implement pedagogical approaches that succeed in liberating students from instructional dependence" (Cummins, 1986,p. 32). To reverse the pattern of educational failure, educators are faced with a personal and a political challenge. Educators need to redefine their roles within the classroom, the community, and the broader society so that these role definitions result in interactions that empower rather than disable. Within the political realm educators must persuade their col leagues and decision makers of the importance of redefining institutional goals so that the schools transform society by empowering minority students rather than reflecting society by disabling them (Cummins, 1986).

As discussed earlier, Lewin's (1936) and Murray's (1938) pivotal works recognizing the interaction of the environment and individuals are instrumental to a holistic understanding of an individual's total behavior (i.e., learning) Lewin theorized that behavior is a function of the person and environment—B = f (P, E). Murray's "needs-press model" complimented Lewin's thought. To Murray, personality characteristics are goal oriented, and environmental characteristics are external and can be positive or negative to the personality needs of an individual. These streams of thought set the foundation for substantive research within a classroom. Getzels and Thelen's (1960) model depicted the classroom as a social system and illustrated that the class, the personality needs of an individual student, the role of the teacher and student plus the created classroom climate interactions predicted group behavior including learning outcomes.

Cummins' (1986) framework is of fundamental importance. The frameworks' three inclusive sets of interactions or power relations bring to the surface and clearly enhance the considerations elaborated on by Getzels and Thelen (1960). In many ways (but beyond the scope of this paper) the interactions or power relations take into account the nomothetic, idiographic and transactional dimensions fully discussed by Getzels and Thelen (1960). The framework centers on "(1) the classroom interactions between teachers and students, (2) relationships between schools and minority communities, and (3) the intergroup power relations within the society as a whole" (Cummins 1986, p. 19). Cummins (1986) also differentiates between dominated students and makes it clear "..that for minority students who have traditionally experienced school failure, there is sufficient overlap in the impact of cognitive/academic and identity factors [to] justify incorporating these two dimensions [cognitive/academic and identity] within the notion of 'student empowerment' while recognizing that under some conditions each dimension may be affected in different ways" (p. 23). Cummins' (1986) contribution is most significant in light of the need to better comprehend the teacher community interaction phenomena within a classroom climate conducive to language minority and ethnically distinct students.

Understanding Bilingual Multicultural Classroom Climates

A fundamental principal of bilingual multicultural education is that the student's language and culture will be accepted and fully incorporated into the classroom climate in order for a meaningful pedagogical experience to occur. (For example, see Appleton, 1983; Arciniega, 1979; Schooling and Language Minority Students, 1980; Wong & Valadez, 1986.) The feelings, attitudes, values, self-concepts concerns, and appreciations of all students are essential elements for the entire educational process to be fully experienced and need critical Consideration (Chavez & Cardenas 1980; Kash & Borich, 1978; Solts (1984). Often the affective environment, the interactions between students and students, and between students and teachers - i.e., the classroom climate, is overlooked as being important to the student's social and emotional development and educational efficacy (Goodlad, 1979).

Soltis (1984) coins the affective environment as the "subjective engines" of teachers and learners in the pedagogical situation:

> Sometimes it's compulsion or curiosity that motivates the learner; sometimes it's duty or social need that moves the teacher. But for those who have truly experienced this universal human activity, there is always an expectation of a joyful subjective feeling that is recognized as ever potential by both teacher and learner in every pedagogical situation. The learner has felt and seeks again the good feeling of the mastery and understanding of a skill, or the consumatory experience of insight, appreciation, and understanding of ideas, or the thrill of discovering something not known before, or the feeling of accomplishment that comes with making sense of the World. The teacher also has experienced and seeks again the joy or success found in the purposeful pedagogical activity, the empathetic sharing of the joy of the learner, and the basic human satisfaction of freely giving to another human being those things that nurture their growth as individuals and as social beings. The subjective experience is an important part of the process (p. 8).

The bilingual multicultural classroom climate has physical and social, as well as intellectual forces and conditions that impinge upon a student (Delgado..Ga 1987; Rueda, 1987; Shultz & Theophano, 1987; Trueba, 1987). Also, the climate acting with other forces in and out of a classroom offers the student the psychological experiences of exploration, limitation, and self-impact (Kash & Borich, 1978; Suarez-Orozco, 1987). In turn, the social relations, among the students as a group and between the students and the teacher will significantly influence the cognitive and affective learning outcomes (Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; Cummins, 1986; Kahn & Weiss, 1973). This does not, however, indicate that successful affective and cognitive experiences within a classroom will guarantee an increase in positive attitudes toward school. Nevertheless, the unsuccessful affective and cognitive experiences within a classroom will guarantee an increase in negative attitudes toward school-related activities (Bloom, 1973; Hernandez-Chavez, 1984; Ogbu & Matute-

Bianchi, 1986; Sinclair & Ghory, 1987). Therefore, the total experiences of a non-bilingual or a bilingual multicultural classroom climate may determine the efficacy of affective and cognitive experiences and determine whether ethnic and linguistic minority students stay in school or drop out.

Conclusions

In a recent national study, Goodlad (1984) illustrated the need to study the context of schooling from several and sometimes contradictory points of reference. Only then can an illustrative panoramic view of what hap pens within schools be fully understood. Similarly, bilingual multicultural classrooms can fully reveal their implicit and explicit regard for the "whole" learner as well as the intrinsic respect such classroom climates offer to the cultural experiences of the students participating therein. As models are created to better comprehend the dynamics of the classroom climate and as research methods that coincide with those models are used, meaningful pedagogical and learning activities that keep in mind the kaleidoscopic effects of classroom climates must be the focus in order for all students to experience consistent and genuine school success. On the one hand, this paper proposes that classroom climates be investigated from a variety of research dimensions, and on the other hand, that cognitive and affective considerations be equally considered. Such an approach would provide, in the broadest sense, an increased understanding of the pedagogical process by allowing research (both applied and theoretical) to bring to the surface a collective critical reflection of the teaching! learning process within bilingual multicultural classroom climates which will create a collective desire to achieve the most beneficial outcomes for all students through schooling by nurturing those activities within schools that would empower students rather than disable students.

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Note
1. Within the literature, climate and environment are used interchangeably.

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