

# Value Consensus Concerning Disadvantaged Pupils in Inner City Elementary Schools

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VALUES play an important part in the processes involved in the identification, establishment, and fulfillment of organizational goals. As Smith (6: 408) points out: "Education . . . is obviously and pre-eminently a value enterprise."

Etzioni (2: 136) confirms the importance of values in relation to the organizational health of normative organizations, of which schools are one type, when he states:

. . . normative organizations require both a high degree and a wide range of consensus. Dissensus in any area, in particular with respect to values, goals, and means, is dysfunctional for the achievement of organizational goals.

Rich (5: viii-ix) reinforces this notion when he asserts:

Since all areas of education are undergirded by values, and since the most basic decisions that must be made with regard to the future direction of education are value decisions, we neglect them at our own peril.

Thus, the values held by the interacting members of a school organization are closely associated with the functional dimensions of the organization, which, in turn, affect the achievement of the organizational goals. If there is complete lack of consensus with regard to values that relate to the goals and the means of attaining the goals, a dysfunctional element is operating within the organization.

As Carver and Sergiovanni (1: x) have noted:

. . . organizations, like individuals, need to identify and pursue goals, react to stress, seek homeostasis, adapt, maintain themselves internally, ensure survival, and grow in size, power, and influence if they are to be effective.

A fundamental characteristic of any social system as a system is that it is normative (7: 145). Schools are both a social system and a normative organization. Within the context of this proposition, Warden (7: 145) states:

People who are in prolonged interactional relationships because of relatively similar socioeconomic positions develop characteristic consensual *value orientations* and *subcultural* normative expectations that serve to guide perception, cognition, affective relationships, and general behavior. There are definable sets of system-wide beliefs, values, and behavioral norms that are idealistically defined and known to the members.

. . . the majority of what any individual thinks and feels, and a great deal of how he acts and reacts, is the direct result of his interaction with others in his subcultural environment. Behavioral expectations, value orientations, and symbolic systems are learned in social interaction.

If the foregoing observations made by Warden are accurate, it would be expected that a high degree of consensus in terms

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of values would exist between individuals functioning in a particular school system or a common inner city school environment. However, does research bear out this supposition?

Currently, complex organizations such as schools are perceived and treated by scholars and researchers as living organisms consisting of a composite of characteristics. Each separate school has certain peculiar traits and values in much the same way as individuals possess a unique composite of personality traits. It is this "personality" that Halpin (4: 131) describes as the organizational climate of schools.

In recent years researchers and writers have displayed much interest concerning the values and value systems of disadvantaged pupils, recognizing that great disparity exists between the values accepted by disadvantaged pupils and the values espoused by the school organization. However, a point of consideration which has not been given attention is the conjunctiveness or disjunctiveness of values which relate to disadvantaged pupils on the part of the professional staff members functioning within a school system, school organization, or common educational environment.

Therefore, does the fact that schools within a system are characterized as having an open or closed organizational climate have any relationship to the consensus of values and perceived values of teachers working and interacting within the given organizational climate?

## Methodology

Sixteen inner city elementary schools designated by the School District of Kansas City, Missouri, as being concerned primarily and extensively with the education of disadvantaged pupils constituted the sample on which this study was based.

Two instruments were administered to the teachers (total N of 328) in the conduct of this investigation: (a) the *Organizational Climate Description Questionnaire* (OCDQ) (4), and (b) the *Values Concerning Disadvantaged Pupils Questionnaire* (VDPQ) (3).

The VDPQ is an instrument which measures the values of teachers concerning disadvantaged pupils and the values of principals concerning disadvantaged pupils as perceived by their teachers. It was developed in the form of a Likert-type ordinal scale consisting of five points, with numerical values assigned to each point. Content validity was established through research at the University of Missouri—Columbia.

Further testing of the VDPQ instrument was conducted with 61 teachers within the elementary schools of Savannah, Georgia, and St. Louis, Missouri. The purpose of this testing was to establish the internal consistency or homogeneity of the measurements; therefore, an item analysis was conducted utilizing the Kuder-Richardson 20 formula. The item analysis on the 42 items comprising the VDPQ yielded correlation coefficients of .929 for the values of teachers and .922 for the values of principals as perceived by teachers.

After interpreting the OCDQ data, each of the 16 schools was classified according to the type of organizational climate which it displayed. Three schools were identified as being characterized by the most open organizational climate (teacher N of 38), and two schools as possessing the most closed organizational climate (teacher N of 38). Analysis of the VDPQ data provided mean scores for the teachers in the open and closed organizational climates for the values of teachers and the values of principals as perceived by the teachers. Additionally, mean VDPQ scores were calculated for the values of teachers and the values of principals as perceived by the teachers, utilizing all 16 schools in the sample.

## Findings

The result of testing the null hypothesis that no significant difference exists between the values of teachers and the values of principals as perceived by their teachers in inner city elementary schools is presented in Figure 1. The mean score was 143.547 for the values of teachers and 139.889 for the values of principals as perceived by their teachers. This difference was significant beyond the

Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	t Value
Values of teachers	328	143.547	17.525	622	2.682*
Values of principals perceived by teachers	296	139.889	16.532		

\* Significant beyond the .01 level.

Figure 1. Difference Between the Values of Teachers and the Values of Principals as Perceived by Their Teachers

.01 level of significance and permitted the rejection of the null hypothesis.

Figure 2 reveals the significant t value of 2.217 which permitted the rejection of the null hypothesis that no significant difference exists between the values of teachers in open and in closed organizational climates.

Schools Grouped by Organizational Climates	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	t Value
Open	38	146.500	17.032	74	2.217*
Closed	38	138.184	15.635		

\* Significant beyond the .05 level.

Figure 2. Difference Between the Values of Teachers in Open and Closed Organizational Climates

The result of testing the null hypothesis that no significant difference exists between the values of principals as perceived by their teachers in open and in closed organizational climates is contained in Figure 3. Inspection of Figure 3 shows a t value of 2.232, which was significant at the .05 level and permitted the rejection of the null hypothesis.

## Conclusions and Discussion

A dysfunctional element appears to be operating within the schools tested, in terms of how teachers perceive their own values in relation to how they perceive their principal's values. Teachers believed their own values concerning disadvantaged pupils to be more positive or higher than their principal's.

Schools Grouped by Organizational Climates	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degrees of Freedom	t Value
Open	36	143.250	16.060	68	2.232*
Closed	34	134.500	16.734		

\* Significant beyond the .05 level.

Figure 3. Difference Between the Values of Principals as Perceived by Teachers in Open and Closed Organizational Climates

Whether the teachers can reliably represent their principal's values is important but not critical to the questions raised in this investigation. If in fact the teachers perceive the values of their principal to be significantly different (less positive) than their own, a dysfunctional element is operating within the school which is a potential source of faculty-administrator conflict and may interfere with the attainment of organizational goals.

A general conclusion can be drawn that the values of teachers and their perception of the values of the principal, as measured by the VDPQ, are more positive or higher in inner city elementary schools characterized by a more open organizational climate than in schools with a closed organizational climate. This would imply that an open climate is to be preferred over the closed climate, and that an open climate represents a more desirable kind of educational environment for inner city schools. Although organizational climate was not shown to have a direct causal effect on values, there is a positive relationship which serves as a basis and justification for additional investigation into the topic.

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