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Research Article

Analysis through Hidden Curriculum of Peer Relations in Two Different Classes with Positive and Negative Classroom Climates*

Meltem Çengel¹

Adnan Menderes University

Adil Türkoğlu²

Adnan Menderes University

Abstract

Classroom climate is the key context that facilitates or complicates the learning process. Peer relationships are some of the principal determinants of this concept, especially for adolescent groups. Analyzing the classroom climate deeply in terms of peer relations can be vital in understanding the students' continuity, success, and connection with the classroom and school. The objective of this research is to make an in depth analysis of peer relations in two classrooms with different climates: positive and negative. In accordance with this, two classrooms with positive and negative climates were chosen through the "classroom climate perceived by students scale:" over a 72-hour period, two different classrooms' lessons were observed. 18 and one teacher were then interviewed. According to the findings of this research, in the classroom with a positive climate there were more positive and negative behaviors in terms of frequency observed and diversity of behavior. In the classroom with a negative climate it was observed that the interaction was more limited and the frequency of behaviors categorized as negative was higher than the positive ones. The findings were debated through "cultural reproduction theory," "resistance theory," and "functionalist theory" in the framework of "hidden curriculum theory."

Keywords

Classroom climate • Peer relations • Vocational schools • Hidden curriculum

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1 **Correspondence to:** Meltem Çengel (PhD), Faculty of Education, Adnan Menderes University, Kepez Mevkii, Aydın 09010 Turkey. Email: meltemcengel@gmail.com

2 Faculty of Education, Adnan Menderes University, Kepez Mevkii, Aydın 09010 Turkey. Email: aturkoglu@adu.edu.tr

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Students spend an important amount of time in classrooms during their education. A student spends approximately 4500 hours in a classroom until the end of primary school, 13,500 hours until the end of secondary school and up to 18,000 hours by the end of high school. Thus the environment of their social and academic learning is based on the classroom climate. Classroom climate can be defined as the quality of the perceived classroom environment (Lee, 2005; Rowe, Kim, Baker, Kamphaus, & Horne, 2010), and can either help the students learn in a higher level or become a barrier, preventing their learning process (Lee, 2005). Penick and Bonnstetter (1993) describe classroom climate as “the conceptual image of the classroom, common for classmates.”

The structure and component of the classroom climate varies according to different sources (Fraser, 1998). For example, some sources [(Science Laboratory Environment Inventory, Fisher, Henderson, & Fraser, 1997; Fraser, Giddings, & McRobbie, 1995; Fraser & McRobbie, 1995; Wong & Fraser, 1995); Constructivist Learning Environment; (Arkün & Aşkar, 2010; Taylor, Dawson, & Fraser, 1995; Taylor, Fraser, & Fisher, 1997)] consider the classroom climate in its relationship with a specific field, or with a lesson; whereas others consider it separately (Rowe et al., 2010). In addition, when the focus is on the individual perception of the social climate of the classroom, four principal elements emerge: peer relations; teacher–student relations; the way that individuals considers themselves in the academic field; and the way that they get satisfaction in the classroom (Doll, Spies, LeClair, Kurien, & Foley, 2010). Peer relations in the classroom are one of the most important elements (Hinshaw, 2001; Wentzel, 1998; Wentzel, Battle, Russell, & Looney, 2010). Nevertheless, the quality of the teacher–student relations influenced the academic and social improvement of the student at every age and socio economic state (Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Pianta, & Howes, 2002; Jerome, Hamre, & Pianta, 2009; Murray & Malmgren, 2005; Pianta, La Paro, Payne, Cox, & Bradley, 2002; Pianta, Nimetz, & Bennett, 1997; Pianta & Stuhman, 2004).

Another element of classroom climate—“academic competence”—concerns the perception of the students about their competence in class (Bandura, 1994). Despite the fact that this element can be a relevant and positive sign of academic success, it is in negative correlation with behavior problems in the classroom (Doll et al., 2010; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). “The satisfaction of being in the classroom” can be defined as “having pleasure of joining in class activities” (Fisher & Fraser, 1981; Finn, 1989).

Because of the diverse and multidimensional aspect of classroom climate, this research focuses on the in depth analysis of peer relations, which is only one of its elements. Peer relations is one of the most important components of classroom climate.

Many researchers emphasize the importance of the support between peers in the education processes (Hinshaw, 2001; Wentzel, 1998). It is observed that individuals who think that their classmates care about them get more immersed in activities at school (Wentzel et al., 2010). Conversely, for those who feel a lack of care and support from their peers, academic risk and behavior disorders are observed (Goodenow, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Wentzel, 1994). Classmates can also support each other by giving signs of information relating to their model for academic competence (Schunk, 1987). While analyzing the relationship between social structure and classroom climate, it is seen that this notion has utmost importance for students who are disadvantaged in terms of cognitive and affective input behaviors. There is a stronger possibility that these students will not be successful within the education system and will repeat a year or leave school at an early age (Milner, 2013). Bernstein (1977) also argues that the differences of speech patterns between individuals belonging to different social classes partly explain the variability of their success at school and in educational life. Whereas middle class children use a code of speech that is quite attentive and compatible with recognized linguistic patterns of the school, the codes of lower middle class children seem limited and this becomes a significant disadvantage at school. According to Bowles and Gintis (1976) the social class determines individuals' experience at school, to a large extent, in the same way as the conflicts in social relations in the society determine the social organization of school life. From this point of view, it is possible to state that the most remarkable period in which disadvantages due to social class can be observed is during secondary school and the following periods (Apple, 1990; Karabel & Halsey, 1977; Young & Whitty, 1977).

Some related research reveals that the students of vocational and technical schools in our country generally come from low socio-economic classes (Birtül, 2011; Esmer, 1979; Köse, 1990; Pakır, 2006; A. Yüksel & Yüksel, 2012). In addition to this, according to the research entitled "Problems of vocational and technical education-1" (2004) carried out by Kayır, Kılıç, Erdek, Dev, and Kocataş, the families of the students who go to vocational schools have relatively lower incomes. Creemers and Reezigt (1999) state that the factors, which condition learning outputs (cognitive and affective outputs), are related to the factors that determine classroom climate and they support each other. However, the fact that individuals with low academic success come together in a class effects the classroom climate in a negative way; and in a classroom with negative qualities, individuals have less potential for learning. This creates a viscous circle, in that the students become more and more unsuccessful.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) point out that different types of schools have distinct methods of imposing some codes of rules and behaviors to individuals. Whereas in the schools with children belonging to a low socio-economic level they are taught to follow the rules, in the schools with children in mid- or high socio-economic levels the

norms related to enterprise and innovation are promoted. In this research the purpose is to treat peer relations in two classrooms with positive and negative climates through hidden curriculum. Hidden curriculum is defined as “the values, attitudes and behaviors given to students systematically in spite of their absence in the curriculum” (Apple, 1990). Thus in this paper the focus is on the values, attitudes and behaviors that students gain systematically by their interaction in the classrooms of vocational schools, even if those are not mentioned in the curriculum. There are diverse classifications in different sources about the way that hidden curriculum can be explained. Some sources classify the approaches as functional and neo-Marxist approaches (Lynch, 1989). However, in some sources, neo-Marxist approach is further classified as Marxists approach, Anglo-social education approach, and critical approach (Margolis et al., 2001). Furthermore, other approaches treat the hidden curriculum through functionalist or neo-marxist approaches, reproduction theory and resistance theory (Yüksel, 2004).

Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to analyze peer relations through hidden curriculum in two different classrooms with negative and positive climates, in the city of Aydin. Within this purpose the answers to these questions should be sought:

1. How are the peer relations in the classroom with a positive climate in terms of hidden curriculum?
2. How are the peer relations in the classroom with a negative climate in terms of hidden curriculum?

The Importance and Limitations of the Research

Even if there is some research about classroom climate in our country (Aslan, 2011; Asrağ, 2009; Şendur, 1999), studies that apply qualitative methods are quite limited (Veznedaroğlu, 2007). There is no research focusing on the classroom climate for secondary schools or for vocational schools. One of the most problematic levels in our education system is the secondary school (Şişman & Taşdemir, 2008). After pre-secondary degree, it is possible to say that the most disadvantaged group is the vocational schools, both in terms of academic success and cultural capital. If education should be a medium that provides social justice by supporting social mobility, within this idea the most disadvantaged group should see the maximum benefit.

As the context in which cognitive and affective learning happens is the classroom climate, observing peer relations in vocational schools will provide information for understanding and improving the classroom climate in these schools.

Method

The Model of the Research

The process of collecting qualitative data can be considered as a case study. As the classrooms with positive and negative climates are observed, the classification can be done in multiple case patterns. As the lessons in these classes are analyzed in their totality, this research can be classified in the framework of a holistic multiple case pattern, among types of case patterns. In this pattern there is more than one holistic case and every case is treated separately in its whole and then compared with the others (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

Data Sources

Observed classrooms. The negative and positive classrooms that will be the center of the research were chosen with the help of the “Classroom climate perceived by students” tool. The first application form of the tool developed on the sample of vocational schools has four dimensions and 54 articles and was applied to all students (422) in ninth grade in four boys’ vocational schools in Aydin. The scale applied to 422 students comprised four dimensions and 54 items, including peer support (17 items), teacher’s support (20 items), satisfaction (11 items) and academic competence. As the main lines are the factor analysis and the relationship between the dimensions, the “direct oblimin” rotation method was preferred (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996) and 29 items were left. The forms of 29 items with similar scales were applied to 2229 students and the validity of similar scales was examined. As a result, the scale consisted of 29 items and four factors. It is observed that the dimension of peer support explains 31.46% of total variance, teacher support explains 10.73% of the total variance, satisfaction explains 4.79% and academic competence explains 1.47%. Whereas the reliability Cronbach’s Alpha of the dimensions are .903, .886, .860 and .787, respectively, their Guttman split half reliability is calculated as .90, .88, .66 and .70.

When the development of the scales was completed, the form with 29 items and the personal information questionnaire was applied to 400 students from 14 sections. The classrooms with positive and negative climates were defined after calculating the average of the answers given in all of the classrooms.

The answers to the tool “Classroom climate perceived by students scale” by students in the ninth grade were analyzed and the classrooms with the highest and lowest points were detected. The average points scored by different classes and their standard deviations are indicated on Table 1.

On Table 1, section F is shown as the class with the most positive climate, with average points of 77.66 and a standard deviation of 23.94. Whereas section M is the class with the most negative climate, with average points of 14.31 and a standard deviation of 14.31.

Table 1
Descriptive Data per Classroom according to the "Classroom Climate Perceived by Students Scale"

Section	X	Ss	N	Section	X	Ss	N	Section	X	Ss	N
A	64.50	21.73	30	F	77.66	23.94	28	L	70.32	17.43	33
B	62.57	16.14	26	G	67.61	14.29	23	M	57.77	14.31	22
C	63.60	14.30	30	H	62.00	12.18	31	N	62.75	19.22	30
D	60.28	22.04	34	I	70.58	12.23	27	O	72.39	14.33	27
E	68.33	18.65	28	K	71.29	21.70	31				

The classrooms with negative and positive climates are defined as a result of the final points of the scale. Thus section F is defined as the most positive climate, and section M as the most negative.

Interviewed people. Two weeks before the end of the semester, the school reports of the students were collected and their average points over the semester were calculated; three students with high, middle, and low scores were chosen for the interview. A total of 18 students were interviewed, nine from each of the two classrooms (positive climate and negative climate); i.e., the working groups were formed according to the criterion sampling (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). All the interviews were held with sound recordings, except one made with a student from the positive climate classroom. A teacher who takes four hours of lessons per week with each class was also interviewed. The data coming from this interview were mentioned in the chapter where the results of the observation of two classes are analyzed comparatively.

Data Collecting Tools

Unstructured Observation Forms. In this research, unstructured participative observation methods were used in order to gain in depth information. During the observations, the back rows of the classrooms were used and detailed notes were taken. The notes were typed on a computer after adding some explanations during the course of the day. In unstructured field works, the objective is to record details about the culture or sub-culture related to the subject. Field research is considered to be almost identical to cultural analysis (ethnography), which tries to define a culture deeply from the inside (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

On the observation form, the circumstances in the classroom were given in detail, including dialogue. During the observations, for the names of some well known

students, only the initials were used. To understand the dialogue, the students whose names are not known were defined by numbers. For the teachers, the letter T was used (Appx 1). For each observation, the “coded descriptive data index” (Appx 2) and information page (Appx 3) were prepared using the detailed observation forms.

Interview Forms. In quantitative research, it is possible to use mainly the interviews as well as combining them with the observations and other techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). In this research the interviews forms are used together with the observations.

Interviews provide empirical data about social lives of people through discussions about their experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 2002). They are used especially as the main data collecting tool for group researches, while analyzing their different qualities, particularly their cultural and symbolic aspects (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). According to Patton (1987 as cited in Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008), the objective of an interview is to understand the inner life of an individual and see their point of view. Since in this research the main point is the classroom climate, it is highly important to collect detailed information about the subjects’ lives; therefore, individual interviews were held with the students, as well as the interviews with teachers, to have varied data.

In semi-structured interviews “the interviewer is free to ask prepared questions related to the fields and subject of the study and also to ask additional questions in order to have detailed information” (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The type of interview chosen seems quite relevant if the climate perceived and experienced by the students can vary, and a flexible interview process facilitates the understanding of multiple aspects during the process of studying hidden curriculum.

During the development of the interview form for students, first of all, the dimensions of classroom climate and hidden curriculum in the literature were analyzed and the main elements were defined. In this period, open-ended questions and surveys were used to reveal the classroom climate perceived by the students, with the help of the observations held during the spring term of 2010–2011. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008) also point out that the surveys are important for that enriching the data collected during the interviews. The form was reviewed and restructured considering the observations held during the autumn term of 2011–2012. An interview form with open-ended questions and surveys was reorganized with the help of expert opinion. The form was tested on one student in both sections. The test of the data collecting tools is directly related to the validity and reliability of the study (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). The data collected during the interviews with students helped the creation of the final interview form.

During the development of interview forms for teachers, the literature was also analyzed at the beginning. The questions that help to collect in depth data and open-

ended questions were used in order to reveal the similarities and differences between two classrooms with positive and negative climates. The form was reviewed and restructured considering the observations held during autumn term of 2011–2012. The parallelism with students' interview forms were taken into consideration. The interview form for teachers was developed with open-ended and expandable questions, with the help of expert opinion. The form was tested on two teachers who have lessons for two hours or less with both sections. The data collected during the interviews with teachers helped the creation of the final interview form.

Data Collecting Process

The study includes the observations between 14 October 2011 and 5 October 2012. In total, 38 hours of observation was held in the positive climate classroom and 44 hours in the negative climate classroom. Five observation data analyses related to the negative climate classroom were removed from the analysis process, in order to obtain comparable data.

Analyzing and Interpreting Data

In this research, content analysis is used in the analysis of qualitative data. Before analysis, the data were typed into a document using MS Word after collecting the field notes taken and the information received from the teachers during the observation. The forms were rearranged in detail, considering every single hour of observation. All raw data sets are below.

Data set		Page
Observation notes	Related to the positive climate classroom	128
	Related to the negative climate classroom	145
Interview notes	Interviews with students from the positive climate classroom	81
	Interviews with students from the negative climate classroom	84
	Interview with teachers	5
Total		438

After this operation came the coding process, consisting of two phases. The first phase was the process of line by line lecture and description. In this phase, the collected data were analyzed and separated to relevant fragments, and every fragment was analyzed conceptually in order to find out their meaning. The researcher gave a name to each relevant fragment (codes them) (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). In this study, and particularly during the analysis of the observations, students' behaviors

and their influences were taken into account as the main units. Next was the focused selection, which helped with the synthesis, unification and organization of the wide data set of the most significant and repetitive main codes. After this phase the codes were correlated, interpreted, explained, and the causal relation was examined with the help of literature and direct citations. Then the categories were formed and frequency tables were developed in order to define which observations codes related to specific categories. For the interviews, similar phases were repeated. After creating two diagrams corresponding to the dynamics of two classes, a compared analysis was done of the relation layouts of two classes.

Studies of Validity and Reliability

In this study, the descriptions were introduced in detail and in relation to the context of the research. Visiting the schools during the term 2009–2010 ensured the basis of a relation of confidence with the teachers. In order to create a similar ambience with the students, some pilot observations were held in every classroom for one month; but these observations were not included in the study. By describing how different theoretical approaches explain the facts, the internal validity of the collected data was increased. External validity refers mainly to the fact that the results of the research may be generalized. The generalizability in qualitative research cannot be explained with the principles and rules like it can be in quantitative studies, but with experiences and examples. In the same way, instead of numerical generalization the question is analytic generalization (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). Every step of the study was described in detail. The role of the researcher during the study, data sources, the chosen school, the choice of classes and people to interview and the classrooms were described in detail. During the observation period, the notes of observations were shared with teachers during the breaks to get their feedback on the information to be verifies to increase the validity and reliability of the study. The researcher verified the reliability due to the period, two months later, by choosing five observations, two students' interviews and teachers' interviews randomly in two classes and by recoding them to see the coherence between the codes. For this calculation, the intercoder reliability formula of Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 64) was used. The intercoder reliability was calculated as .92 for the observations, .91 for the students' interviews, and .91 for the teachers' interviews. The reliability related to observation refers to the fact that more than one researcher measures a fact or a case in the same way at the same timeframe (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008). Within this purpose, a researcher and a field expert observed three lessons in the positive climate classroom and two lessons in the negative climate classroom (five lessons in total). The coherence of the notes of observation was controlled and brought together. However during the data analysis,

the researchers coded five observations and two interviews from both classrooms and calculated their intercoder reliability. The intercoder reliability was calculated as .88 for the observations, .86 for students' interviews and .90 for teachers' interviews. The best way to increase the internal reliability for a researcher is to define their role in detail; in the research report there is a chapter concentrating on the description of the role of the researcher. The individuals who are the data sources for the external reliability were also described in detail, and in depth descriptive statistics and examples about their social environment were explained.

The Role of the Researcher

The researcher tried to define the classroom climate in vocational schools during her observations in the periods 2009–2010, 2010–2011, and 2011–2012. Within this period she made informal interviews with the teachers, principals, and supervisors in four vocational schools in the city of Aydin. In the period of interpretation of these interviews followed by the main research, she reviewed the existing literature in detail. The researcher is experienced in quantitative research methods.

In quantitative research, the main point is the process of human interpretation. That is why the reality cannot be considered independently of the individual who creates it. In this context how the researcher positions herself/himself is very important. For this specific study, it is an important point that the researcher describes herself as someone from a mid socio-cultural class. As an example, in some observations the researcher may qualify some students' manners of address to each other as rude or harsh whereas the interviews with the students do not reveal it or the students are basically not disturbed by it. This situation may occur because of the researcher's lack of understanding of the cultural values of the students. Thus, this study gives place to the way the students evaluate the situations that are observed during the interviews, through the agency of the data collected.

In addition to this, the researcher has a year of experience in teaching, so knows about how the teachers try to teach, and in which circumstances, in an overloaded program. During the observations, it is considered that the negative experiences repeated in every lesson between teachers and students, which may relatively be linked to the personality of the teacher, is not only the result of "teacher's competence" but also a result of the education system and of the classroom climate.

Findings

Findings Related to the First Sub-Problem

According to the findings of the content analysis of 38 observations, after examining the hidden curriculum due to the peer relations in the ninth grade in a classroom of a vocational school with a positive climate, the categories of positive and negative behaviors, their frequencies and slots of observation are listed on Table 3.

Table 3

*Positive and Negative Behaviors related to the Peer Relations, Their Frequencies and Slots, Provided by the Observations in the Positive Classroom**

Negative		Positive	
Behavior	f	Behavior	f
Complaints about each other	46	Students warning each other to be silent	15
	OFC 2 (2 times), OFC 3, OFC 4 (2 times), OFC 5, OFC 7, OFC 8 (2 times), OFC 9 (2 times), OFC 10 (2 times), OFC 11, OFC 12 (4 times), OFC 16, OFC 17, OFC 18 (2 times), OFC 19 (3 times), OFC 20 (3 times), OFC 21, OFC 22, OFC 23 (2 times), OFC 24, OFC 27, OFC 31, OFC 33, OFC 34, OFC 35, OFC 36, OFC 37 (5 times), OFC 38 (2 times)	OFC2, OFC7 (2 times), OFC11 (4 times) OFC14, OFC23 OFC27 (2 times), OFC32 (2 times) OFC33 (2 times)	
Yelling and/or chatting about other things during the lesson	30	Defending classmates	6
	OFC 2, OFC 4, OFC 5, OFC 10 (4 times), OFC 11, OFC 14, OFC 15 (2 times), OFC 16, OFC 18, OFC 19 OFC 20, OFC 27, OFC 29 (2 times) OFC 30 (2 times),OFC 31, OFC 32, OFC 33 (4 times),OFC 35 (2 times) OFC 38 (2 times)	OFC1, OFC15 (2 times), OFC22, OFC26 (2 times)	
Addressing each other in a rude and harsh way	15	Intervening against a negative behavior of the other	4
	OFC 2 (3 times), OFC 4, OFC 7, OFC 8, OFC 10, OFC 12 (2 times), OFC 17, OFC 33 (2 times),OFC 34 (3 times)	OFC3, OFC13, OFC16, OFC21	
Insulting	15	Sharing school materials	4
	OFC 2 (2 times), OFC 3, OFC 8, OFC 9 (2 times), OFC 13, OFC 14, OFC 19, OFC 20 (2 times), OFC 24, OFC 29, OFC 37, OFC 38	OFC15, OFC26, OFC34, OFC38,	
Squealing	15		
	OFC2 (2 times), OFC3, OFC12,OFC15 (3 times), OFC20, OFC22, OFC24 (2 times), OFC26 (2times), OFC37, OFC38		
Physical intervention	11		
	OFC2, OFC7 (2 times), OFC18, OFC32 (2 times), OFC33 (2 times), OFC35 (2 times), OFC38		
Menacing	6		
	OFC5, OFC9, OFC13, OFC15, OFC29,OFC35		
Scolding	6		
	OFC16, OFC19 (2 times), OFC20 (2 times), OFC27		

*OFC#: Coded as "Observation," section "F," "Case" (slot) "1, 2, 3..."

When the peer relations in two positive climate classrooms were examined, the behaviors observed were as follows. Negative behaviors: complaints about each other ($f = 46$), yelling and/or chatting about other things during the lesson ($f = 30$), addressing each other in a rude and harsh way ($f = 15$), insulting ($f = 15$), squealing ($f = 15$), physical intervention ($f = 11$), menacing each other ($f = 6$) and scolding ($f = 6$). Positive behaviors: warning each other to be silent ($f = 15$), defending classmates ($f = 6$), intervening against a negative behavior of the other ($f = 4$), and sharing school materials ($f = 4$).

Within an overall analysis, the codes under the negative behavior category draw attention with more frequency and more category compared with the codes under the category of positive behavior.

Explaining different codes through case examples can provide a better understanding of the behavior. During the presentation of the findings related to the codes found after the observations, the results of interviews about the codes were also mentioned.

Negative Behaviors Observed in Peer Relations in the Positive Climate Classroom

When the behavior of “complaint” is questioned, it is observed that the students have a tendency to complain about their classmates, whose behavior has already received a warning from the teacher.

I: Ma’am/Sir, she/he doesn’t stop pushing my desk.

Ç...: Ma’am/Sir, the desk is crooked.

T Ç...: Can you get up, my friend?

T: Why do you push your friend’s desk? Ç...: To fix it. It is crooked.

T: Ok. Do not push your friend’s desk. (OFC23, p.1; lines: 2–7)

When the findings about the “complaint” are interpreted, it is observed that complaining about one another in the classroom for any reason happens frequently. Interviews and the observations reveal that the most disturbing part of the complaints is that they are targeted on certain students. This subject is treated under the title “oppression against certain students.”

One of the most frequent behaviors in the classroom is that the students yell at each other during the lesson and chat about irrelevant things. When their ideas about yelling and talking about other things during the lesson are observed, it is seen that they think that their friends speak a lot during the lessons:

Those who speak during the lesson ... You were there too; they speak in the classroom. They say things to the teacher. That is how the lesson is disrupted. There you go. There is nothing to do. (Ahmet, high success group, 19.01.2012, p.13; lines: 227–229)

The observation data reveal that the students' yelling and chatting about other things during the lesson is a highly frequently ($f = 30$). In the meantime, it is observed that this situation is evoked in the interviews mainly by the students from high or middle success group. Those who talk about this in the interviews generally described the situation with reference to their classmates.

Another code found during the observations is about the use of a rude and harsh language by the students while addressing, or sometimes yelling at, each other:

R...: A.! Shut up, man! You make me speak.

A...: Shut up, man!

R...: It is because of you that I speak!

A...: pushes the desk in front of him.

The student sitting on the desk in front of him: Don't do it, man! (OFC2, p.1; lines: 10–14)

However, it is observed that in the interviews the students do not talk about this at all, so it is possible to assume that the use of rude and harsh language does not upset them.

One of the most frequent situations observed is that the students use offensive expressions against each other. Here are some examples, observed in the classroom:

A...: changes her/his seat.

R...: Ma'am/Sir, she/he cannot sit, like a cripple. (OFC2, p.2; lines: 21–22)

The observations reveal that the students address each other with offensive expressions and insults, sometimes by humiliating each other. Related codes are also detected during the interviews. According to the findings of the interviews, the students are annoyed by the offensive way of speaking or by insults from their classmates. Some extracts from the interviews are noted below:

What do You Like and Dislike about Your Class?

Well, they are ribald. They insult. I am friends with some of them. The others have nothing to do with school. (Ali, the positive climate classroom, high success group, 16.01.2012, p.2; lines: 28–30).

During the interviews, whereas a student from the high success group affirmed that it is rare to see someone blaming or squealing on the others, three others responded the opposite way. An example is given below:

For example when someone reveals a secret of the other, then they squeal her/him.

In which topics, for example?

For example when it is about a girl, or cheating in an exam. (Ahmet, the positive climate classroom, 19.01.2012, pp.14–15; lines: 265–267)

While observing the peer relations, one of the most frequent cases is the physical intervention against each other. These interventions, which are sometimes a part of the jokes between them, can end up with pushing and harming each other. One of these interventions is noted below:

6 to Ç...: Dude, you give me headache. Shut up, dude!

7 stands up talking to the student sitting on the first row.

6 comes closer to Ç... and D... She/He punches the others' head.

8 punches the 6's back. (OFC33, pp.3–4; line: 80–84)

One of the negative behaviors about the peer relations is still related to physical intervention, but is limited to “threatening the other by using physical force.” Even if the interviews reveal the physical force that the students use against each other, there is no menacing attitude found. However this can be related to the fact that instead of threatening each other by physical force, they may have really used this force against each other. It is possible to admit that they threaten each other by physical force.

When it comes to an overall evaluation of the observations held in the positive climate classroom, it is seen that the students scold each other from time to time.

Positive behaviors observed about the peer relations in the positive climate classroom. In the positive climate classroom, among the behaviors of the students under the positive category it is possible to list their warning each other as silence, defending their classmates, joking and laughing, intervening against a negative behavior of their classmates, and sharing school materials. Some below-mentioned examples can provide a better understanding of these codes. For example, here is one of the examples about the students' way of warning each other to be silent:

The classroom is noisy.

11: Keep quiet please! I cannot hear anything!

T hits the desk with the rubber. (OFC13, p. 3; lines: 60–62)

One of the positive behaviors observed in the positive climate classroom is the way that the students defend each other. During an interview, one of the students explained the solidarity between his classmates:

Yes, Everyone respects each other. Even if they do not like each other, they respect. In some people's classes, the people do not respect each other. Everyone is very distant. In our classroom, it is relatively good. Everyone is friends with each other. Everyone speaks to each other. In other classrooms there is no such thing. In ours, at least people are respectful. (Tahir, positive climate classroom, low success group, pp. 59–60; lines: 1130–1135).

Another positive behavior observed in the positive classroom is the way that the students intervene against negative behaviors of each other. In addition to that there is a positive behavior, which is sharing school materials. One of the examples of this situation is below:

Ç... is standing, T asks Ç...: What are you searching for?

Ç...: Pen-nib, 0.7.

K...: I have it, come and take! (OFC38, p.3; lines: 62–64)

Besides, the interviews reveal that they do not only share school materials, but also information about the content of the lesson:

We are a group of three. Sometimes we discuss, we compete. We compete especially in Maths, trying to find out who will solve the problem first. Well... (Ali, positive climate classroom, high success group, p. 3; lines: 48–50)

The context about peer relations in the positive climate classroom. Within the period of the research of hidden curriculum due to peer relations, first of all the behaviors were categorized as positive or negative. But there are some behaviors repeated quite often in the classroom that are impossible to classify as positive or negative. In this case, the situations that are impossible to classify were described as “the context of the classroom”; the frequency of the data linked to the context was not considered; nevertheless many examples were given to explain the situation.

Oppression against certain students. An important situation revealed thanks to the interviews and verified by some observations is the existence of oppression against certain students and the fact that the other students neglect this situation and do not protect them. It is observed that most of the time the students who are subjected to oppression are reported to the teacher by their classmates. The observations also indicate the use of insulting and humiliating expressions towards the ones who are subjected to oppression:

2–3 calls out to A (from 2–3 meters away): A...! I have a question for you. But tell me the truth.

A...: What is it?

2–3: Are you an inbred child?” 2–3 laughs.

A... turns back, huffing. (OFC14, p. 2; lines: 34–38)

Findings related to the Second Sub-Problem

Hidden curriculum due to the peer relations in the negative climate classroom. According to the findings of content analysis after 38 observations in total, and through the analysis of the hidden curriculum due to the peer relations in the classroom of ninth grade in the vocational school, the categories of positive and negative behaviors, their frequency and slots of observation are indicated in Table 4.

Table 4

*Positive and Negative Behaviors related to the Peer Relations, their Frequencies and Slots, Provided by the Observations in the Negative Classroom**

Negative		Positive	
Behavior	<i>f</i>	Behavior	<i>f</i>
Complaints about each other	51	Students warning each other to be silent	5
		OMC1, OMC12, OMC14, OMC20, OMC21	
		Slot of observation	
		OMC 2, OMC 3, OMC 9, OMC 11 (4 times), OMC 15 (5 times), OMC 20 (6 times), OMC 21 (4 times), OMC 26, OMC 29, OMC 30, OMC 33 (8 times), OMC 34 (4 times), OMC 35 (2 times), OMC 36, OMC 37, OMC 41 (3 times), OMC 42 (7 times)	
Physical intervention	26	Intervening against a negative behavior of the other	3
		OMC1, OMC11, OMC33	
		Slot of observation	
		OMC 3, OMC 11, OMC 12 (2 times), OMC 20, OMC 23 (2 times), OMC 26, OMC 31, OMC 33 (4 times), OMC 34 (4 times), OMC 35 (2 times), OMC 41 (3 times), OMC 42 (2 times), OMC 44 (2 times)	
Insulting	12		
		Slot of observation	
		OMC 1, OMC 8, OMC 15, OMC 20, OMC 21 (2 times), OMC 28, OMC 30 (2 times), OMC 40, OMC 42 (2 times)	
Menacing	10		
		Slot of observation	
		OMC 21 (2 times), OMC 23, OMC 28, OMC 33 (3 times), OMC 34, OMC 40 (2 times)	
Disrespectful speech	8		
		Slot of observation	
		OMC 3, OMC 5, OMC 17, OMC 20 (2 times), OMC 21 (2 times), OMC 33	
Humiliation	7		
		Slot of observation	
		OMC 1, OMC 8, OMC 11, OMC 15, OMC 17, OMC 23, OMC 28	

*OFC#: Coded as "Observation," section "M," "Case" (slot) "1, 2, 3..."

When the peer relations in the negative climate classroom are examined, as they appear on Table 4, the behaviors are as follows. Negative behaviors: complaints about each other ($f = 51$), physical intervention ($f = 26$), menacing ($f = 10$), disrespectful speech ($f = 8$) and humiliation ($f = 7$). Positive behaviors: warning each other to be silent ($f = 5$) and intervening against a negative behavior of the other. Within a general analysis, the codes under the negative behavior category total more than those under the positive category, both in terms of quantity and frequency. In addition to this, there are very few behaviors with low frequency under the positive behavior category.

Negative behaviors observed about the peer relations in the negative climate classroom from the ninth grade of the vocational school. Giving examples of different types of behaviors can provide a better understanding of the behavior observed. During the presentation of the codes and categories obtained from the observations, findings of the interviews were also considered. One of the frequent situations observed in the negative climate classroom is the students' complaints about each other. Here is an example:

A wooden cupboard of the classroom was broken last week.

T: Come on, tell me who broke it!

3: K... broke it!

K...: Ma'am/Sir, they pushed me there.

T: Who pushed you?

T: Well, anyways. A... during the break: Go on, you will tell the teacher who pushed you. (OFC 15, p.1; lines: 12–18)

During the interviews about the complaints regarding the sources of the noise in the classroom, some of the students explained their opinion:

They chat during the lesson. They don't take notes and they don't do what the teacher tells them to do.

Does no one warn them?

They don't listen anyways. (Burak, negative climate classroom, high success group, 17.01.2012, p. 4; lines: 67–69)

In the negative climate classroom, one of the most frequent behaviors is students' physical interventions of each other. In general these interventions can be diverse: from pushing each other to throwing materials at each other. The interviews reveal that except one, all the students qualify this physical intervention as "annoying."

Another behavior observed in the negative climate classroom is using insulting words to each other ($f=12$). Here are some examples of the insults in the classroom:

A student brings chalk to the classroom.

U...: You idiot dude. Do you have just one chalk to bring? (OFC 1, p.3; lines: 57–58)

When the interviews are analyzed, it is possible to say that in the negative climate classroom when the students receive insults they reply with insults, which affects the classroom climate negatively. In this classroom, the students often use insulting and humiliating language and this situation sometimes escalates. Another negative situation observed in the negative climate classroom is related to students' aggression against each other ($f=10$):

M... to K...: Dude, I will beat you, you little guy. Don't butt into all.

K... stands up and comes closer to M... (OFC 21, p. 2; lines: 30–32)

When the negative climate classroom is analyzed, it is observed in general that the students use aggressive language related to physical intervention, although they do not discuss being worried about this issue during the interviews.

There is another negative behavior observed in the negative climate classroom, regarding their use of disrespectful speech towards each other ($f=8$). Within an overall interpretation, it is possible to say that the students sometimes use a disrespectful speech to each other even though they do not mention it during the interviews. In the same classroom, it is observed that the students use humiliating words during their conversations. Here are some examples:

1 says, sitting: She/he gave me 3. (mentioning oral exam mark)

H... imitates 1, saying: She/he gave me threeee!

H...: Idiot, with all her/his efforts, she/he got 3.

1: You, you will get maximum 1! (OFC 27, p.1; lines: 11–14)

Positive behaviors observed in the peer relations of the negative climate classroom. The number and the frequency of the positive behaviors observed in the negative climate classroom are quite limited. Therefore, some extracts of the interviews are introduced, in order to represent the positive behaviors and to give a voice to the positive opinions of the students about their relations with their classmates. For example, Fatih explains how his classmates motivate each other to study:

It is positive. One who studies well, makes her/his close friends study too. When one doesn't achieve the other helps. That is how they do. (Fatih, negative climate classroom, high success group, 17.01.2012, p. 19; lines: 355–356)

Onur explains how his classmates help him when he is in need:

Some of my friends... Well they did something positive. They helped me. With friends. We didn't speak. But they helped me. (Onur, negative climate classroom, middle success group, 19.01.2012, p. 57; lines: 1116–1118)

Regarding the reaction of the teacher and the students about the noise in the classroom, here is what Devrim say:

Frankly, I don't know how it works in the other classes, but our classmates are kind. Sometime there is some chat but they are kind. (Devrim, negative climate classroom, low success group, 17.01.2012, p. 79; lines: 1524–1525)

Discussion

The behaviors and their frequency in the peer relations of both classrooms, positive and negative, are indicated on Table 5.

Table 5

The Behaviors and their Frequency in the Peer Relations of both Classrooms, with Positive and Negative Climate

Behavior	Negative Behaviors		Positive Behaviors		
	Positive climate classroom (f)	Negative climate classroom (f)	Behavior	Positive climate classroom (f)	Negative climate classroom (f)
Complaints about each other	47	51	Warning each other to be silent	14	5
Yelling/chatting about other things during the lesson	30	-	Defending classmates	6	-
Addressing each other in a rude and harsh way	15	8	Intervening against a negative behavior of the other	4	3
Insulting	15	12	Sharing school materials	4	-
Squealing	14	-			
Physical intervention	11	27			
Menacing	6	10			
Scolding	6	-			
Humiliating	-	7			

When Table 5 is analyzed, it is possible to see that the behaviors “complaints,” “physical intervention” and “aggression” are more frequent in the negative climate classroom than in the positive climate classroom while the behavior of “humiliating” that does not exist in the positive classroom appears in the negative one. As to the behaviors “squealing” and “scolding,” they appear in the positive classroom whereas they do not exist in the negative one. Among positive behaviors, “defending classmates” and “sharing school materials” are not present in the negative classroom. On the other hand, the frequency of “noise” is relatively low in the negative climate classroom. In addition, the interaction of the students is quite rare, in terms of positive or negative behaviors, their diversity and frequency.

When “respect” and “trust” are taken into consideration, in relation to the cultural values of middle and high social classes, the students in the positive climate classroom seem to be in a “negative” environment, though are not disturbed by this situation. This case should be interpreted very carefully.

Discussion of Findings through Hidden Curriculum Theories

McLaren's publication "Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical pedagogy in the foundations of Education" (2011) treats a similar subject. A long time after publishing his research journals about his five years of observations as a teacher in a primary school described as coming from a low socio-economic class, McLaren evaluates his own book (McLaren, 2011, p. xix):

Consequently, I ran the risk of allowing readers to reinforce their stereotypes of what schooling was like in the "blackboard jungle" and what constituted the behavior of economically disadvantaged students. I also was in danger of portraying impoverished communities as crucibles of violence and hatred, devoid of humanity and dignity.

McLaren's proposal (McLaren, 2011, p. xix) of how to prevent this situation is related to the description of ideological and theoretical contexts in which the observations are held:

Every description is ideologically loaded, semiotically classified, codified and intertextually related to larger interpretive contexts. Nothing that can be observed or named is ideologically neutral. No thoughts, ideas or theories are transparent, autonomous, and clear. Ideas are always and necessarily tied to particular interests.

During the process of interpretation, the frameworks of "cultural reproduction," "resistance," and "functionalist" theories can be used. According to cultural reproduction theoreticians, school activities are organized according to the cultural standards of the dominant (ruling) groups (Yüksel, 2004, p. 28). School, which has a place in the symbolical reproduction of this culture, gains a certain "relative autonomy" compared with other institutions, through classification, segregation, and evaluation processes (van Zanten, 2005). In the Turkish Educational System, the impact of this process of classification is visible in the system of Transition to Secondary Schools. Via this system, the students are placed in different types of schools according to their academic success and that is how educational orientation takes place. However, from the point of view of cultural reproduction theoreticians, it is possible to point out the disadvantage in terms of cultural capital, for the students who continue their studies in vocational and general high schools.

Bernstein and Bourdieu remark that certain codes of language and cultural competence are dictated to students via different lives of education and thus a ruling class is reproduced culture at school (Yüksel, 2004, p. 31). The autonomy of the school system masks the relationship between the social structure and the expectation of students about education, as well as the language used, words chosen and behavior patterns (van Zanten, 2005). This can explain the reason why many behaviors that reflect low socio-economic levels appear in the classroom perceived as "positive" by

the students. In other words, the students feel that they belong to this classroom—they are glad to be there. However when the peer relations are observed, they seem not to be disturbed by the moments when they use language considered “rude” or “unacceptable” towards each other. This situation can be linked to the fact that they represent a “low” socio-economic level of culture; in this case, it may be important to strengthen the democratic consciousness of the students.

The viewpoint of the functionalists about the issue is that there is a normal distribution in society concerning every subject. Within this distribution, when the individuals in certain divided areas go to similar schools they have more chance to have a functional education in compliance with social needs. According to functionalism, in this case the group who is disadvantaged in terms of cultural values has the opportunity to have a better education, which provides their social function. As a result, helping the students gain behaviors such as “obeying the rules,” “punctuality” or “studying in silence” can facilitate their rapport with the society. Conversely, criticisms of the cultural reproduction theory are about the way that social needs are defined according to the high and middle social classes and that it is their values that are promoted. Consequently the school system serves the benefits of the high and middle social classes and this is a process of the legitimate school system (van Zanten, 2005).

As to the theoreticians who defend the “resistance” theory, they agree with reproduction theories in many ways, while stating that the students are not passive receivers of the cultural values learnt at school and they resist this cultural transmission period in various ways. Willis, an important name among these theoreticians, observed in his ethnographic research (Willis, 1981) that male working class students resist both official and hidden curriculums at school. These students who do not have much hope for the future make fun of and fight the other students (Willis, 1981). Again, in a study on students from the same school, Everhart (1983 as cited in Yuksel, 2004) explains that the students perceive the activities of school as operations of alienation. The situation can be similar for both classrooms with positive and negative climates.

Ogbu and Fordham (Fordham, 1996; Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 1991, 2003) explained the students’ resistance at school through “cultural opposition theory.” Ogbu interpreted the cultural opposition theory via immigrants in the multicultural context of the United States of America. In his opinion, minorities are divided in two groups: those who voluntarily migrated to the USA (such as Vietnamese and Irish people) and those who were forced to (for example Afro Americans). The groups who migrated of their own will had positive beliefs about ruling social values and were willing to adapt their attitudes and behaviors into the ruling group. Whereas the groups who came by force had a negative attitude towards ruling values in society. The group that migrated voluntarily had more positive attitudes towards school,

teachers, and curriculums. For example, families coming from Asia and China were more likely to undertake the responsibility of school failure. In addition to this, in the groups forced to come to the USA “the norm of minimum effort” takes place and this norm is reinforced. The effort of a black student for the lessons is defined as “acting like white people” by the other student; just as speaking English correctly is considered to be “speaking like white people.” Even if the situation in the school subject in this study does not have an ethnic aspect like in the USA, there are some similarities in the way of accepting or resisting the values the school tries to impose. While resistance against school rules was not observed in the negative climate classroom, “minimum effort norm” was frequently observed and it was reinforced in the positive climate classroom.

Discussion of Findings through the Research

When the classrooms with positive and negative climates are compared, some significant differences are seen. For example, in the positive climate classroom, “noise” was an important factor in the environment of the classroom. Among reasons for the noise were “complaints” ($f = 47$) and “yelling and chatting about other things during the lesson” ($f = 30$); and the effect of the noise was “warning each other to be silent” ($f = 14$) and the warning of teachers were observed quite often. The act of changing places regularly for any reason and uncertainty of the lesson rules were mentioned.

In the negative climate classroom the “noise” was less frequent, the interaction between the students was very limited, as well as the variety and frequency of negative and positive behaviors. The perception of being supported by classmates does not only influence academic processes in a positive way (Hinshaw, 2001; Wentzel, 1998) but also has a good effect on the individual’s feeling of connection with school (Wentzel et al., 2010). Conversely, some researchers (Goodenow, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Wentzel, 1994) show that the school life of the students is badly affected when they think that their peer relations do not include support and care. When it is considered that during adolescence the individuals pass a period of “identity versus role confusion” and they are highly influenced by their peers (Senemoğlu, 2009), it is possible to comprehend to what extent the lack of interaction in the classroom affects them. Researchers of social support for adolescents show the importance of peer support even in over family and teacher support during this period (Bokhorst, Sumter, & Westenberg, 2010; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). From this point of view, it is clear that the interaction and support between students are not enough in the negative climate classroom.

Findings of this research have some parallels with the study of Saçar (2007) in terms of students' behaviors, which focuses on peer relations in elementary schools. According to Saçar there is no significant difference between the students' retaining or expressing their anger and their loyalty in friendships. Another finding based on his observations states that the students find friends whatever level of anger they have and they choose friends who have equivalent levels of anger. In this study it is observed that students in the positive climate classroom show some behaviors related to anger, such as physical interventions, aggression and insults, but this does not prevent them from perceiving their peer relations as "positive." Conversely, there is a certain bias against some students in the positive climate classroom. However the other students explained that they do not share their feelings of discomfort with any teacher or administrator. One of the students who repeated a year and who was subject to oppression from his peers expressed his contentment about his class by considering it as "better than the one he had a year before." When it is considered that the experience of oppression is not reported to any teacher or administrator, either by victims or by witnesses, there is a necessity of action to promote conversation in the classes and schools.

This study is limited to peer relations, which are considered to influence classroom climate. Nonetheless, research about teacher–student relations, students' perception of academic competence and satisfaction, all of which have an impact on the peer relations, can contribute to a better understanding of the classroom climate.

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