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Classroom discipline and student responsibility: the students' view

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Abstract

There is, internationally, increasing interest in the quality of children's character. This paper examines, in 21 elementary and 21 secondary schools, the role of classroom discipline in promoting student responsibility for the protection of learning and safety rights in the classroom. The results indicate that teachers are seen by students to react to classroom misbehavior by increasing their use of coercive discipline, which inhibits the development of responsibility in students and distracts them from their schoolwork. Unfortunately, teachers fail to increase their use of more productive techniques, such as discussions, rewards for good behavior and involvement in decision-making. Implications of these findings are discussed. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

The quality of children's pro-social behavior is fast becoming acknowledged as a central objective of schooling that is not being adequately addressed (Ryan & Bonlin, 1999; Kohn, 1998; Houston, 1998; Bennett, 1998). One expression of this concern is the discussion in various countries of the need for schools to produce more responsible citizens (Kennedy, 1996; Anderson, Avery, Pederson, Smith, & Sullivan, 1997; Bickmore, 1997; Osborne, 1995; Pearl & Knight, 1998). A number of causes have been cited for what is perceived as an increasing lack of civility of many young people. These

include the breakdown of the nuclear family and community norms, young people's increasing access to technology leading them to find school boring, increased retention at schools of students who once would have left to find employment, and reduced resources in schools (Lewis, 1997a). The manifestations of antisocial behavior appear to range from increasing student violence (Kauffman & Burbach, 1997) to research which indicates that even students report that there are too many disruptions in classrooms (Benninga & Wynne, 1998). According to Lickona (1996) there is a crisis in character, the indicators of which include increases in youth violence, dishonesty, disrespect for traditional authority figures, cruelty to peers, bigotry and hate crime, self destructive behavior and a loss of work ethic. He also cites as a reason for concern decreases in the personal and civic responsibility of youth.

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Recently, in a bid to explore what virtues and values underlie socially acceptable behavior, and how they can be learned in schools, *Phi Delta Kappan* devoted almost an entire edition to the issue of Character Education (Vol. 79, No. 6, 1998). Similarly, the editors of *School Administration* chose Character Education as their theme for Vol. 55, No. 5 (1998) because of its relevance to the preservation of democracy through public schooling. In general, there appear to be two distinguishable aspects to the concern about social behavior. One focuses on providing children with appropriate morals and values (Narvaez, Bentley, Gleason, & Samuels, 1998; Glanzer, 1998; Siebold, 1998; Fisher, 1998) while the other considers the political relevance of the behavior (McDonnell, 1998; Barber, 1998; Bennett, 1980). In Australia, both aspects were considered by Ainley, Batten, Collins, and Withers (1998) who conducted a national study of the objectives of social education. In their report they cite student characteristics such as optimism, self-confidence, respect for others and desire for personal excellence as critical to the outcomes of schooling.

This paper reports on a facet of social behavior that appears central to all definitions, and that is taking responsibility for the protection of human rights in the classroom. In investigating how student social behavior is influenced by schooling it reports the relationship between various aspects of classroom discipline and the extent to which students report a willingness to exercise their own learning rights and protect the learning, and physical and emotional safety rights of others. In particular, the role of classroom discipline in promoting student responsibility is examined.

A number of recent innovations in school discipline appear to be aimed at increasing students' sense of responsibility, but go about it in conflicting ways. For example, some educationalists argue that in order to promote responsibility in children, teachers need to develop clear expectations for student behavior and then judiciously apply a range of rewards and recognitions for good behavior and punishments for misbehavior (Canter & Canter, 1992; Swinson & Melling, 1995; McCaslin & Good, 1992). Others

argue that the same aim can only be attained by emphasising less student obedience and teacher coercion, and more use of techniques such as negotiating, discussing, group participation and contracting (for example, Freiberg, 1996; Schneider, 1996; Kohn, 1996; Pearl & Knight, 1998).

Very few studies have systematically evaluated the effectiveness of alternative styles of discipline. Probably one of the best evaluations has been contributed by Emmer and Aussiker (1990), who conducted a meta-analysis and reported the effects of three types of discipline packages on students' school-related attitudes and behavior. These three styles, proposed by Gordon (1974), Glasser (1969) and Canter and Canter (1992) have been recently characterized as models of Influence, Group Management and Control respectively (Lewis, 1997b).

The model of teacher Influence consists of the use of techniques such as listening to and clarifying the student's perspective, telling students about the impact their misbehavior has on others, confronting their irrational justifications, and negotiating for any problem behavior a one to one solution that satisfies the needs of both the teacher and the individual student.

Techniques relevant to the model of Group Management are class meetings at which students and the teacher debate and determine classroom management policy, the use of questions by the teacher such as "What are you doing?" (and other forms of reality tests), the application of class determined teacher responses to unacceptable student behavior, and finally the use of a non-punitive space where children can go to plan for a better future.

The model of Control consists of clear rules, a range of rewards and recognitions for appropriate behavior and a hierarchy of increasingly severe punishments for inappropriate behavior. The evaluation by Emmer and Aussiker reports that although there is some evidence for the impact of these models on teachers' attitudes and beliefs, any impact on teachers' or students' behavior was generally inconclusive.

The inability of discipline packages to bring about a change in student behavior is also noted by

Hart, Wearing and Conn (1995), who evaluated the impact of a one and a quarter million dollar staff development program in Australia, called the Whole School Program — Discipline. Their evaluation involved the collection of longitudinal data from over 4000 teachers in 86 schools. Hart et al., conclude that

... although it is generally believed that schools' discipline policies and procedures will influence student misbehavior ... a series of structural equation models based on large samples of teachers failed to support this view. (p. 44)

To further substantiate this contention, they also report that over the 12 month period that schools were involved in the intervention there was significant improvement in their discipline policies but no corresponding change in the mean level of student on-task behavior.

The impression that packages do not systematically affect students is contradicted, however, by some recent studies. Interestingly, reports cite the benefit of conflicting models. For example Freiberg, Stein, and Huang (1995) note the effect of a cooperative 'Consistency Management Program' in an inner-city elementary school. This program is one within which self-regulation is central. They report a significant change in teachers' behavior, students' perceptions of classroom climate and students' motivation and achievement one year after the program was implemented. In contrast, the benefits of an assertive approach emphasising the use of rewards and punishments to modify students' inappropriate behavior are reported by Swinson and Melling (1995).

Although most evaluations of the impact of different discipline styles or techniques have used as their criteria the amount of order in the classroom, the students' academic achievement, time on task, amount of lesson content covered, students' attitude toward their learning environment, or some combination of these, this study will report the effect of discipline on the level of student responsibility. In doing so, it joins the few pieces of research conducted into teachers' classroom discipline which have utilised the views of the target of such techniques, namely the students.

2. Methodology

2.1. Sample

In order to investigate what kinds of discipline styles promote greater levels of responsibility in students, the regional office contacted all 30 secondary schools and the 48 primary schools with over 18 students in grade 6 in the Northeastern Region of Victoria. They requested volunteer schools for a study that aimed to investigate levels of student responsibility and that would attempt to relate this to students' perceptions of classroom management. The 21 primary schools and 21 secondary schools from the NE region of Victoria which provided data for this investigation were the volunteers. Consequently the response rate for schools was 70% for secondary schools and 44% for eligible primary schools. It is not possible to conclude whether a willingness to participate stems from concern with the issues that form the focus of this investigation, however, the greater interest from secondary schools is consistent with the greater concern about issues of discipline at this school level.

2.2. Instrumentation

From within these schools, all students at the grade levels 6, 7, 9 and 11 completed a questionnaire documenting firstly their perception of the extent to which their teacher utilises each of a range of discipline strategies. To enable a sample of teachers to be described without identifying any individual by name, questionnaires for secondary students specified one of six subject areas taught (e.g. English, Humanities, Mathematics). Students were then requested to concentrate on one class in that subject area and the teacher who teaches it when completing the questionnaire. Primary students were asked to focus on 'your main teacher this year'.

Although, as explained above, it is common to conceptualize teachers' classroom discipline behavior in terms of the three styles of Influence, Group Management and Control outlined above (Lewis, 1997b), to assess teachers' discipline techniques, students indicated the extent to which their

teachers used each of the following six discipline strategies:

1. Hints and non-directional descriptions of unacceptable behavior (e.g. Describes what students are doing wrong, and expects them to stop).
2. Talking with students to discuss the impact of their behavior on others (e.g. Gets students to change the way they behave by helping them understand how their behavior affects others).
3. Involving students in classroom discipline decision-making (e.g. Organises the class to work out the rules for good behavior).
4. Recognising the appropriate behavior of individual students or the class (e.g. Rewards individual students who behave properly).
5. Punishing students who misbehave and increasing the level of punishment if resistance is met (e.g. Increases the level of punishment if a misbehaving student stops when told, but then does it again).
6. Aggressive techniques (e.g. Yells angrily at students who misbehave).

Six strategies rather than 3 styles were assessed because it was thought that, in practice, teachers may not necessarily act in accordance with theory. Whatever their patterns of classroom discipline, it would be possible to characterize them by combining strategies into styles on the basis of empirical relationships among perceived strategies. The six strategies were assessed by a total of 35 questionnaire items, each of which required a response on a 6-point scale to indicate how frequently the teacher did such a thing “when trying to deal with misbehavior”. The response alternatives provided (Nearly always, Most of the time, A lot of the time, Some of the time, Hardly ever and Never) were coded 6 to 1, respectively.

In addition to allowing assessment of teachers’ discipline, the survey also provided a measure of student responsibility by having students indicate the extent to which they believed they are characterised by a total of 39 responsible classroom behaviors. These behaviors address exercising one’s own learning rights (e.g. “Do my best”) and protect-

ing students’ and teachers’ rights associated with learning (e.g. “Allow others to make up their own minds rather than try to make them agree”), emotional and physical safety (e.g. “Sort out differences without verbal aggression like name-calling”), and property (e.g. “Keep my hands off the property of others unless I have their permission”). The questionnaire items focus both on the student acting responsibly as well as encouraging others to do the same (e.g. “Try to stop classmates from disrupting the work of other students”, “Encourage others to try and stop all forms of bullying in the class”). Each of the 39 descriptions was associated with a 6-point response format: Exactly like me, Very much like me, Mostly like me, A little like me, Mostly not like me and Not at all like me (coded from 6 to 1 respectively).

In order to see if the students’ interest in, and belief about the importance of the learning influenced either the discipline they received or the extent to which they reported being responsible, the former was assessed on a 4-point scale, Very interested, Interested a little, A little uninterested and Very uninterested, coded 4 to 1. The latter had a 3-point scale, Very important, Important and Not important, coded 3 to 1.

Similarly, to determine if the level of misbehavior in the class influenced teachers’ choice of discipline techniques, 2 questions were included. The first asked, on a 4-point scale (Often, Sometimes, Only a little and Almost never — coded 4 to 1) how often the student misbehaved in the class being described. The second asked about how many of the students in this class misbehaved. This question had a 4-point scale, Nearly all, Many, Some and Hardly any/None coded from 4 to 1.

The remaining measure relevant to this investigation was a scale which addressed how students felt “when the teacher deals with misbehavior”. It comprised 15 items, 6 of which are relevant here as they assessed the extent to which the student felt “distracted”, “put off my work”, “Not able to get on with my work properly” etc. These had a 4-point scale measuring the frequency of feeling distracted. The alternatives were Nearly always, Most of the time, Some of the time and Hardly ever/Never and were coded from 4 to 1 respectively.

3. Results

Examination of the sample showed that it comprised 592 students from year 6 (aged approximately 12), 1131 from year 7 (13 yr), 995 from year 9 (15 yr) and 872 from year 11 (17 yr). For the purposes of the analyses to follow, no distinction will be made between the secondary students of different grade levels. Overall the proportion of girls in the sample was 51% and did not differ by level of schooling (Chi-square₁ = 1.55, $p = 0.22$)

To commence the analysis, Table 1 reports for each scale, the scale mean (average item mean in parentheses), and where applicable, scale standard deviation, Cronbach Alpha coefficient of internal consistency and the number of scale items. In addition, for each measure, the primary students are compared to those in secondary schools using t -tests for independent means, therefore t and p values are also reported. Because 13 t -tests are being considered simultaneously, a conservative level of statistical significance is employed ($p < 0.001$).

3.1. Responsibility

Inspection of the data in Table 1 indicates that overall, the Primary (year 6) students see themselves as quite responsible. They describe themselves as likely to protect rights in the classroom but less likely to encourage others to do likewise. The secondary students' level of responsibility is significantly less, both with regard to students' willingness to protect rights, and to encourage classmates to act responsibly. It is, on average, mostly like them to do the former and only "a little" like them to do the latter.

3.2. Classroom discipline

Primary students report very frequent teacher use of rewards, hints, discussion and student involvement, frequent use of punishment and very little aggression. Secondary students differ in that they see significantly less of four techniques. As can be seen by inspection of the t values, the most noticeable difference occurs for perceived recognition and reward for good behavior, student

Table 1
Attitude to work, Misbehavior, Discipline and Responsibility by School type (Primary or secondary)

Variable	Primary (N = 592)		Secondary (N = 2938)		t-value	Prob	Alpha	No of Items
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.				
<i>Responsibility</i>								
For self	69.5(4.3)	13.4	64.7(4.0)	13.3	7.2	< 0.001	0.89	16
For others	52.4(3.5)	16.8	46.0(3.1)	16.3	7.8	< 0.001	0.93	15
<i>Discipline</i>								
Hint	32.7(4.7)	4.9	28.3(4.0)	5.8	18.7	< 0.001	0.76	7
Discussion	15.8(4.0)	3.9	12.3(3.0)	4.4	17.2	< 0.001	0.85	4
Involvement	6.8(3.4)	2.4	4.1(2.1)	2.2	24.9	< 0.001	0.67	2
Recognition	18.1(4.5)	3.9	11.7(2.9)	5.0	33.3	< 0.001	0.83	4
Punishment	26.2(3.7)	5.2	24.6(3.5)	5.8	6.5	0.022	0.81	7
Aggression	14.7(2.1)	5.2	15.0(2.1)	6.3	1.2	0.307	0.77	7
<i>Disruption</i>								
Disrupted	17.8(3.0)	4.4	18.2(3.1)	4.0	1.98	0.048	0.83	6
<i>Attitudes to learning</i>								
Interesting	3.0	0.8	3.0	1.0	0.2	0.066		
Important	2.7	0.6	2.3	0.7	11.3	< 0.001		
<i>Misbehavior</i>								
Self	1.9	0.9	2.0	0.9	3.48	0.002		
Others	2.8	0.6	2.7	0.8	2.30	0.022		

involvement, non-directive hints, and discussion with students aimed at exploring their reason for behaving inappropriately and negotiating a win-win solution. There are no significant differences in the perceived amount of punishment and aggression. As can be seen in Table 1, the average item score for the six aggression items indicated that these techniques were hardly ever used by teachers. Inspection of individual item means however shows that, on average, both primary and secondary school teachers are seen, at least sometimes, to yell angrily at students who misbehave and to keep classes in because some students misbehave.

3.3. Attitudes to schoolwork

Primary and secondary students express only a little interest in their schoolwork, although Primary students think it is very important. Secondary students' responses are significantly lower. They view their learning as closer to Important.

3.4. Misbehavior and reaction to discipline

Both primary and secondary students report that many students in their class misbehave although they misbehave only a little. They also agree that most of the times their teacher deals with discipline in the classroom they are disrupted from learning.

To analyse the relationship between classroom discipline and student responsibility two analyses will be reported. The first is an exploratory correlation matrix noting the correlations between each of the six discipline strategies and the other variables. The second, a path analysis, is outlined later.

Table 2 reports the correlations between the discipline strategies and each of the other measures. Because of the large sample very small correlations are statistically significant. Therefore only the larger correlations ($r > 0.20$) will be discussed.

The strongest relationship ($r = 0.46$) occurs for Aggression and Disruption. It could be argued therefore that when teachers are sarcastic towards students, yell in anger, keep classes in, or use sexist or racist language, students feel more distracted from their work.

The next most significant correlation ($r = 0.29$) indicates that the level of misbehavior in class is associated with teacher aggression. It could be that coercive teachers promote misbehavior, or student misbehavior promotes an aggressive response from teachers, or both.

Finally, it can be seen that more responsible students are in classes where teachers involve them more in the decision making and are seen to provide more non-directive hints, recognition for good behavior, and discussion with misbehaving students, to allow them to understand the impact of their behavior on others and to work out how to behave better. In interpreting these findings it could be that it is the teacher's classroom discipline that is causing the level of student responsibility, vice versa, or most probably both.

For the analysis to follow, it was decided to attempt to reduce the number of discipline strategies using factor analysis. For this purpose an oblique analysis (Oblimin) was performed on the 6 scale scores. The solution provided only two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The two-factor solution accounted for 70% of the variance in the six measures of discipline. The first factor was

Table 2
The relationship between discipline techniques and other measures

	Hint	Discuss	Involve	Recog	Punish	Aggr'n
Responsibility-self	-0.25	0.29	0.20	0.20	0.25	-0.07
Responsibility-others	-0.20	0.22	0.09	0.09	0.23	-0.02
Misbehave-self	-0.02	-0.05	0.01	0.01	-0.11	0.26
Misbehave-class	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.02	-0.07	0.29
Work interesting	0.08	0.12	0.02	0.02	0.15	-0.19
Work-Important	0.11	0.15	0.06	0.06	0.17	-0.17
Disrupted by discipline	-0.02	-0.10	-0.00	-0.00	-0.16	0.46

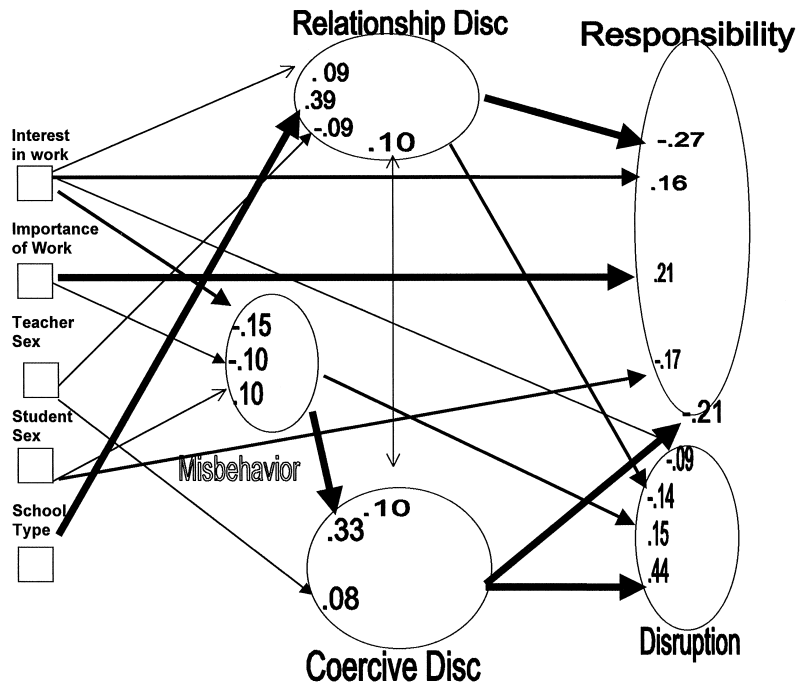


Fig. 1. Path analysis.

called Relationship-Based Discipline, as Discussion, Hints, Recognition and Involvement loaded 0.87, 0.81, 0.80, 0.69, whereas Punishment and Aggression had noticeably lower loadings of 0.46 and -0.20 , respectively. Factor 2 was entitled Coercive Discipline, as Aggression and Punishment loaded at 0.91 and 0.68 and Discussion, Hints, Recognition and Involvement loaded -0.04 , 0.15, -0.22 and 0.05, respectively. Consequently, in Fig. 1, which demonstrates pictorially the assumptions about causality which were tested using the path analysis, there are only two discipline styles represented.

In this analysis, as can be seen in Fig. 1, it was assumed that students' interest in, and views about the importance of their schoolwork, together with the structural variables, sex of teacher, sex of student and level of schooling, influence students' level of misbehavior in class. All of these then influence a teacher's choice of discipline response. This in turn impacts upon the extent to which students are disrupted from their work by the teacher's actions and the degree to which they feel motivated to

protect students' and teacher's safety and learning rights in that classroom. For the purposes of this analysis the Responsibility-Self and Others scale scores were combined as they correlated very highly (0.92).

To allow interpretation of the outcome of this path analysis three sets of statistically significant paths ($p < 0.05$) will be presented. The respective β coefficient will follow the description of each path. The first paths to be considered will be termed minor and have β coefficients ranging from 0.08 to 0.10. Inspection of these paths (1)–(5) indicates that

(1) Students who are more interested in their learning are more likely to receive Relationship-based discipline from their teachers (0.09).

(2) Students who are more interested in their learning are less disrupted from their work when teachers discipline misbehavior in class (-0.09).

(3) There is less misbehavior in classes, where schoolwork is seen to be more important (-0.10).

(4) Boys are more likely to misbehave than girls (0.10).

(5) Male teachers are more likely to employ Coercive discipline (0.08) and less likely to employ Relationship-based discipline than female teachers (– 0.09).

The second set of paths (6)–(10) to be reported are called moderate and range in magnitude from 0.14–0.17. As a result of these it may be argued that

(6) Students who are more interested in their learning act more responsibly in class (0.16).

(7) Boys act less responsibly in class than girls (– 0.17).

(8) Students who experience more Relationship-based discipline are less disrupted from their work when teachers discipline misbehavior in class (– 0.14).

(9) Students who are more interested in their learning misbehave less in class (– 0.15).

(10) Students in classrooms in which more misbehavior occurs are more disrupted from their work when teachers discipline misbehavior (0.15).

The final set of paths to be reported (11)–(16) are called major and range in magnitude from 0.21 to 0.44. These indicate that

(11) Students who feel that their schoolwork is more important act more responsibly in class (0.21).

(12) Students who experience more Coercive discipline act less responsibly in class (– 0.21).

(13) Students in primary schools receive more Relationship-based discipline techniques than do students in Secondary schools (0.39).

(14) Students in classrooms in which more misbehavior occurs experience more coercive discipline from their teachers (0.33).

(15) Students who experience more coercive discipline are more disrupted from their work when teachers discipline misbehavior in class (0.44).

(16) Students who experience more Relationship-based discipline act more responsibly in class (0.27).

4. Discussion

The first of the reported findings above notes that students in this study generally describe themselves as relatively responsible, although only the primary students are likely to actively encourage their classmates to act responsibly. Even though

this finding may be influenced by the students' desires to provide socially acceptable responses it nevertheless indicates that Australian students are not experiencing the crisis in character described in the introduction to this paper. This finding is consistent with those of another recent national study in Australia (Ainley et al., 1998).

A number of possible explanations exist for the observation that secondary students rate themselves as less responsible than do those in year 6, despite being older. These include

- Raging hormones of adolescence “kick in” after students leave primary school (from age 12).
- Less recognition, validation and empowerment of students in secondary schools leads to a negative student reaction.
- The school culture in primary schools emphasises more the development of responsibility in students as an educational goal.
- Different youth cultures exist in primary and secondary schools, whereby it is not as “cool” among older students to act responsibly.
- Younger students are more prone to providing a socially acceptable response than are older students and thereby rate themselves as more responsible.

Most of these issues have occupied the attention of a number of researchers studying transition from primary to secondary schooling and middle schooling (For example Eccles et al., 1993; Lipsitz & Feldner, 1997; Green, 1997; Cumming, 1998). However since they are not the focus of this investigation they will not be discussed further.

4.1. Classroom discipline techniques, Attitudes to schoolwork, Misbehavior, Distraction from work and Student responsibility

As noted earlier the four discipline techniques most associated with student responsibility are rewards and recognitions, discussions, involvement, and non-directive hints. Whereas hinting is a generic technique which can precede more interventional strategies, rewards forms part of the model of Control, involvement part of the model of Group Management and discussion is integral to the model of Influence.

As stated earlier, these correlations may indicate that teachers' discipline techniques cause greater responsibility in students, or teachers are choosing to select particular strategies on the basis of the level of student responsibility. Since the amount of use of these strategies generally correlates very lowly with the amount of reported misbehavior in the class, it can be argued that teachers are not being influenced by the level of student behavior when selecting discipline strategies. Consequently it would appear reasonable to assume that teachers' use of rewards and recognition, discussions, involvement, and non-directive hints promotes greater levels of student responsibility.

Aggressive discipline techniques display a negative association with responsibility (Others) and a positive correlation with misbehavior in class and reaction to discipline. Consequently it appears that teachers' aggression, misbehavior in class and level of student responsibility may influence each other. The final substantial correlation indicates that greater teacher aggression disrupts students' focus from their schoolwork.

Before interpreting the path analysis which follows, and discussing likely causal relationships among the variables measured in this study, a word of caution is necessary. Although school type (primary or secondary) has been entered into the analysis, individual school membership has not. It is possible therefore that aspects of school culture may be causally related to both teachers' discipline strategies and student responsibility, thereby making some findings tenuous. The assumption has been made however that most school-related factors capable of influencing student responsibility *in a particular classroom* will work via classroom processes, of which discipline is argued to be among the most potent (Ingersoll, 1996). A further limitation relates to the fact that students provided measures of both the independent and dependent variables in the analysis. Consequently, some relationships may be due to unmeasured correlated variables.

4.2. Path analysis

Given the very many paths that are reported above, to facilitate interpretation, the numbers of

the detailed findings reported above (1)–(16) are included in parenthesis for reference in the discussion below.

In general, students' attitude to their schoolwork is a positive predictor of their lack of misbehavior (9) and their general level of responsibility during class (3, 6, 11), even when teachers are engaged in disciplinary actions (2). When misbehavior does occur, students find it difficult to concentrate on their work (10). These findings are not surprising as motivation could be assumed to facilitate concentration just as misbehavior in class would inhibit it.

Boys are more likely to misbehave in class (4) and in general report that they are less responsible (7) than girls see themselves. Male teachers are more likely to utilise Coercive discipline and less likely to use Relationship-based discipline (5). The former finding is consistent with most research on classroom behavior which reports greater levels of misbehavior for boys (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). Nevertheless, the fact that the path was relatively weak, although statistically significant, is also evidence that the association may be overstated (Wheldall & Beaman, 1998). The greater likelihood of male teachers being less interested in providing a greater opportunity for student voice in decision-making surrounding classroom discipline has also been recently noted by Lewis (1999a).

Students who are more likely to receive Relationship-based discipline are those in Primary schools (13) and those more interested in their schoolwork (1). Students who receive more Relationship-based discipline are less disrupted when teachers deal with misbehavior (8) and generally act more responsibly in that teacher's class (16). In contrast, the impact of Coercive discipline appears to be more student distraction from work (15) and less responsibility (12).

Given what has been reported in the last paragraph, it is ironic to note the final findings. In classes where there is more student misbehavior, teachers are likely to employ more Coercive discipline (14), but not vary their usage of Relationship-based discipline. Two key questions arise from this research. The first is — If Coercive discipline disrupts students from their learning and inhibits the development of responsibility why would teachers choose to use more of it in response to increased

levels of misbehavior? The second is — If Relationship-based discipline minimizes disruption to student learning and increases students' responsibility why wouldn't teachers use more of it in classes where there is more misbehavior? Although as has been noted earlier, caution must be used when assuming causality from the preceding analyses, answers to these two questions will now be considered.

There would appear to be at least two explanations capable of providing answers to these questions. The first is based on research into teacher concerns reported by Fuller and Bown (1975). According to Fuller and Bown there are a number of levels of concerns experienced by teachers as they gain experience. Initially teachers focus on themselves (level 1 concerns) and are concerned about their physical and emotional well being. Once they are sufficiently experienced to no longer be concerned about level 1 concerns, teachers focus on skills (level 2). Having gained sufficiently in the area of teaching skills they move to level 3 concerns which focus on the needs of their clients, the students. Consequently, at this level they would be assumed to choose from among the many skills in their repertoire, those that are most productive. However, as Fuller and Bown explain, if teachers appraise a particular situation as sufficiently challenging to be a threat against 'self' they regress to level 1 concerns and will then do whatever is necessary to protect themselves against the perceived threat.

According to Fuller and Bown, teachers who appraise classroom misbehavior as threatening would act to protect themselves, even at the temporary expense of students' learning and other needs. Such an analysis could explain why teachers would implement Coercive techniques. This is because, in the short term, they can efficiently establish order in the classroom and thereby acquire a sense of emotional well being. Similarly, they would be unlikely to utilize discipline techniques which although more positive take longer to restore order, because their prime concern is their own immediate need for security.

The second explanation is based on something said during a paper presentation at the Australian Education Research Conference in 1998 (Rich-

mond, 1998) and implied by Glasser when describing a teacher Janet's reaction to a student named John, who is refusing to learn.

He (John) is more than uninterested; he is disdainful, even disruptive at times. To get him interested will require a real show of interest on her part. But Janet resents any suggestion that she should give John what he needs. Why should she? He's 14 years old. It's his job to show interest... because of this resentment, all she can think of is punishment. (Glasser, 1997, p. 60)

When a student exhibits challenging behavior which teachers find confronting they may respond by giving the student what he or she deserves. According to this explanation, students who deny a teacher's legitimate authority and act in a way which they clearly understand is irresponsible and unfair, deserve to be put in their place and any resistance may even justify an angry response from the teacher. Similarly any class that acts irresponsibly deserves to be punished as a group. Even if some students were not directly involved in the misbehavior they did not try to prevent it. Consequently, according to what Richmond calls a Justice model for dealing with misbehavior, teachers may utilize Coercive discipline in response to increases in levels of student misbehavior, because that's what students deserve.

As Richmond argues, however, a Justice approach to misbehavior is certainly not what many theorists like Glasser would recommend. Difficult students rarely respond well to teacher aggression. Even increases in the levels of punishment, in the absence of rewards for good behavior, discussions and involvement, (and the corresponding referent power they provide) do not generally improve students' behavior (Tauber, 1995). Turning attention from what students deserve and focussing on what they need is the basis of what Richmond calls a Social Justice model for misbehavior. Only if a teacher adopts a Social Justice model for misbehaving students and provides them with what they need, is he or she likely to increase the use of the more productive discipline techniques in the face of increased classroom misbehavior. The findings reported above, if interpreted causally, therefore, indicate that teachers, when confronted with

increased levels of student misbehavior, may be adopting a Justice model and giving students what they deserve rather than a Social Justice model which focuses on giving students what they need.

Regardless of whether one interprets the findings of this investigation in terms of Fuller's levels of concerns or Richmond's models, they are challenging. Teachers should be trying to make less responsible students more responsible through increasing their use of rewards, hints, discussion and involvement in rule setting. Even if the causality of the model were questioned it would be difficult to accept teachers failing to validate the good behavior of, and talking less with, the more difficult students.

As stated earlier, the considerable interest in children's values has resulted in curriculum demands for moral and civic education. In establishing the possibility of a strong connection between discipline strategies and the development of student responsibility, this study indicates that it may be possible to have a substantial impact on students' commitment to the protection of human rights by attending to teachers' classroom disciplinary style. Such changes are relatively inexpensive. They are also uncontroversial, unlike some of the debate surrounding character education (Kohn, 1998). It may even be argued that without changes to the discipline approaches utilized by some teachers the impact of instruction in democratic values may be impeded if not nullified.

Initial changes may require a commitment by all staff in a school to a code of behavior for teachers which specifies avoidance of aggressive discipline strategies like class punishments, sarcasm and yelling in anger. This commitment should come only after extensive examination of the negative impact of such techniques and should be seen as part of a process of defining the ideal school culture. Such a code would also require teachers to allow students to have some input into rule definition in the area of behavior management. In addition, it would make mandatory some systematic approach to providing recognition for students' responsible behavior. Obviously the form these recognitions would take should depend to some extent on the age of the students. Ideally they may be negotiated with students but could be assumed to include descriptive praise or encouragement, communica-

tion to parents or others, special activities or roles, free time and tangibles.

In addition to agreeing on the use of student involvement and recognitions, teachers should discuss and agree on the need for teachers giving punishments, to create an opportunity to discuss with misbehaving students the impact their behavior has on the rights of others to feel safe and to have an opportunity to learn. Such a discussion would not take the form of a lecture by the teacher but would need to include statements of the "problem", active listening, probably some confrontation of students' irrational ideas and the negotiation of a plan for the future.

To work effectively the school culture needs to become collegial to the extent that teachers manifesting unacceptable disciplinary strategies are identified as requiring support rather than condemnation. The likelihood of teachers agreeing to identify colleagues using aggressive techniques can be increased by informing them that these teachers are probably those most stressed by discipline. Further, recent research (Lewis, 1999b) indicates that such teachers are least likely to inform others of the stress they are experiencing. They are however, more likely to worry, and blame themselves, vary their eating or sleeping patterns, and get sick. Consequently, the identification of staff utilizing aggressive discipline techniques can be represented as a way of assisting stressed colleagues who, although requiring support, may not normally be expected to voluntarily seek it.

To soften the process of identification, staff can be asked to indicate how they would like to be notified if the problem arises. For example, they may wish to have a "buddy" channel the communication, any concerned member of staff approach them or be spoken with by someone from administration. The development of a voluntary code of conduct for staff is not only a theoretical suggestion. To date, the author has facilitated at four schools which have implemented such a code, and are providing collegial support for staff who are unable to minimize yelling in anger, using sarcasm, labelling students and keeping classes in for detention.

In conclusion, the results of this study indicate that there is a need to encourage teachers to avoid becoming coercive in the face of increases in

student misbehavior and to rather respond by calmly punishing misbehavior while rewarding good behavior, discussing with students the impact their misbehavior has on others and involving them in some of the decision-making surrounding rules and consequences. If teachers do not, it may mean less student time on task, and possibly more significantly, less responsible students.

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