ELEMENTARY STUDENT TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION: LINKING THEORY TO PRACTICE

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Doctor of Education Degree in Educational Leadership

by

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the following people, who steadfastly supported me during its construction: the Thompson family; the Carbone family; and the Wolfe family.

It is also dedicated to Dr. Susan Auerbach, committee chair, who agreed to take this journey with me, and whose vast knowledge and superior writing skills kept me on the path toward the completion of this dissertation.
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ABSTRACT

ELEMENTARY STUDENT TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE CONSTRUCTION:
LINKING THEORY TO PRACTICE

by

Loraynne Elizabeth Thompson
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In Educational Leadership

Within the university setting, elementary student teachers need adequate training and preparation in the practical application of classroom management skills for success during the student teaching phase, so that they feel a sense of efficacy and are ready to take on the practical aspects of behavior management and instruction within their own classrooms. However, university teacher preparation programs may not adequately prepare preservice teachers for the reality of classroom management issues, causing them to abandon teaching within the first few years.

This case study sought to determine whether the teacher preparation program at a large, public university in Southern California adequately prepared preservice teachers for the reality of classroom management issues. The purpose of the study was to investigate student teachers’ perceptions of the ways their university coursework, and
their interactions with mentor teachers, were linked to promote classroom management knowledge construction. The study was conducted at Southern Crest University, a large, urban public university in Southern California, in the Fall semester of 2012. Participants included five elementary preservice teachers, who attended Southern Crest full time in the K-5 multiple subjects teaching credential program, and who were in the first semester of their student teaching practicum. Other participants were two university professors who taught the seminar section of the practicum during the Fall, 2012 semester.

Qualitative data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at the beginning of the Fall, 2012 semester with five elementary student teachers. A bi-weekly, online journal was also provided for student teachers to record their reflections about classroom management during their practicum experience. At the end of the semester, a focus group interview was conducted with all five student teacher participants. Other data collection methods included one observation in a university student teaching seminar, and semi-structured interviews with the two university seminar professors. All data collection was conducted at the university setting.

The student teachers’ prior conceptions of effective classroom management practices played a significant role in their acquisition of new knowledge as they began the teacher education program. All five student teachers initially claimed that they believed in a student-centered (or constructivist) philosophy of classroom management, but three of them actually described classroom management practices that were dramatically more teacher-centered, controlling and authoritarian. Only two of the student teachers initially expressed increased feelings of self-efficacy in their ability to practice effective classroom management strategies, as well as confidence in their capacity to engage and motivate students to learn. Once in the practicum, they felt that university coursework
and their interactions with mentor teachers were somewhat linked to promote classroom management knowledge construction, but only after the first four weeks of student teaching.

During the second half of the semester, the student teachers began to make stronger connections between constructivist theories of learning and behavior from coursework, and behavior and organizational management practices in the classroom setting. The mentor teacher played the most significant role in the participants’ construction of classroom management knowledge. The student teachers’ perceptions of their mentors were influenced by the mentor’s classroom management philosophy, as well as what they perceived to be the reasoning behind her actions. By the end of the practicum, all five student teachers began to apply the constructivist theories and practices they recalled from prior coursework and to compare those practices to the ones used by their mentors.

After the practicum, the student teachers said they had begun to make more explicit connections to theoretical foundations as they critiqued their mentors’ specific management strategies, and they began to note disparities between the mentor’s style and the theory they had learned previously. After the practicum, the participants believed that using classroom management practices based on constructivist theories promoted a classroom community of learners. They also become somewhat aware of the connection between effective classroom management, and student engagement and motivation. However, only two of the student teachers expressed increased feelings of capability, or efficacy, in their ability to practice effective classroom management strategies, as well as confidence in their capacity to engage and motivate students to learn. Data from this
study did not suggest a clear connection between the student teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and other factors, such as university coursework and their experience with the mentor teacher.

Recommendations for future research include conducting additional qualitative and quantitative studies to determine what supports, both in the student teaching seminar and in the classroom setting, would further strengthen the connection between constructivist theory and effective classroom management practices during the first semester of the practicum. In addition, future studies should explore whether and to what extent a connection exists between initial classroom management philosophy and later self-efficacy, so that credential programs can be strengthened to influence those feelings of self-efficacy.

Also, using various models of the practicum (PDS schools, co-mentoring, etc.), future studies might investigate the various ways that university faculty and classroom mentor teachers work together during the second semester of student teaching to strengthen the link between classroom management theory and practice. Finally, using Limited Peripheral Participation (LPP) as a framework, further qualitative research should explore what supports the university might put in place to better prepare mentor teachers to assist student teachers in the classroom setting.
Chapter 1: Introduction

For decades, educators have been concerned about the long-term success of new elementary teachers (Duck, 2007; Fry, 2007; Putman, 2009; Tait, 2008; Zuckerman, 2000). While California spends more than $455 million per year to recruit, hire and prepare new teachers (Futernick, 2007), 29% of them leave the profession during their first three years in the classroom (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, as cited in Fry, 2007). Among the explanations for this phenomenon are that novice teachers claim to have inadequate support from mentor teachers during their student teaching phase (Chambers, 2005; Hertzog, 2002; Hong, 2010; Klausmeier, 1994; Tait, 2008; Wynn & Kromrey, 2000), and that they experience difficulty assimilating what they have learned through coursework with the often overwhelming and immediate demands of the classroom (Çakmak, 2009). Even though a new teacher admittedly needs strong skills in curriculum content and pedagogy to succeed, classroom management skills are equally vital to a novice teacher’s survival (Çakmak, 2008; Duck, 2007), and thus deserve attention from teacher educators.

It is imperative that future teachers receive both preservice and practicum training that can be assimilated into new knowledge, so that they are prepared in theory, content, pedagogy and classroom management for educating all types of students (Clark, 2002; Wilkinson, 2009; Zeichner, 2002; Zuckerman, 2000). This qualitative case study examined the connection, if it exists, between the university teacher preparation program and the elementary school setting in providing student teachers with the necessary classroom management skills to effectively manage their own classrooms. Specifically, this study investigated the ways that the student teaching experience and the university contribute to the student teacher’s knowledge of classroom management.
Problem Statement

Student Teaching

In the United States, teacher preparation programs have employed varying forms of classroom practice since at least the early 1960s (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Classroom practice includes preservice field experiences, such as classroom observations and student teaching under the mentorship of a more experienced teacher. The rationale for including field experiences as part of any teacher preparation program, according to Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005), is that they are the “key components … [in which] prospective teachers learn to bridge theory and practice” (p. 493). Student teaching is a specific type of field experience in which the prospective teacher has completed most of the required coursework in educational curriculum, theory and pedagogy and is ready to practice the art of teaching in an actual classroom, under the guidance of a mentor teacher (Moore, 2003; Zeichner, 2002). Researchers during the first half of the 20th century continually debated the merits of moving teacher education from the American “normal schools,” where teachers were commonly taught, to university settings (p. 73). The normal school advocated that teacher candidates apply the principles of teaching practice in the classroom setting, under the guidance of an experienced mentor teacher, and that learning should be “action oriented and field based” (p. 75), rather than based on content and educational theory.

With the launching of Sputnik by the Soviet Union in 1957, there was a renewed focus on adequately preparing teachers in content, theory and pedagogy so that they, in turn, could educate students as scientific thinkers, primarily to compete with Soviet Russia (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). Student teaching has been a formalized and required phase of teacher education since at least 1983, when the Mentor Teacher
Program was first authorized as part of California’s Budget Act of 1983-84 (Wagner, 1985).

California’s current model of teacher education remains largely unchanged, as student teachers typically move in linear fashion through teacher education programs from coursework and classroom observation to the practicum or student teaching phase (Capraro, Capraro, & Helfeldt, 2010). University preparation provides an important foundation for training in theory, pedagogy, and content (Duck, 2007; Johnson, 1994). But there is general consensus that the practicum, or student teaching experience, is an equally significant element of teacher preparation programs (Bain, 2004; Cuenca, 2011, LaCombe, 2003; Zeichner, 2002).

Student teaching typically signals the final stage of the teacher preparation program. It generally lasts either one or two semesters and takes place during the final year of teacher preparation (Watzke, 2003). It is during this phase that student teachers have the opportunity to apply in a real classroom setting all that they have learned in their courses (Moore, 2003; Zeichner, 2002).

In the classroom the student teacher is assigned an experienced mentor teacher. The mentor is expected to successfully guide her mentee on a path toward linking knowledge of content and theory gleaned from university courses, with practical application of that knowledge in a classroom setting. Despite notable exceptions in the research (Bullough, 2004), it is also expected that the mentor and student teacher will develop a collegial relationship during the practicum, and that this relationship will foster the successful transfer of classroom management knowledge to the student teacher through ongoing guidance, support and reflective feedback (Cuenca, 2011; Glenn, 2006).
There are many variations of the practicum model, including the professional development school (Bolick & Fry, 2004; Siebert, 2004), the university-school partnership (Capraro, Capraro, & Helfeldt, 2010; Singer, Catapano, & Huisman 2010; Stanulis & Russell, 1999), the peer coaching model (Pan, 2000; Wynn & Kromrey, 2000), and even on-line case-based learning (Choi & Lee, 2009) No matter the type, almost all these practicum models include some form of student teacher-mentor teacher pairing in an actual classroom (Allen & Blakston, 2003; Arnold, 2002; Clement, 2002; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2002; Glenn, 2006). Thus, the practicum experience has existed for years and continues to be the culminating experience for teacher candidates (Allen & Blakston, 2003; Arnold, 2002; Clement, 2002; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Fairbanks, Freedman & Kahn, 2002; Glenn, 2006; Wagner, 1985).

**Classroom Management**

Since creating and maintaining an effective level of control in a classroom is admittedly a pressing concern for student teachers (Boynton & Boynton, 2005), adequate training and preparation in the practical application of classroom management skills may be vital for success during the student teaching phase. Yet classroom management continues to appear not to be a major concern of most teacher training establishments (Merret & Wheldhall, 1993; Putman, 2009; Wilson & Cameron, 1996). Pre-service teachers tend to be taught a great deal in the university setting about instructional issues, including curriculum content knowledge, pedagogy and the planning of lessons (Duck, 2007). But the business of management issues, including how to handle a room full of youngsters, has not been adequately addressed within the university setting (Merret & Wheldhall, 1993).
Novice teachers need adequate classroom management practice prior to entering their own classrooms (Duck, 2007). Lacking such skills or adequate support during their first years, new teachers can quickly become overwhelmed by the demands of challenging student behaviors, ongoing lesson planning and daily classroom procedures (Duck, 2007). Under such circumstances, instruction may eventually take a back seat to management issues, and without the support and guidance from colleagues and administrators, novice teachers have few options to feel successful (Fry, 2007), causing many to leave the profession within the first few years (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004, as cited in Fry, 2007).

The goal of the practicum may be to give student teachers the opportunity to assimilate university coursework with hands-on experience. However, many candidates complete the student teaching phase feeling ill-equipped to take on classroom management issues when they become full-time teachers (Bandura, 1986; Putman, 2009; Zuckerman, 2000). These feelings of inadequacy become especially obvious when novice teachers are placed in large, urban classes that may include a large number of English Learners, students with serious behavior issues, and students with special learning needs and Individual Education Programs (IEPs) (Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997). It could be that the university may fall short in linking coursework to classroom practice (Bullough, 2004; Johnson, 1994).

University coursework tends to focus on content and to be more theoretical in nature (Bolick & Fry, 2004; Kaufman & Moss, 2010), while the experience of being under the guidance of a mentor teacher, in a classroom replete with procedural concerns and student behaviors, places the student teacher in the position of having to construct classroom management knowledge at a moment’s notice from hands-on experiences.
alone (Bolick & Fry, 2004). What is learned in university coursework and what is learned in action in the classroom may actually cause confusion and hinder student teachers in their ability to access, assimilate and apply theoretical knowledge to real life situations (Cuenca, 2011).

A typical university teacher preparation program offers very little in the way of practical classroom management strategies and skills (Allen & Blakston, 2003; Capraro, Capraro & Helfeldt, 2010; Holmes Group, 1990). Rather the emphasis is to prepare preservice teachers in curriculum content, pedagogy and student assessment to meet state standards for the teaching profession. Very few courses that specifically target classroom management may be offered in a university setting (Bolick & Fry, 2004; Siebert, 2004; Singer, Catapano & Huisman, 2010). Those courses that are offered might provide only general information about room environment, classroom procedures, planning and motivating students. It is difficult to find classes whereby managing for various student behaviors is addressed (Holmes Group, 1990).

University coursework also may fail to adequately prepare student teachers for the impact of student behaviors on their instruction. When a student teacher fails to address a classroom management issue swiftly or correctly, for example, she can lose her stature and authority with the rest of the class. This in turn could affect the frequency and intensity of subsequent management issues, which may lead to a poorer quality of instruction for students (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). Research has shown that students work harder to please adults whose actions show they respect and care for them (Boynton & Boynton, 2005). It is therefore logical to assume that a student teacher who demonstrates that she cannot handle management issues will continue to struggle during
the induction period, which could contribute to her leaving the profession within a few short years (Boynton & Boynton, 2005).

For these reasons it is crucial for university teacher preparation programs to adequately prepare preservice teachers for the reality of classroom management issues, and facilitate an effective support system between mentors and student teachers, so that student teachers feel a sense of efficacy and are ready to take on the practical aspects of behavior management and instruction within their own classrooms.

A large number of research studies on student teachers and classroom management have focused exclusively on the classroom setting, and the mentor teacher-student teacher relationship in particular (Çakmak, 2008; Çakmak, 2009; Chambers, 2005; Glenn, 2006; Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Klausheimer, 1994; Latz, 1992; Martin, 2004; McCormack, 2001; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher & James 2002; Stoughton, 2006). Similarly, extensive research has been conducted on the role of university coursework in constructing new learning for student teachers (Bolick & Fry, 2004; Choi & Lee, 2009; Cuenca, 2011; Martin, 2004). Yet little qualitative research has investigated the link between what is learned through university coursework, and what is learned through student teachers’ classroom interactions with the mentor teacher, to construct practical classroom management knowledge that positively impacts instruction in the classroom (Glenn, 2006; Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Klausmeier, 1994; Poulou, 2007; Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2007).
Purpose and Significance

The more teacher educators understand those elements of university coursework and the practicum experience that contribute to fostering student teachers’ construction of classroom management knowledge, the better they can guide and support novice teachers so that they enter the profession feeling adequately prepared (Cuenca, 2011; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Hong, 2010), and less likely to leave the teaching profession (Çakmak, 2008; Duck, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate student teachers’ perceptions of the ways their university coursework and their interactions with mentor teachers were linked to promote knowledge construction.

Results from this study served to inform teacher education practice by suggesting improvements to programs that link the practicum phase, and specifically the mentor teacher’s role, more closely with university coursework in classroom management. The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of the need for the inclusion of practical classroom management topics at the university level in addition to the theoretical foundations currently emphasized. This is significant, as it will lead to a more thorough grounding for novice elementary student teachers in classroom management issues and contribute to their increased effectiveness and sense of self-efficacy as they enter the teaching profession.

It is also hoped that the findings from this study will contribute to the literature base regarding student teaching and teacher preparation, specifically with regard to the linkage between theoretical foundations courses at the university setting and actual classroom practice. In addition, study findings may allow for improvements in education policy with regard to the student teaching phase of elementary teacher preparation.
Research Questions

The research questions that guided this study were:

(1) How do elementary student teachers perceive their construction of classroom management knowledge to be linked to coursework in a traditional teacher education program at a large, public university?

(2) How does this elementary teacher education program prepare preservice teachers in classroom management?

(3) How do elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices prior to their practicum experience?

(4) How do elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices after their practicum experience?

(5) How do elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices to be linked to instruction?

(6) What role do student teachers perceive the mentor teacher to play in reinforcing the link between university coursework and classroom management knowledge?

Within the context of this qualitative case study, key terms were defined as follows:

- Classroom management – the competency of a teacher or student teacher in strategies to address and manage student behavior and procedural matters in the classroom setting (Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997).

- Practicum – the student teaching phase of an elementary teacher preparation program (Bain, 2004; Cuenca, 2011; LaCombe, 2003; Zeichner, 2002).
• Mentor teacher – also known as the cooperating teacher or master teacher, the role of the mentor is that of supportive coach and experienced guide for the student teacher in the elementary classroom setting.

Methods

This qualitative case study was conducted at a large urban university in southern California. The education college has both undergraduate and graduate teaching programs in elementary and secondary subjects, and has placed many teachers at schools throughout the region and beyond. The main data source for this case study were five elementary preservice teachers who, during the course of this study, attended the university full time in the K-5 multiple subjects teaching credential program and were in the first semester of their practicum, or student teaching phase at both Title I and non-Title I schools. Student teacher participants were chosen by the recommendations of their university supervisors, and upon their availability and willingness to participate. Other data sources included two elementary education faculty at the university, both of whom provided instruction in classroom management to student teachers as seminar professors.

Qualitative data collection methods included semi-structured interviews, which were conducted at the beginning of the Fall, 2012 semester with five elementary student teachers. In addition, a bi-weekly, online journal was provided for student teachers to record their reflections about classroom management during their practicum experience. At the end of the semester, a focus group interview was conducted with all five student teacher participants. Other data collection methods included one observation in a university student teaching seminar, and semi-structured interviews with the two university seminar professors. Data collection was conducted at the university setting so
as to provide a comfortable, familiar environment for participants and to maintain confidentiality between participants and the researcher.

These research methods were appropriate for my study for several reasons. First, access to student teachers at the university was more easily accomplished than at various partnership school settings. Also, comparing perceptions of classroom management knowledge at Title I and non-Title I schools assured student teachers’ exposure to a broad range of elementary student behavior issues. Finally, investigating student teachers’ perceptions at various intervals throughout the semester provided a more detailed picture of the ways in which student teachers perceived theory and content to be linked with classroom management practices in developmental stages.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

This research study by necessity contained both delimitations and limitations (Bryant, 2004). Delimitations are defined by Bryant (2004) as those conditions imposed by any study which may prevent results from being generalized to any other study. One such delimitation in this study was that the specificity of the setting (a large, urban university) and participants (a small number of elementary student teachers) limited generalization and applicability of results to other populations.

Study limitations, according to Bryant (2004), are those limitations imposed by the method itself. Due to time constraints, and to minimize student teacher discomfort, interviews were conducted away from the elementary school setting. Hence, a limitation of this study was that the perceptions of participants may have been influenced by time and distance away from the classroom. Another limitation was that interviews, online journals, and focus group data analysis provided only a partial window into the ways in which student teachers perceived assimilation of their practicum experiences with
university coursework. While these perceptions may provide insight into the experiences of this sample of student teachers, they cannot be generalized to a larger population, nor can they in any way be taken to be exhaustive or encompassing. It is acknowledged that many other ways of constructing classroom management knowledge might exist which cannot be described within the scope of this study.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

The dissertation begins with an introductory overview of the research and its significance to the field of teacher education. The second chapter presents a review of scholarly literature that examines the following: historical definitions and interpretations of classroom management standards to train prospective elementary teachers; elementary teacher candidates’ evolving conceptions of classroom management; the linkage between the practical aspects of classroom management and the theoretical foundations provided by the university; and a rationale for the proposed research study. A third chapter on methods describes the research tradition and methodology used to approach this case study including multiple qualitative data collection and analysis techniques, as well as ethics and validity issues.

Findings are presented in the fourth chapter and are organized chronologically according to the student teachers’ emerging conceptions of classroom management. The fifth chapter further discusses the findings in light of the literature and theoretical framework, and concludes by recommending improvements to teacher education practice in the area of classroom management.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate student teachers’ perceptions of the ways their university courses in classroom management and their interactions with mentor teachers were linked to promote the construction of classroom management knowledge. The literature review examines this topic in four sections, each of which serves to present an extensive body of current scholarly research on the research problem and provide a rationale for the proposed study (Kilbourn, 2006).

The initial section traces the historical development of standards for classroom management and examines the ways researchers and university teacher preparation programs have defined and interpreted those standards. The second section focuses on elementary teacher candidates’ evolving conceptions of classroom management at three phases of their training: prior to entering the university; during university coursework; and during the student teaching phase. The third section reviews current research on the linkage between the practical aspects of classroom management and the theoretical foundations provided by the university. The fourth section notes gaps in the research on this linkage and justifies a rationale for the proposed research study on student teachers’ perceptions of a connection between university coursework and the classroom setting in their construction of classroom management knowledge. The chapter concludes with an explanation of the conceptual framework based on linkage theory and situated cognition.

Guiding Frameworks for Classroom Management: National and State Standards

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) is a federal entity that established a set of national standards for the teaching profession. NCATE is recognized as “a professional accrediting body for colleges and universities
that prepares teachers and other professional personnel for work in elementary and secondary schools” (NCATE, 2009). The mission of NCATE, among other things, is to improve the quality of teacher education by establishing rigorous standards for teacher education programs. In the area of classroom management, NCATE seeks to help teachers in developing a positive climate in the classroom, through field experiences and clinical practice, in order to make it a stimulating learning environment (NCATE, 2009).

At the state level, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC), originally called the Commission on Teacher Preparation and Licensure (CTPL) (CCTC, 2011, p. 366) was created in 1970 by the Ryan Act for similar purposes. Beginning in the 1980s the CCTC developed specific standards for the teaching profession. These standards were designed to set forth the minimum knowledge and skills teachers should possess in order to obtain a teaching credential (CCTC, 2011, p. 11). No matter which type of teacher preparation program is selected, the CCTC stipulates that all teacher candidates must satisfactorily fulfill the requirements as outlined in the six California Standards for the Teaching Profession in order to achieve certification and seek employment by California public school districts.

Currently the California teaching standards include competencies in the following domains: engaging and supporting student learning; creating and maintaining effective environments; understanding and organizing subject matter; planning instruction and designing learning experiences; assessing students for learning; and developing as a professional educator. All educational institutions in the State of California must ensure that teacher candidates demonstrate competency in these standards through a combination of classroom observations, satisfactory completion of coursework in theory, content and pedagogy, and successful completion of the student teaching practicum (CCTC, 2011).
Two of the six teaching standards address classroom management. Standard one, engaging and supporting all students in learning, charges teachers with the general responsibility for “using a variety of instructional strategies and resources to respond to students’ diverse needs” (p. 33), including behavioral needs. Standard two, creating and maintaining effective environments for students, more specifically addresses issues of classroom management and student behavior and states in part: “Expectations for student behavior are established early, clearly understood, and consistently maintained. Teachers make effective use of instructional time as they implement class procedures and routines,” and should “develop, communicate and maintain high standards for individual and group behavior” (p. 8). To encourage growth in the teaching profession, the standards are broadly defined, leaving ample room for interpretation by California’s educational institutions, although the CCTC requires various tests to demonstrate teachers’ content knowledge.

Interestingly, the CCTC does not specifically require passage of a classroom management skills test in order for a teacher candidate to graduate from a teacher preparation program in California (CCTC, 2011). Neither of the CCTC standards on classroom management specifically defines what constitutes effective use of instructional time or high behavioral standards, nor do they outline the ways teacher candidates are to acquire expertise in this area (CCTC, 2011). Since California is a large and diverse state, its educational institutions must therefore develop their own organizational structure and propose their own official curriculum (p. 13), including curriculum that addresses classroom management, in alignment with the needs of the populations they serve (p. 6).

Just as California teacher preparation programs interpret, provide training in, and assess their candidates’ knowledge of classroom management differently, prospective
elementary teachers themselves enter teacher preparation programs with a wide variety of prior conceptions, unexamined beliefs, differing levels of education, and classroom management experiences (CCTC, 2011; Hong, 2010; Kaya, et al., 2010; McCormack, 2001; Shulman, 1998). Consequently, today’s teacher preparation programs acknowledge that “these individuals need a teacher preparation program that builds upon existing knowledge and work skills and [is] organized to fit their needs as adult learners (CCTC, 2011, pp. 302-303). Indeed, some candidates may have previously worked as teacher assistants or school volunteers, while others may have taken extensive coursework in early childhood education (Rots & Aelterman, 2009). Still others may not have been inside a classroom since they were in high school, or are changing career paths (Brown, Morehead & Smith, 2008; Parker & Brindley, 2008). In light of these variations in prior experience with which candidates enter teacher preparation programs, research suggests that educational institutions acknowledge and address candidates’ prior classroom management conceptions as they enter the teacher preparation program (Hong, 2010; Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher & James, 2002; Murphy, Delli & Edwards, 2004).

Classroom Management Components and Effects

It is well established within the literature that managing a classroom is a complicated enterprise (Çakmak, 2008; Zuckerman, 2000). Within the context of the classroom setting, researchers have described classroom management in a variety of ways. Zuckerman (2000), for example, suggests it is the process of establishing and maintaining social order so that instruction and learning can occur. Other researchers claim that it includes the organization, planning, time usage, and resources of a behavioral rather than an instructional nature (Wilson & Cameron, 1996). Still others
infer that classroom management addresses the way teachers interact with students in the classroom to facilitate instruction (Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft (1997).

Boynton and Boynton (2005) further imply that while the importance of learning content and applying the design and delivery of instruction in a classroom setting cannot be discounted, it is the development and practical application of effective classroom management skills and strategies that becomes one of the most critical aspects of the teaching experience. Indeed, a number of researchers suggest that effective group management skills are the single most important factor in achieving and maintaining good standards of classroom behavior, because they affect how teachers interact with students to convey curriculum content (Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Merret & Wheldall, 1993; Putman, 2009). Pellegrino (2010) further suggests that while the majority of elementary preservice teachers enter teacher education programs with at least a minimum level of exposure to classroom management, that exposure is limited to simulations in which the outcomes are predictable.

**Preservice Teachers’ Unexamined Beliefs and Preconceptions**

It is well understood within the literature that elementary teacher candidates enter their preservice programs with individual belief systems that “powerfully shape their perceptions about teaching and learning” (Gallagher, 2009, p. 50; Minor et al., 2002), including belief systems regarding classroom management. These beliefs and initial conceptions of classroom management are based largely on their previous experiences as students themselves (Gallagher, 2009; Minor et al., 2002; Moore, 2003; Putman, 2009; Wilson and Cameron, 1996). Murphy, Delli and Edwards (2004), for example, found that elementary preservice teachers may possess some well-established beliefs about effective teaching, including beliefs about classroom management, as a result of having been
students themselves for many years. Walker-Dalhouse and Dalhouse (2006) suggested that preservice teachers’ entering beliefs about classroom management are, to some degree, racially and culturally based. Wilke & Losh (2008) further observed that the initial beliefs of preservice teachers are important because they exert an influence on their subsequent classroom practice and on their delivery of instruction.

While a number of studies have addressed teacher candidates’ unexamined beliefs and prior conceptions about classroom management in general, the issue of whether educational institutions should consider these beliefs and conceptions when designing teacher preparation programs is of particular interest (Brown et al., 2008; He & Levin, 2008). Brousseau & Freeman (1984 et al., as cited in Wilson & Cameron, 1996), for example, concluded that since elementary teacher candidates initially describe teacher effectiveness in terms of teacher caring, nurturing and imagination, these are qualities that should be of value to educational institutions.

Other researchers determined that an individual’s initial conceptions of classroom management can powerfully affect their feelings about discipline, routines and reward systems, and that elementary teacher candidates’ decision to enter a teacher preparation program is influenced by initial confidence in their ability to successfully tackle the demands of teaching and affect student outcomes as novice teachers (Brown et al., 2008; He & Levin, 2008; Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Marshall, 2009; Pajares, 1996, pp. 543-544; Parker & Brindley, 2004; Putman, 2009). Prior classroom management beliefs may even influence a candidate’s decision to remain in the teaching profession (Marshall, 2009). Additionally, Parker and Brindley (2004) suggest that these initial beliefs may “facilitate the [ongoing] acquisition of new knowledge” within the teacher preparation program, and
therefore deserve increased attention from educational institutions when considering elementary teacher candidates for admittance (p. 4).

Parker and Brindley (2004), for example, investigated elementary teacher candidates’ previously held beliefs about classroom management as factors in their decisions to enter teaching. Their study measured the initial beliefs, including classroom management beliefs, of 21 elementary teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds who had recently enrolled in a graduate level alternative teacher preparation program at a southeastern university. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the framework designed by the alternative certification program faculty aligned with candidates’ prior beliefs to “facilitate the[ir] acquisition of new knowledge” (pp. 3-4). Participants’ initial conceptions of classroom management were analyzed to determine the extent to which those conceptions aligned with the goals and objectives of the university program. Even though participants represented a variety of cultural, educational and experiential backgrounds, a majority of them described the optimal classroom teacher as one who creates an environment that gives students “meaningful choices,” who provides “authentic cooperation,” and who cultivates “nurturing relationships” with students, rather than focusing on controlling student behaviors (p. 7). Interestingly, a number of participants were unable to articulate their reasoning behind these latent but persistent beliefs. This study suggests that teacher educators should be aware of the degree to which these latent beliefs may be challenged by traditional teacher preparation programs, and of the degree to which that subsequent instruction might create dissonance in candidates’ evolving perceptions of an effective teacher (p. 10).

Similarly, research by Brown et al. (2008) used a mixed-methodology design to determine elementary teacher candidates’ initial conceptions of teacher quality, including
conceptions of effective classroom management, with undergraduate elementary education candidates at a large, public university. The study examined the degree to which prospective elementary teachers’ initial conceptions of effective teacher qualities changed over the course of one semester. Like those of Parker and Brindley (2004), findings suggested that these teacher candidates held rather naïve views about what constitutes an effective teacher, using terms such as “warm, encouraging and friendly” (p. 6), and “liking children” (p.1). They concluded that the prior conceptions of elementary teacher candidates should thus be an important consideration for elementary teacher preparation programs, because “teacher candidates enter teacher education programs with predetermined conceptions, visual images, and beliefs about teaching” which are influenced by new conceptions throughout their program (p. 1).

A number of studies suggest that elementary teacher candidates’ prior conceptions may also play a role in creating anxiety and stress throughout the teacher preparation program and beyond, and therefore deserve attention from educational institutions (Çakmak, 2008; Duck, 2007). Kaufman and Moss (2010), for example, examined the prior conceptions of elementary and secondary pre-service teachers regarding classroom management, and the degree to which those conceptions aligned with their subsequent classroom management practices as novice teachers. They determined that many of the preservice teachers’ greatest fears were in the area of teacher-student relations, which affected their perceived ability to manage behavior problems. In fact, a large number of respondents stated that they feared eventually losing control of their own classroom, and maintained that teachers should take more control of student behavior. At the same time, however, many respondents also expressed a somewhat conflicting desire to create
classroom environments in which the focus was on giving students the independence and freedom to learn creatively.

Implications from this and other studies suggest a disparity between preservice teachers’ unexamined beliefs and prior conceptions of classroom management versus those they subsequently experience in the university (Alvarez, 2007; Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler & Shaver, 2004; Stoughton, 2007). Therefore, teacher preparation programs that take candidates’ prior conceptions of classroom management into account when designing coursework may be more successful in tailoring instruction to meet their individual needs, and might also promote their sense of self confidence upon entering their own classrooms (Bandura, 1977; Putman, 2009). The literature clearly articulates a need for further study in this area.

**Classroom Management Conceptions and University Coursework**

While research has pointed to a need for teacher educators to design their programs with candidates’ prior conceptions about classroom management in mind, an abundance of literature suggests that equal attention be given to the role that coursework plays in further influencing those conceptions (Bandura, 1977; Brown, et al., 2008; Gallagher, 2009; He & Levin, 2008; Kolloff, Lenski, Nierstheimer & Toll, 2004; Korthagen and Kessels, 1999; Murphy, Delli & Edwards, 2004; Putman, 2009; Stoughton, 2006; Wilke & Losh, 2008). Coursework in classroom management is provided in a variety of models of teacher education including the traditional university setting, the school-university partnership, the professional development school model, the internship model, and other alternative models of teacher preparation (Chant, Heafner & Bennett, 2004; McCormack, 2001; Gilles, Wilson & Elias, 2009; Howey, 1999; Miller,
Some scholars argue that teacher educators must be cognizant of preservice candidates’ beliefs regarding classroom management, the role those beliefs play throughout their coursework experiences, and their subsequent interactions with teacher educators and mentor teachers (Brown et al., 2008; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; He and Levin, 2008). They suggest that teacher candidates enter the university setting with images, visions and beliefs that act as filters to their subsequent learning and which may be difficult to change. These initial conceptions may cause candidates to enter the teaching program with their attention focused narrowly on the immediate classroom setting, rather than on the larger context of the school and community (Brown et al., 2008). Once they are enrolled, the university setting contributes little to preservice teachers’ understanding of educational theory, psychology of learning and classroom management in a practical setting, according to these researchers (Brown et al., 2008; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000).

Brown et al. (2008), for instance, highlighted the dichotomy that exists between teacher candidates’ prior classroom management assumptions and concepts taught in university teacher preparation programs. The authors claimed that as preservice teacher candidates enter teacher education programs, their own prior experiences, beliefs and conceptions about what constitutes a good teacher act as filters to new information from teacher educators. These prior beliefs and conceptions may include being kind, empathetic, organized and encouraging (p. 172). Many teacher education programs, however, tend to encourage candidates to adopt new conceptions of effective teachers, with an emphasis on “instructional design and assessment” and “building a community
for diverse learners” (p. 170) which may suppress candidates’ previously held conceptions. Doing so can create conflict within candidates regarding new teachings that may become an area of challenge for teacher educators attempting to reconcile these differences.

Minor, Onwuegbuzie, Witcher and James (2002) also conducted a similar, mixed methods study at a large university in Georgia with both male and female preservice teacher candidates to determine their entering beliefs about the characteristics of effective teachers, and to subsequently investigate factors that influenced those beliefs as they continued through their teacher preparation program. Interestingly, over half the respondents initially rated effective teachers as those who were enthusiastic and who possessed effective classroom management and behavioral skills, while rating subject knowledge as the least important traits of effective teachers. The authors suggest that this could have occurred because the candidates had not yet been adequately exposed to the wide variety of educational approaches taught at the university level. Teacher educators later encouraged candidates to continuously reflect upon and challenge their initial educational beliefs, and note gaps in their understanding of pedagogy and classroom management. Their aim was to change those beliefs that they considered “ill-founded” (pp. 125-126), by aligning these with established principles such as those of NCATE (2009). The authors suggested that teacher educators at the university consider these prior beliefs when designing coursework.

Furthermore, Stoughton (2006) used a critical inquiry framework to investigate the ways 48 preservice teachers at a large Midwestern university navigated between their prior conceptions of effective classroom management and coursework taught by more experienced mentors and teacher educators about how to handle classroom behavior
issues. The process of critical inquiry was described within the context of the study as the examination of taken-for-granted educational practices to construct new meanings of teaching and managing a classroom. Through reflective writing samples, the author determined that developing conceptions about classroom management frequently came into conflict with the viewpoints expressed by authority figures within the teacher preparation program, especially with regard to classroom discipline and consequences. Of particular note, 45 participants expressed conflict between their desire to establish positive relationships with students, and their emerging realization that they needed to maintain control in the classroom. The author pointed to a need for teacher educators to engage in critical inquiry throughout the teacher preparation program in order to assist preservice teachers to examine their evolving beliefs and conflicts about classroom management.

Freiburg and Lamb (2009) further suggest that some modern institutions still cling to traditional, teacher-directed and rewards-based behaviorist views of classroom management and training despite the preponderance of recent research that supports a more constructivist, or student-centered management view (p. 100). McTamaney and Palmeri (as cited in Cohan & Honigsfeld, eds., 2011) also found that while teacher candidates need to be aware of their prior conceptions as a point of reference, they must also be given a clear sense of the university’s expectations and goals for their learning, and a means by which to continually measure their progress toward that goal. The authors endorsed multiple opportunities to critically reflect on their thinking and learning, knowledge and performance.

Some theorists claim that many teacher candidates enter their credential programs with an already developed sense of good teaching and classroom management from their
own educational experiences, without the benefit of formal practical experience (Murphy et al., 2004; Winitzky, 1992). Murphy et al. (2004), for example, suggest that teacher educators should pay close attention to entering teacher candidates’ personal beliefs about classroom management and instructional pedagogy, because those candidates should gradually learn to merge their beliefs with the knowledge they gain as they move through the credential program. Gallagher (2009) further suggests that the overarching goal of teacher education programs should be to combine theory and research to help teacher candidates develop and implement their own conceptions of teaching, including classroom management, and utilize them in practice.

It may be that elementary preservice teachers with higher levels of organization and complex knowledge structures also have a higher capacity to critically reflect on classroom management events, which in turn can lead to sustained classroom management effectiveness Winitzky (1992). Winitzky (1992) determined that teacher educators should explore their existing skills to further develop the classroom management knowledge base of preservice teachers. Similarly, Wilke and Losh (2008) concluded that preservice teacher candidates may benefit less from instruction that conceptualizes instructional strategies, including those relating to classroom management, and more from understanding in depth about the situations in which those strategies should be employed. They claim that preservice teachers may already possess ample knowledge of classroom management, and employ a variety of effective strategies without being explicitly taught, based on their previous experiences as students, their chosen content area of study and their prior conceptions of how teaching should look. The researchers used both a quantitative survey instrument and qualitative interviews.
with 128 preservice teacher candidates at a large southeastern university, to determine which instructional strategies participants considered most effective.

They found that over half the preservice teachers endorsed a broad range of effective interactive teaching behaviors regardless of content area specialty, and regardless of the fact that they had no prior classroom training. These behaviors included practice activities, demonstrations and small group discussion, all of which involved substantial amounts of classroom management planning and reflection time. The authors suggested that teacher educators focus more on linking teacher candidates’ current beliefs to deeper understandings of the contexts, goals and strategies used in delivering instruction, rather than on the construction of effective teaching practices from the ground up.

Some scholars contend that university coursework in classroom management necessitates presenting a great deal of content – that is, theories of student behavior and motivation, and core subject matter - that contribute to the candidate’s ongoing construction of knowledge about classroom management (Duck, 2007). Others, however, believe that the instructional practices required for teachers to effectively communicate expectations to students, or the “how” of teaching classroom management (p. 598), may be largely neglected in university preservice programs (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Martin, 2004). For example, a traditional teacher education program might require students to demonstrate competence in classroom management strategies by completing rigorous coursework in the university setting, whereas an alternative approach might require teacher candidates to demonstrate competence by assessing those skills in an actual classroom setting (Martin, 2004). Martin (2004) suggests that the latter type of assessment is more valuable to the teacher
candidate because she must adapt to the context of the classroom itself in order to handle specific management issues. In other words, she must learn classroom management by doing it rather than by merely studying it.

**Learning versus doing.**

To this end, it has been suggested that the context in which classroom management content is delivered may have a tremendous impact on the developing conceptions of elementary teacher candidates as they move through the teacher preparation program (Allen & Blakston, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997). Indeed, some researchers claim that coursework without practical application provides little opportunity for prospective teachers to practice classroom management strategies in authentic settings, or to observe the impact those strategies have on student learning (Allen & Blakston, 2003; Finders & Rose, 1999; Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Martin, 2004; Mahon, Bryant, Brown & Kim, 2010).

Darvin (as cited in Cohan & Honigsfield, eds., 2011), for example, conducted a study within the theoretical frame of situated performance to determine whether and to what extent there was a mismatch between teacher education coursework in classroom sensitivity and its applicability to the actual classroom environment. Situated performance activities utilize simulations, role play and classroom activities in actual classroom settings, as do situated cognition activities (Darvin, as cited in Cohan & Honigsfield, eds., 2011; Finders & Rose, 1999). However, the construction of these activities differs slightly from those of situated cognition, in that they are essentially simulations conducted within preset political, cultural and interpersonal boundaries, meaning they are situation-specific. These activities not only involve active participation by preservice teachers, they further require that teacher candidates engage in ongoing
critical self-reflection and behavior correction after completing each activity as a means for self-analysis and knowledge construction.

Using situated performance as a frame of reference enabled the author to test the extent to which teacher candidates were able to retain their memories of learning situations, in order to determine appropriate responses in real situations that occurred during subsequent phases of their preparation program. Results revealed that using situated performance activities in classroom management simulations positively influenced decision making responses in over 80% of the participants. The author concluded that using situated performance activities positively influenced preservice teachers’ perceived ability to successfully handle classroom management situations (Darvin, as cited in Cohan & Honigsfield, eds., 2011).

Mahon et al. (2010) also employed a situated performance framework in their mixed methods study on preservice teacher conceptions of classroom management. The research questions were developed out of a constructivist assumption that classroom management is difficult to teach due to multicultural and behavioral differences among students. It was theorized that greater collaboration, discovery, creativity, motivation and social interaction would occur among preservice teachers as a result of using artificial intelligence technology to simulate a real classroom with a variety of student demographics, cultural and language needs.

As part of their coursework on classroom management, Mahon et al. (2010) investigated the ways 20 preservice middle school teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and classroom management conceptions evolved by creating computer simulated scenarios of authentic classroom management situations. Survey results showed that 16 of the 20 participants considered the approach novel, creative and transferable to real classroom
management situations. Furthermore, all of the participants’ reflections noted that using such a highly personalized learning environment with real classroom management situations transferred to overall positive changes in their perceived ability to effectively manage a real classroom.

It may be even more crucial for universities to provide specific coursework that adequately addresses the sometimes challenging social, emotional and behavioral needs of students with disabilities. Regan (2009) suggests that without a thorough grounding in classroom management or the ability to critically reflect and maintain self-awareness, the teacher may actually cause or contribute to behavior problems in students with emotional and/or behavior disorders (p. 61). Indeed, the value of understanding classroom management through the lens of special education may be an important aspect of future studies.

**Pre-Student Teaching Field Experiences**

In addition to coursework, virtually all teacher preparation programs require candidates to participate concurrently in early field experiences, or service learning (Capraro, Capraro & Helfeldt, 2010; Coffey, 2009). Early field experiences are defined as classroom based experiences that allow teacher candidates to “observe, assist, tutor, instruct, and/or conduct research” (Coffey, 2009, p. 1). According to NCATE (2009), these “planned, guided and sustained interactions with pupils within early field and student teaching settings [are] important” (p. 316). Coffey (2009) also implies that service learning has a positive influence on preservice teacher candidates’ attitudes and values toward education. Minor et al. (2002) suggest several purposes for these early experiences, one of which is to provide the prospective teacher with a sense of the daily procedures of an actual classroom.
While elementary preservice teacher candidates may benefit somewhat from observing classroom management in action, research suggests they cannot possibly learn all they need to know, either in depth or breadth (Capraro et al., 2010; Singer, Catapano & Huisman, 2010). Singer et al. (2010) found that the hours of observation alone were not enough, while Capraro et al. (2010) determined more specifically that these experiences may not afford teacher candidates and teachers the opportunity to discuss why a certain strategy was used, or whether alternative strategies might have worked better. On the other hand, elementary preservice teachers might benefit greatly from first observing the teacher in action, then asking her to reflect on the reasoning behind her actions. Choi and Lee (2009) for example, conducted a qualitative study in which observers watched videotapes of a teacher during instruction, and subsequently debriefed with him to dissect how he dealt with student behaviors. Both the observers and the teacher benefited from the dialogue in which the teacher reflected on why he used specific management strategies, and then shared them with the observers.

The aforementioned studies highlight some of the ways the developing classroom management conceptions of elementary preservice teacher candidates can be profoundly influenced by both coursework and situational activities. As candidates enter the practicum phase, however, their evolving conceptions and beliefs about classroom management may gradually shift to focus primarily on student behavior concerns (Çakmak, 2008; Putman, 2009; Singer, Catapano & Huisman, 2010). No matter how much theoretical background and instructional pedagogy preservice teachers receive through university coursework, it is during the practicum phase that teacher candidates may feel the greatest apprehension regarding overall classroom management and student behavior (Putman, 2009).
Student Teachers’ Classroom Management Conceptions

There is general consensus among scholars that the student teaching experience is the key one for teacher preparation programs (Koerner, Rust & Baumgartner, 2002; LaCombe, 2003; Latz, 1992; Meuwissen, 2005). Often called practice teaching (Capraro et al., 2010; Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005), the field experience (Goodnough, Osmond, Dibbon, Glassman & Stevens, 2008) or the practicum (Meuwissen, 2005), it is during this phase that preservice teachers learn to apply a great many strategies and methods for instruction, while developing and maintaining relationships with their university supervisor and one or more mentor teachers (Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Koerner et al., 2002; Meuwissen, 2005; Minor, et al., 2002; Moore, 2003).

Student teaching in the U.S. has existed in some form for nearly a century (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; Wagner, 1985). With the advent of industrialization in the early 20th century, there was a push by U.S. policymakers to turn teacher preparation into an academic enterprise, which included a form of “practice teaching,” or what is currently termed student teaching in the classroom setting (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005, p. 73). As early as 1929, Congress called upon the U.S. Commissioner of Education to develop a national survey that would not only define the characteristics of effective teacher preparation but would also set forth guidelines to reflect increased requirements for teacher preparation programs that included experiential learning (p. 73).

It was not until A Nation At Risk was first published in 1983, that teacher preparation programs began to be overhauled by educators who sought to further reform the teacher preparation process (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005; NCATE, 2002). Between 1986 and 1995 The Holmes Group, a consortium of American education scholars and researchers, published a series of reports that traced the reasons for the
failed teacher credentialing process and recommended a new process for preparing and licensing teachers, especially with regard to student teaching and classroom management (Mayes, 1999). A large body of research suggests that 21st century prospective teachers should continue to acquire and assimilate increasingly complex perspectives and higher levels of expertise in managing diverse classrooms, so that they in turn can deal effectively with students’ increasingly complex social and behavioral issues (Akar & Yildirim, 2009; Bolick & Fry, 2004; Freiburg & Lamb, 2009; Minor, et al., 2002; NCATE, 2008; Siebert, 2004).

During the culminating year of teacher preparation, student teachers often find themselves moving away from a perspective which emphasizes student learning, and toward one which emphasizes classroom management (Moore, 2003; Wilson & Cameron, 1996). Research suggests that educational institutions prepare candidates for teaching in classrooms that include a broad spectrum of student behaviors, and develop field experiences that strategically build on their conceptions about classroom management (Duck, 2007; Fajet, et al., 2005; Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Johnson, 1994; Latz, 1992; Minor et al., 2002). Student teachers must learn to successfully manage multiple issues that occur in classroom settings (Auld, Belfiore & Scheeler, 2010; Meuwissen, 2005; Minor et al., 2002). Some are of an instructional nature and include lesson planning, differentiation of instructional delivery and monitoring for understanding, while other issues have more to do with student behavior and discipline (Minor et al., 2002; Stoughton, 2006). Not surprisingly, a large number of preservice teachers enter the student teaching phase with feelings of apprehension (Stoughton, 2006).
A number of studies have investigated the incongruity between preservice teachers’ developing classroom management conceptions and their experiences during student teaching (Akar & Yildirim, 2009; Capraro et al., 2010; Freiburg & Lamb, 2009; Kaya et al., 2010; McCormack, 2001; Siebert, 2004). Kaya et al. (2010) for example suggest that as preservice teachers enter the student teaching phase, their beliefs about discipline and classroom management shift dramatically from a constructivist, or student-centered stance to a more controlling position. Capraro et al. (2010) also found that as teacher candidates enter the student teaching phase, they come to feel ambivalence between the learner-centered teachings of the university and the more procedural and applied teachings at the school setting. They eventually gravitate toward a more transmission-oriented and controlling classroom demeanor while dismissing the more theoretical teachings they learned while at the university.

A variety of factors may contribute to, and greatly influence the developing classroom management conceptions of elementary preservice teachers as they enter the student teaching phase. Three factors that are examined in depth include the role of the cooperating teacher, the feelings of self-efficacy that student teachers bring to the classroom setting, and the impact of student teachers’ perceptions on effective instruction.

**Role of the mentor teacher.**

The first factor that may have a profound effect on student teachers’ perceptions of classroom management is the relationship between the student teacher and the cooperating, or mentor teacher (Iceman Sands & Goodwin, 2005). Mentoring, according to Kwan and Lopez-Real (2005), is ongoing and comprises both “a relationship and a process” (p. 276). Because of the importance accorded the student teaching experience
and its subsequent relation to teacher retention, the role of the mentor teacher becomes a very important one in the preparation of the student teachers in their care (Clement, 2002; Glenn, 2006; Rajuan et al., 2007; Stanulis & Russell, 1999). In fact, the role of the mentor teacher is often referred to as one of the most critical factors in the professional preparation of student teachers (Clement, 2002). Furthermore, research suggests that the initial environment that the mentor creates for the student teacher becomes a critical factor in the student teacher’s classroom management success (Clement, 2002; Glenn, 2007; Rajuan et al., 2007; Ritter, 2009).

No matter which format for mentorship is selected, research suggests that it is the relationship between the mentor and the student teacher that has the most impact on the student teacher’s subsequent success and retention as a novice teacher (Glenn, 2006; Stanulis & Russell, 1999). It is thus reasonable to assume that the process of selecting the right cooperating teacher might be an arduous one, undertaken with great care as to matching personalities, teaching styles and classroom management belief systems (Glenn, 2006; Klausheimer, 1994). Several studies imply that an effective mentor teacher should be chosen based on characteristics such as depth of curriculum knowledge, instructional experience, or the ability to model “engaging and innovative” instructional practices (Loughran & Berry, 2005, p. 194), and in particular, classroom management skills (He & Levin, 2008; Iceman Sands & Goodwin, 2005). In addition, Kwan & Lopez-Real (2005) found that the mentor teacher assumes a dual role, meaning she is both a friend and a formal teacher (p. 276) or one who initially establishes a positive working relationship with the student teacher at the outset of the student teaching phase.

Glenn (2006) found that student teachers value attributes of the cooperating teacher such as organization and planning, positive rapport and compassion with
students, knowledge of subject matter, establishment of daily routines, and good classroom management. He emphasized that in the view of student teachers, mentor teachers should not only help student teachers become effective practitioners but should help them to develop as professionals in the field. This includes assistance in the area of behavioral issues, positive student discipline and classroom routines. Additionally, Stanulis and Russell (1999) found that student teachers valued mentors who communicated effectively, who provided emotional support, and who they trusted to “jump in” (p. 69) or intervene during difficult classroom management situations.

However, some research also suggests that the matching of student and cooperating teacher often seems to be the arbitrary result of the placement of the student teacher with any available experienced teacher who is willing to mentor (Awaya, McEwan, Heyler, Linsky, Lum & Wakukawa, 2003; Merrett & Wheldall, 1993; Rajuan et al., 2007; Ritter, 2009). Furthermore, not all mentor teachers may understand the inquiry method and constructivist theory, which are cornerstones of the modern preservice teaching program (Awaya et al., 2003; Moore, 2003; Rajuan et al., 2007).

There may be numerous obstacles to establishing and maintaining specific standards in mentor teacher proficiencies across settings, particularly with regard to classroom management (Awaya et al., 2003; Rajuan et al., 2007). Awaya et al. (2003), for example claim that a lack of appropriate criteria for assigning mentors to student teachers often leads to the selection of mentors based solely on a “contractual arrangement” (p. 45) between the university and the partnership school. Ramanathan and Wilkins-Canter (2000) found that a majority of mentor teachers were not provided adequate professional development by the partnering university in the supervision and evaluation of student teachers in any aspect of instruction. This could have been due to
the reluctance of universities to require such training and to the limited amount of time mentors have to attend such professional development (pp. 106-107).

Similarly, Iceman Sands and Goodwin’s (2005) survey study determined that while mentor teachers rate themselves as being generally knowledgeable and skillful about their own competencies in the areas of curriculum, instruction and classroom management, they feel less sure of their ability to adequately transfer those competencies to student teachers under their supervision (pp. 825-826). Results indicated that while over 90% of the mentor teachers believed they modeled classroom management practices regularly for student teachers, only 62% rated themselves proficient in this area (p. 824). The authors concluded that it is incumbent upon the university to provide ongoing training to mentor teachers so that they, in turn can better support student teachers.

Furthermore, Rajuan et al. (2007) investigated the role expectations of 78 student teachers and compared their responses to those of 40 mentor teachers with regard to classroom management and other aspects of instruction. They found that over a third of student teachers rated the practical and personal aspects of teaching as important attributes for mentors. Practical aspects of instruction included “coping of dilemmas” (p. 232), where “the focus is on situations that take place in a changing classroom context in which there are no final or absolute solutions” (p. 232), or in other words, classroom management situations. Personal aspects of teaching encompassed affective characteristics such as caring, trust, nurturing and appreciation. Student teachers looked to the mentor as both a guide and as a reflection of their personalities in the classroom.

Rajuan et al. (2007) also found that just as preservice teachers come to student teaching with previously held conceptions and orientations about teaching, mentor teachers possess their own prior conceptions regarding their perceived ability to deliver
curriculum, instruction, assessment and classroom management that are closely aligned with their professional self-image. In addition, mentor teachers may have developed classroom procedures and instructional methods intuitively over the course of several years based on their unique contextual experiences with changing sets of students. These conceptions can result in conflict with student teachers, particularly if mentors see themselves as experts who possess technical knowledge, rather than as guides whose job it is to develop student teachers’ confidence through “experimentation and risk-taking” (p. 238).

These findings and those of other researchers indicate that classroom management beliefs and experiences of mentor teachers may have a profound impact on the developing conceptions of the student teachers with whom they work (Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005; Clement, 2002; He & Levin, 2008; Johnson, 2003; Glenn, 2006; Kagan & Warren, 1992; Koerner et al., 2002; Kuechle, Holhauzer, Lin, Brulle & Morrison, 2010). Moore (2003), for example, found that teacher candidates who first begin student teaching often adopt the management style expressed by the cooperating teacher regardless of whether they are in conflict with theory or practice suggested in the university classroom. There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. For one, the assignment of a mentor to a student teacher may be accomplished according to a hierarchical structure, in which the protegé understands that she is expected to assume an unequal and often subservient role (Awaya et al., 2003). Another explanation may have to do with a lack of self-confidence (Clement, 2002). Since the student teacher is entering a situation that is not of her making, her perceptions may be affected when she first enters a classroom that is not hers, the students are unknown, and the rules are already established by the mentor teacher (LaCombe, 2003)
Other researchers also found that preservice teachers chose to follow the mentor teacher’s management style rather than risk their disapproval (Clement, 2002; Moore, 2003). Clement (2002) studied student teachers’ perceptions about what their cooperating teachers were sharing with them about classroom management strategies, and the most frequent management problems encountered in their classrooms. Interestingly, the problems ranked highest by the student teachers were not the same as those ranked highest by the cooperating teachers, which led the researcher to conclude that student teachers either do not want to criticize their mentor teachers, or they lack the experience to perceive all off-task behaviors in the classroom (Clement, 2002).

Likewise, Stoughton (2006) analyzed occasions in which student teachers either agreed or disagreed with accepted classroom management practices, and found that almost all the participants indicated ambivalence and discomfort about the need to maintain classroom control; instead, they wished to develop a positive classroom climate that promoted social justice and differentiated instruction. They further indicated their desire to practice a more positive style of classroom management than that of the mentor teacher, one that focused on students’ needs for growth and understanding rather than on the needs of teachers to maintain obedience and order (p. 1033).

Clearly, pre-service teachers’ ideas regarding classroom management are significantly impacted by their mentors (Clement, 2002; Putman, 2009). The research discussed above underscores the need for teacher preparation programs to not only address the issue of the student teacher-mentor teacher relationship, but for mentor teachers to be trained thoroughly in classroom management theory and foundations prior to being paired with a student teacher. Given the findings discussed above, there seems to
be a need for further research that examines the role of the mentor teacher in the formulation of student teachers’ classroom management conceptions.

**Student teachers’ self-efficacy.**

Just as the mentor teacher plays a significant part in the preservice teacher’s evolving conceptions of classroom management, a number of studies have showcased the importance of the student teacher’s sense of self-efficacy as it affects and is affected by, her evolving conceptions of classroom management. Poulou (2007) defines self-efficacy within an educational context as “a teacher’s judgment of his or her ability to execute particular courses of action and bring about desired goals” (p. 192). The cumulative effects of lack of classroom control can contribute to a lack of what social cognitive theorists call low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Chambers, 2005; Hong, 2010; Poulou, 2007; Putman, 2009).

Empirical studies suggest that teachers who have low self-efficacy with regard to classroom management are more likely to experience feelings of failure, a lack of enthusiasm for teaching, decreased stamina in coping with difficult student behaviors, and self-doubt about their ability to teach (Chambers, 2005; Hong, 2010; Poulou, 2007; Putman, 2009). Furthermore, research suggests that feelings of low self-efficacy which are not thoroughly addressed in the teacher education program, often lead to higher levels of teacher stress, burnout and risk of leaving the profession within the first five years of their career (Hong, 2010; Martin, 2004). Lacking the confidence needed to create and maintain an orderly classroom, novice teachers can experience difficulty providing meaningful instruction for students, which in turn can lead to feelings of stress, anxiety, loss of autonomy, and teacher burnout (Alvarez, 2007; Bandura, 1977; Boynton &
Boynton, 2005; Çakmak, 2008; Hong, 2010; Kaya et al., 2010; Merret & Wheldhall, 1993; Stoughton, 2007).

Stoughton (2007), for example, found that beginning teachers are primarily concerned with managing classrooms filled with what he termed “unruly and difficult to teach” students (p. 1025), rather than with delivering effective instruction. Some may doubt their abilities to effectively handle classroom disruptions, leading them to become either overly concerned with class control or too vague in their expectations of student behavior (Putman, 2009). The resulting confusion can lead to a lack of teacher self-efficacy (Duck, 2007).

Stoughton (2006) also suggests that learning to create and maintain effective classroom control is imperative and contributes greatly to the development of a student teacher’s self-efficacy. Indeed, as preservice teachers enter the student teaching phase, their developing conceptions of instruction and classroom management are often challenged by the immediate problems they may face in the classroom environment (Rajuan et al., 2007; Stoughton, 2006). Often, they must navigate between the world of the university and that of the classroom to construct new perceptions of classroom management, which may conflict with a school’s established classroom norms, procedures and consequences (p. 1029). Feelings of inadequacy and low self-efficacy may become especially obvious when they become novice teachers and are placed in large, urban classes that may include a large number of English Learners, students with serious behavior issues, students with low achievement, and students with special learning needs and Individual Education Programs (IEPs) (Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997).
There are a variety of possible explanations for these feelings of inadequacy. Often, preservice teachers arrive at the student teaching phase with existing low self-efficacy (Poulou, 2007; Putman, 2009), meaning that they do not believe in their ability to use certain behaviors to produce effective classroom outcomes. Feelings of inadequacy could also be attributed to the prospect of having to work long hours, establish relationships with prospective colleagues, assume overwhelming duties outside the classroom, deal with administrators and parents, and struggle with student motivation (Fry, 2007), usually with no remuneration, during the student teaching phase.

Creating and maintaining an effective level of control in a classroom is admittedly a pressing concern for student teachers (Akar & Yildirim, 2009; Boynton & Boynton, 2005), and research suggests that university and other teacher preparation programs should provide adequate training and preparation in the practical application of classroom management skills as a requisite for success during the student teaching phase (Merret & Wheldhall, 1993; Putman, 2009; Wilson & Cameron, 1996). Supporting and nurturing a student teacher’s self-efficacy may lead her to implement more effective classroom management strategies, which in turn may lead to a more positive instructional climate, increased student independence, and greater student achievement (Freiburg & Lamb, 2009; Merret & Wheldhall, 1993). To promote and maintain candidates’ feelings of self-efficacy, research suggests that elementary education programs provide them with an equal measure of high quality coursework in content and theory, and an emphasis on classroom management skills and strategies. By doing so, new teachers may be better prepared to take on the practical aspects of behavior management and instruction within their own classrooms (Çakmak, 2008; Hong, 2010; Merret & Wheldhall, 1993; Putman, 2009; Stoughton, 2007).
Moreover, Wynn and Kromrey’s (2000) longitudinal study of 26 elementary student teachers determined that while they expressed initial feelings of ambivalence toward classroom management, over time they gained a more positive and student-centered outlook. They found that a majority of student teachers’ conceptions of classroom management progressed through Fuller’s “continuum of concerns” (1974, as cited in Wynn & Kromrey, 2000, pp. 8-9). These concerns initially focused on the student teacher’s survival and included concerns about the use of control, verbal and nonverbal communication and questioning of students, reflecting a self-oriented view. Over time, these concerns shifted to a second level that reflected student teachers’ growing focus on instruction and included active involvement, student teacher pacing, planning and modeling of lessons, and transition activities. Student teachers eventually progressed to the third level of concerns, which were more student-centered in nature and which included differentiation for student learning, appropriate instructional strategies to motivate students and a sense of personal accomplishment (pp. 8-9).

Given the findings reported above, there appears to be a need for further research into the various ways that a student teacher’s developing conceptions of classroom management impact her feelings of self-efficacy. Furthermore, the student teacher’s feelings of self-efficacy, combined with her relationship with the mentor teacher, may impact her perceptions as to the quality of instruction she is able to provide in the classroom. These issues merit further study as well.

**Impact of classroom management conceptions on student engagement.**

Research has shown that effectively managed, student-centered (constructivist) classrooms facilitate higher student achievement (Akar & Yildirim, 2009; Freiburg & Lamb, 2009; Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Snoeyink, 2009). According to some
researchers, students work harder to please adults whose actions show they respect and care for them (Boynton & Boynton, 2005; Freiburg & Lamb, 2009). Putman (2009) found that a teacher’s level of expertise in and knowledge of classroom management both have a direct bearing on her perceptions of her ability to conduct instruction.

Utilizing technology in the classroom can have a profound impact on student teachers’ ability to reflect on the best use of classroom management to improve instruction. Downey (2008), for example, conducted a study that used reviews of 48 secondary student teachers’ videotaped lessons to study their perceptions as to the effectiveness of experiential learning at a university in Montana. Results showed that all of the participants benefited from the video analysis of their management styles, while 44% became more aware of the need to practice explicit classroom management and planning strategies they had been taught to enhance student learning (p. 6).

Snoeyink (2010) also suggested that the quality of a student teacher’s instruction was to a great extent dependent on her ability to make sense of classroom interactions on a continuous basis to prevent behavior problems from interfering with instruction. The author used eight student teachers’ videotaped self-analyses at a small, Midwestern private college to examine the extent to which student teachers’ “withitness” (p. 101), or ability to notice classroom discipline situations, could be used to improve overall classroom management, and to continuously check for student understanding of the lesson. Snoeyink (2010) described teachers who demonstrated withitness as those who were able to scan their classrooms regularly for potential behavior problems, and intervene before situations spiraled out of control (p. 101). Using a mixed-methods design, the author placed two cameras in the classroom, which allowed the researcher to simultaneously videotape the student teacher and the students. Snoeyink (2010) described
all of the participants’ written reactions to the video self-analyses as valuable, “allowing them to view themselves as their students would.” More importantly, all participants reflected that by watching both themselves and their students on the videos, they were able to adjust their own mannerisms including facial expressions, gestures, lack of movement or rate of speaking, that students perceived as impediments to learning (p. 104).

On the other hand, recent research also reveals that a teacher’s inability to establish and maintain an effective discipline system, results in the absence of sustained learning (Meuwissen, 2005). In an unstructured and disorderly classroom environment, student teachers may initially have difficulty developing positive relationships with students, or feel that they are not taken seriously by students, which could lead to feelings of decreased instructional effectiveness (Akar & Yildirim, 2009; Johnson, 1994; Meuwissen, 2005; Zuckerman, 2002). Inadequate training in classroom management might ultimately lead novice teachers to enter the profession unprepared to handle a variety of management issues, including those of students with disabilities whose behaviors fall outside the mainstream curriculum (Martin, 2004). Many otherwise highly qualified novice teachers actually leave the profession within their first three years due to the overwhelming demands of managing a classroom with only a generic theoretical base of preparation for classroom management (Boynton & Boynton, 2005; Meuwissen, 2005). With a growing demand nationwide for high-quality teachers, a number of studies have called for a stronger emphasis to be placed on the practical aspects of managing a classroom to increase instructional effectiveness (Johnson, 1994; Stoughton, 2006).

Gilberts and Lignugaris-Kraft (1997) found that competency in classroom management focuses mainly on the teacher’s ability to manage the educational
environment, rather than on her ability to affect student achievement. Downey (2008) implies that this is because student teachers themselves often come to the classroom setting with rigid, traditionalist and naïve views of classroom management, which include the view that teaching is synonymous with telling, that students do not have a responsibility to affect their own learning, and that “classroom management is unrelated to instruction” (p. 1).

Downey (2008) further claimed that student teachers’ reluctance to discard prior beliefs about classroom management and student learning derive from two pre-existing critical factors. One of these factors is known as confirmation bias, in which student teachers’ prior conceptions about classroom management and student learning may act as filters to maintain their conceptions, and thus prevent them from assimilating new or conflicting information or adjusting their classroom management beliefs (p. 2). The other factor is the influence of tacit, or implicit knowledge on student teachers’ beliefs, which the author describes as the unconscious beliefs the student teacher holds and of which she is unaware (p. 2). Downey (2008) claimed that these influences may prevent or hinder student teachers from being open to acquiring explicit, constructivist classroom management behaviors despite a large body of research that attests to their evidence of success.

Other researchers indicate a need for modern methods courses and practicum to provide congruent classroom management strategies to support and enhance student learning (Copeland, 1987; Goatly, 1995; Meuwissen, 2005). Meuwissen (2005), for example, noted that secondary social science student teachers found their university methods courses to be too theoretical and disconnected from the classroom setting. The author concluded that without effective classroom management training in their methods
courses, student teachers could not begin to meet the curricular needs of students, with
the result that instruction suffered (p. 257). The author determined that methods
instructors must step up their efforts to address the immediate and ongoing management
needs of student teachers while concurrently providing content and theory, to minimize
the cynicism student teachers may acquire during the practicum experience.

Given the findings of these studies, it appears that further research into the
classroom management beliefs of preservice teachers during the student teaching phase is
indeed warranted, particularly regarding to the extent to which the practicum experience
affects the student teacher’s evolving perceptions of classroom management.

**Gaps in the Literature and Study Rationale**

As this literature review demonstrates, an abundance of research has established
that elementary preservice teachers’ conceptions of classroom management are shaped by
their prior beliefs, by university coursework, by the classroom mentor teacher, and by
their own feelings of self-efficacy. A large number of studies have focused exclusively on
the elementary classroom setting and the mentor teacher-student teacher relationship in
particular (Çakmak, 2008; Çakmak, 2009; Chambers, 2005; Glenn, 2006; Kaufman &
Moss, 2010; Klausheimer, 1994; Latz, 1992; Martin, 2004; McCormack, 2001; Minor,
Onwueguzie, Witcher & James 2002; Stoughton, 2006). However, few recent studies
explore the ways elementary student teachers construct practical classroom management
knowledge using a situated cognition model that includes LPP (Cuenca, 2011; Swabey,
Castleton & Penney, 2010).

Similarly, extensive research has been conducted specifically on the ways the
university experience affects student teacher perceptions of classroom management
(Bolick & Fry, 2004; Choi & Lee, 2009; Cuenca, 2011; Martin, 2004). Yet for the past
decade, only a limited number of qualitative studies on the construction of practical classroom management knowledge have investigated the perceptions of elementary student teachers as to whether a link exists between what is learned through university coursework, and what is learned situationally in the elementary classroom (Glenn, 2006; Kaufman & Moss, 2010; Klausmeier, 1994; Poulou, 2007; Rajuan, Beijaard & Verloop, 2007).

There is also a lack of research that specifically addresses the perceptions of elementary student teachers as to their classroom management beliefs and their ability to provide effective instruction in the classroom setting (Putman, 2009). Finally, few recent studies have addressed the ways elementary student teachers perceive the combined influences of prior beliefs, university coursework, the influence of the mentor teacher, and the student teacher’s level of self-efficacy on their classroom management conceptions (Putman, 2009). This study, therefore, sought to explore whether and to what extent a connection exists between the university and the elementary classroom in contributing to student teachers’ perceptions of classroom management, using linkage theory and a situated cognition framework.

**Theoretical Framework: Linkage and Situated Cognition**

This research study was undertaken within the theoretical framework of linkage, whereby theory and content that student teachers learn from coursework are linked to their actual classroom practice (Allsop et al., 2006; Barksdale-Ladd & Rose, 1997; Cuenca, 2011; Holmes Group, 1990). Linkage theory is closely aligned with socio-cultural theory (p. 23), which is described in education as a student teacher’s learning that transpires within a “zone of proximal development” (p. 23). In essence, the student teacher acquires new learning through the process of testing herself at the boundaries of
what she already knows. In the act of making inevitable mistakes in judgment, she is given the opportunity to test alternative ways to handle future situations in similar circumstances. By continually stretching the boundaries of her comfort zone, she retains the knowledge from her experiences, which she is then able to link to new ones.

Linking education theory to practice further requires engaging the student teacher in multiple realistic classroom activities, in which the development of teacher practice is a complex and holistic process, and where the classroom itself is a real life learning laboratory in which to gain mastery of management and instructional skills (Allsop et al., 2006, pp. 19-20; Goodnough, et al., 2009).

A central component of linkage theory is situated learning or situated cognition, which in the context of student teaching is defined as the specific linking of theory and practice in backward or reverse fashion (Cuenca, 2011; Lave & Wenger, 1991, as cited in Hertzog, 2002, p. 27; Moore, 2003). Additionally, Anderson, Reder & Simon (1996) describe situated cognition as the concept that initial learning takes place in context-specific situations such as the classroom, then gradually becomes generalized through use in real-world settings. Cuenca (2011) and others (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989) suggest that within a situated learning model of teacher education, learning to teach and manage a classroom is a reciprocal process in that knowledge springs from the situation in which it occurs, and future situations offer the opportunity to apply the connections made with prior knowledge to new situations. In other words, how teachers learn to teach, and the situation in which they learn, are “inextricably linked” (Cuenca, 2011, p. 117).

Cuenca (2011) goes on to suggest that learning does not take place in isolation, but rather in social settings, or “communities of practice” (p. 118), or in terms of teacher
preparation, learning takes place in the classroom (Goodnough et al., 2009). Student teachers therefore begin their teacher preparation program with realistic, meaningful experiences from the field under the guidance of an experienced mentor while concurrently taking coursework at the university to broaden their knowledge base, similar to Kirshner and Whitson’s (1998) pillar of social learning theory. A hallmark of linkage theory is the relationship that university faculty and site-based mentor teachers develop and maintain with student teachers, and the creation of collaborative structures in which to support them (Allsop et al., 2006, p. 20; Çakmak, 2008; Clement, 2002; Moore, 2003; Putman, 2009).

During this phase, student teachers gradually participate in developing management strategies through the use of Limited Peripheral Participation (LPP), whereby they first observe, then participate alongside their mentors without the full burden of responsibility (Cuenca, 2011; Fairbanks, 2000; Lave & Wenger, 1991). One important aspect of LPP in learning to teach, according to Swabey et al. (2010), is that a student teacher’s success in constructing new knowledge is dependent to a great degree on the influence of both the mentor teacher and the university supervisor (p. 31). Swabey et al. (2010) state that it is crucial for the mentor teacher to initially scaffold the instructional process, introducing the student teacher to the periphery of the community of practice. As the student teacher learns experientially about instruction, the mentor gradually gives the student teacher more access to the practice of teaching, which enables the mentee to construct more knowledge and make vital connections to theory and content learned in coursework (p. 32).

LPP has gained a measure of popularity in recent years with teacher educators who have utilized the professional development school and school-university partnership
models of student teaching to increase the retention rates of novice teachers (Cuenca, 2011; Swabey, Castleton & Penney, 2010). However, there is a dearth of recent research on the use of LPP in the specific area of elementary classroom management.

A final component of linkage theory involves the use of reflection-in-action (Allsop, et al, 2006; Barksdale-Ladd & Rose, 1997; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1990). Reflection-in-action is defined as the observation and discussion by student teachers, of expert teacher practices and behaviors as a means to create viable understandings of instructional and classroom management knowledge (Ethell & McMeniman, 2000). Utilizing ongoing reflection-in-action practices during the practicum fosters students’ critical connections between classroom experiences and university coursework. Within a framework of situated learning, meaning is therefore being constantly re-created, as linking theory to practice flows freely in a circular rather than linear fashion (Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Margerum-Leys & Marx, 2004).

This study examined whether and to what extent student teachers perceived there to be a connection between the university and the classroom setting in their construction of classroom management knowledge. Is it possible that in the case of student teachers, the gradual assumption of classroom management activities might create lasting connections between theory, pedagogy, and practice, perhaps leading to better classroom management skills, increased student teacher self-efficacy, and greater student achievement?

**Summary**

As the review of the literature demonstrates, student teachers’ perceptions of effective classroom management evolve from the time they enter the teacher education program and may be influenced to some degree by such factors as university coursework,
the mentor teacher, and their own self-efficacy beliefs. In turn, these perceptions may have an effect on student teachers’ perceived ability to offer quality instruction in the classroom. Currently there is a lack of research exploring the ways that elementary student teachers build practical classroom management knowledge using a situated cognition model that includes LPP. The proposed study therefore sought to investigate these perceptions during the initial practicum phase. Does a link exist between the university and the classroom as contributing factors to student teachers’ classroom management knowledge?

The more teacher educators know about the classroom management perceptions of elementary student teachers, and the possible connections between the university setting and practicum experience as they contribute to these perceptions, the better they can guide and support novice teachers so that they enter the profession feeling adequately prepared to meet their own needs, as well as the needs of their students, and are less likely to leave the teaching profession (Çakmak, 2008; Cuenca, 2011; Duck, 2007; Ethell & McMeniman, 2000; Hong, 2010).
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate student teachers’ perceptions of the ways their university courses and their practicum experiences were linked to influence their knowledge construction of classroom management. The research questions that guided this study included:

(1) How do elementary student teachers perceive their construction of classroom management knowledge to be linked to coursework in a traditional teacher education program at a large, public university?

(2) How does this teacher education program prepare preservice teachers in classroom management?

(3) How do elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices prior to their practicum experience?

(4) How do elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices after their practicum experience?

(5) How do elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices to be linked to instruction?

(6) What role do student teachers perceive the mentor teacher to play in reinforcing the link between university coursework and classroom management knowledge?

The chapter is organized into six sections. The first section describes the research tradition and rationale, followed by a section on the research setting and context. Next, a section on the research sample and data sources describes and provides a rationale for the ways participants were selected and assured of their rights and protections. The last four sections outline the instruments and procedures which were used to conduct the study,
data collection methods and procedures, the types of data analysis, and the role of the researcher throughout the study including possible biases and subjectivities.

**Research Design and Tradition**

In order to determine elementary student teachers’ perceptions of how their construction of classroom management knowledge is linked to university coursework, I conducted a phenomenological case study (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994) within the interpretivist tradition. A case study approach as described within this context is a system that is bounded by time and space, and involves a particular set of individuals in a particular place and time (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). My case study was bounded by the participants (student teachers and university faculty) and setting (a university teacher credential program). A case study is also heuristic in that new meanings may be discovered through data collection and analysis (Schram, 2006).

A case study approach was appropriate for my study because I wished to conduct an “in-depth exploration” (Creswell, 2008, p. 476) of the process by which a small group of elementary student teachers acquired classroom management knowledge (p. 488). This case study can be considered “instrumental” in that it highlights the classroom management conceptions of elementary student teachers as they evolved during the student teaching experience (p. 476). Through the collection of multiple forms of data I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the ways effective classroom management is perceived by student teachers as they move through the teacher education program (p. 477).

According to Bloomberg & Volpe (2008), a phenomenological research tradition investigates the “lived experiences” (p. 11) of people through understanding the patterns
and relationships that develop among a small number of participants (p. 11). My study was phenomenological in nature because it concerned the perceptions of a small group of student teachers and their interactions, both with mentor teachers and university supervisors. A phenomenological research design is also holistic in its approach to data collection (Schram, 2006), and it assumes that evidence is presented through the lens of participants’ socially constructed meanings.

**Research Setting/Context**

My research was conducted at Southern Crest University (a pseudonym), a large, public, urban university located in Southern California. This setting was appropriate for my research because it had an established teacher education program that is one of the state’s top producers of new teachers, with close professional ties to the surrounding education community. These ties took the form of student teacher placement, professional development for teachers, placement of novice elementary teachers and follow-up support in the form of the Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment (BTSA) program for new teachers (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2012).

The education college at Southern Crest has both undergraduate and graduate teaching programs in elementary and secondary subjects, with 25 faculty members in the elementary education department alone. For the Fall, 2010 and Spring, 2011 semesters, a total of 278 students were admitted to the elementary multiple subjects credential program. Of those enrolled in Fall, 2011, approximately 72% were female. 25% were Hispanic, 42% were White, 3% were African American, 9% were Asian, and over half were under 30 years of age. Less than 50% of its students attend the teaching program full-time. It has placed many teachers at schools throughout the region and beyond.
Typically, elementary (Kindergarten through 5th grade) teacher preparation at Southern Crest may be undertaken in one of three ways. First, the Traditional (a pseudonym) fifth year program is intended for college graduates with a degree in any major, and may be completed in anywhere from two to five semesters depending on part or full-time enrollment. For undergraduates who are Liberal Arts majors, the Comprehensive Educator Program (CEP) (a pseudonym) may be taken concurrently for the multiple subjects teaching credential while the candidate pursues a Bachelor degree. For elementary teacher candidates who have earned a Bachelor degree in any field of study, and who wish to join a cohort, there are two additional options leading to the multiple subjects teaching credential. One option consists of an accelerated program, called the Advanced Preparation Program (APP) (a pseudonym), in which Southern Crest University collaborates with a local school district to provide candidates with intensive coursework, hands-on classroom experience and academic advisement. The other option consists of an internship in which the teacher candidate completes coursework and fieldwork while concurrently employed with an individual school.

In all of these programs, teacher candidates must complete a total of 39 units for the multiple subjects teaching credential, including one semester of supervised fieldwork and one semester of supervised student teaching in an elementary classroom. For most of the credential options, both fieldwork and student teaching may be completed either concurrently with university coursework, or after all coursework has been fulfilled. In any event, student teaching is considered the culminating phase of teacher preparation.

Regardless of which credential pathway the elementary teacher candidate chooses to pursue, attaining the multiple subjects credential requires coursework in the fundamentals of teaching; teaching methods in English language arts, mathematics,
science, social science, health, technology, English language development, physical education, and art; and improving the learning of students with special needs. In addition, candidates must take a course in educational equity and diversity.

**Fieldwork and Student Teaching**

Southern Crest requires elementary teacher candidates to complete the practicum, which includes fieldwork experience and student teaching, over the span of one or two semesters, after completing or concurrently completing all other multiple subjects coursework. In supervised fieldwork, candidates are placed in classrooms for three or six hours per day, five days per week for ten weeks under the supervision of an experienced classroom mentor teacher. According to its website, fieldwork experience provides an emphasis on “general pedagogical skills such as classroom management and lesson planning” (Southern Crest University, 2011), in addition to learning to teach the general education curriculum. A fieldwork seminar is also required and allows candidates the opportunity to reflect on their fieldwork experiences.

The second semester of the practicum consists of the student teaching component and the student teaching seminar. As in the fieldwork component, candidates spend ten full weeks in the elementary classroom under the supervision and guidance of an experienced classroom mentor teacher, and also under the direct instruction of the university elementary education supervisor. The purpose of student teaching is similar to that of fieldwork with the addition of “planning, implementing and evaluating all areas of the elementary education curriculum” (Southern Crest University, 2011). The weekly student teaching seminar is designed so that candidates have opportunities to reflect upon and analyze their fieldwork experiences. Student teachers learn to assess their pupil needs, gather data, analyze results, problem solve, modify teaching practices, and
determine the implications of their experience for future instruction (Southern Crest University, 2011).

Access to participants was gained through several gatekeepers. After receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the university, I gained access to student teaching seminar classes there through Elementary Education Department faculty and university supervisors.

**Research Sample and Data Sources**

**Sources of Data**

The main data source for this case study were five female elementary preservice teachers in their early 20s who, during the course of this study, attended Southern Crest University full time in the K-5 multiple subjects teaching credential program and were in the first semester of their practicum, or student teaching phase (see Chapter 4, Table 1). Participants were reassured that my role was purely that of a researcher and not an elementary school administrator, and that confidentiality would be maintained throughout the study and afterward. Since it was important to gain a measure of trust from student teachers as they described their perceptions, it was necessary to spend several months cultivating a reciprocal relationship with them.

Other data sources included two Southern Crest elementary education professors, namely Julia Raines and Harvey Stevenson (pseudonyms), both of whom are elementary seminar instructors. These faculty members did not provide direct supervision of student teachers during the first semester of the practicum phase. Professors Raines and Stevenson have each been with the university for over ten years. Prof. Stevenson coordinates the matching of student teachers with mentors at area partner schools. He also teaches an elementary student teaching seminar, and provides student teachers access
to numerous workshops, conferences and presentations on campus that involve all aspects of teaching, including workshops on the topic of classroom management.

Prof. Raines has also worked at Southern Crest for many years as an adjunct lecturer in the elementary education credential program. Aside from her teaching duties, Prof. Raines is a support provider with the state’s New Teacher Assessment and Support (NTAS, a pseudonym) program.

My intent was to gain the classroom management perspectives of these participants separately from those of student teachers. In addition, triangulating data from multiple sources served to enhance the validity of the study results. Creswell (2008) defines triangulation of data as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals” (p. 266) in order to lend credibility and accuracy to support a theory.

Data types included audio recordings and transcripts from interviews and focus groups; online student teacher journals; review of student teaching seminar syllabi and class handouts; and field notes from an observation in the student teaching seminar. Using multiple forms of data collection provided validity to the study through triangulation of data.

**Sampling Strategies**

Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants. In purposeful sampling participants are selected intentionally to study a specific phenomenon from information-rich, multiple perspectives (Creswell, 2008). In addition, a criterion based sampling strategy was employed to further narrow the field of participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). All of the student teachers had to be ready to enter the practicum phase of their teacher preparation program at the university and must have had roughly the same coursework. Three participants – Mary, Carly, and Wanda – were enrolled in either the
Traditional fifth year credential program or the Comprehensive Education Program (CEP), while two participants – Andrea and Rachel – were enrolled in the Advanced Preparation Program (APP).

University faculty assisted in recommending the participants based on their possible interest in the study and their ability to communicate well. Since the sample was so small, at least two of the participants were chosen based on their assignment in Title I schools, while the other three participants had been placed at non-Title I schools. This allowed for student teacher participants to experience and reflect on working with students from varying socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

University faculty participants were solicited based on the recommendation of one of the Elementary Education department faculty and the program directors in charge of student teacher placements. Faculty participants were selected based on their role as seminar instructors during the Fall 2012 semester, and on their willingness to participate in the study.

**Ethical Issues**

In regard to ethics, I assumed a deontological stance at all times during the research process. According to Glesne (2011), a deontological stance is one in which the researcher must use ethical standards at all times when representing the research purpose, and to gain entry to a setting (p. 176). Therefore, this study was conducted according to ethical standards of social science research (Creswell, 2008). The Institutional Review Board (IRB) process of the university was followed in respecting the rights and obtaining the consent of participants for the research study. To that end, prior permission from the IRB was obtained to proceed with the research prior to soliciting any participants. During data collection, honesty as to the nature of my study was maintained, and participants
were fully informed as to the nature of the research, were treated with respect and assured of confidentiality at all times. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. Ethical guidelines were also adhered to when interpreting research findings to the education community. Finally, continuous consideration and reflection on the integrity and validity of findings and their significance were noted throughout data collection and interpretation (p. 13).

Permission to conduct my research at the university setting was obtained through the Internal Review Board (IRB) process. In addition, access to participants was granted by several gatekeepers, namely, the student teacher program coordinators, who assisted in selecting participants who met research criteria. The adult consent form specified the purpose and procedures of the study, including the length of time interviews and focus groups would last, the potential risks and benefits to participants, and the opportunity for potential participants to opt out of any or all portions of the study without consequences or repercussions of any kind (see Appendix E).

While I stood to gain knowledge and perhaps make a contribution to the knowledge base surrounding the student teaching experience, I also wished to reciprocate by providing student teacher participants with individual feedback, coaching, and instructional materials and support, if desired, so that they felt they gained knowledge as well. To reciprocate for faculty participants’ involvement, I offered to serve as a resource to faculty during subsequent seminar sessions.

**Instruments and Procedures**

Four data collection instruments were utilized during the study. They included: the Elementary Student Teacher Interview Protocol; the University Faculty Interview Protocol; the Elementary Student Teacher Focus Group Protocol; and finally, the
Elementary Student Teacher Online Journal, for student teachers to record their bi-weekly perceptions online. These documents can be found in appendices A, B, C and D.

The Student Teacher Interview Protocol (Appendix A) was used to investigate student teachers’ initial perceptions about classroom management in September, 2012, prior to entering the student teaching, or practicum phase. A version of the interview protocol was pilot tested with an elementary student teacher in spring, 2012 to narrow the questions and remove researcher bias. The interview format was semi-structured, and questions dealt with expectations of classroom management training in the elementary school setting and the ways the university and the school setting conduct training in classroom management. The University Faculty Interview Protocol (Appendix B) was constructed to examine their perceptions of the effectiveness of classroom management instruction in coursework and in the classroom setting. Individual faculty interviews were held in November and December 2012 and were semi-structured in their format. Debriefing information was also included in both the student teacher and faculty interview protocols, which provided participants with the opportunity to ask follow-up questions or to add further comments.

The Elementary Student Teacher Focus Group Protocol (Appendix C) was utilized with all five student teacher participants at the end of the student teaching phase, in December 2012. Participants were asked to reflect upon their student teaching experience in general, and on their classroom management experiences in particular. Participants were given the chance to ask follow-up questions and to share information.

The Online Journal Protocol (Appendix D) was constructed to provide a forum for student teachers to reflect on their classroom management experiences at intervals during the actual student teaching phase (approximately eight weeks), without having to
participate in additional interviews. The first three Online Journals contained three to four open-ended questions regarding various aspects of classroom management, while the final Online Journal contained a short survey about issues that might have arisen in the classroom setting. Online Journals were intended to elicit student teachers’ thoughts, feelings and understandings about specific student behaviors, the student teacher’s relationship with the mentor teacher, and classroom organization and management in general.

**Data Collection**

Data collection included interviews, focus groups, online student teacher journals, observations, and document review. Data from individual interviews, focus groups and online journals were used most extensively for this study.

**Interviews**

The purpose of the individual interviews with student teachers was to gain a sense of the ways elementary student teachers perceived classroom management prior to their initial semester of student teaching. Semi-structured interviews using the Student Teacher Interview protocol (Appendix A) took place in September 2012 with five elementary student teacher participants. Each interview lasted approximately 60-75 minutes and was scheduled individually at times and settings that were convenient to participants. Interviews took place at local coffee shops close to Southern Crest University so as to provide a comfortable and convenient setting for participants.

Student teacher participants were initially asked to describe their overall philosophy about classroom organization and student discipline, their initial expectations for the practicum, and their feelings about working with a mentor teacher (see Appendix A). Follow-up questions were designed to probe for participants’ understandings about
student learning theory and to elicit their descriptions about specific management strategies they might use to handle behavioral issues in the classroom.

Semi-structured interviews using the Faculty Perceptions Protocol (see Appendix B) took place from November through December, 2012 with two elementary education faculty instructors. One interview was held at the researcher’s place of employment and lasted approximately 60 minutes. The other faculty interview was conducted by telephone. Interviews were scheduled individually at participants’ convenience. The purpose of the individual faculty interviews was to examine how classroom management theory and pedagogy were included as part of the elementary education curriculum, and the degree to which coursework in that subject contributed to student teachers’ conceptions of classroom management.

Faculty participants initially were asked to describe their personal philosophy regarding classroom management, and how that philosophy was informed by theory (see Appendix B). Follow-up questions probed for the types of theories participants emphasized in teaching classroom management strategies, and the extent to which they expected student teachers to apply those theories in the classroom environment. In addition, faculty participants were asked about whether and to what degree they felt the classroom setting contributed to student teachers’ conceptions of classroom management theory, and the degree to which they believed their partnership with the classroom setting linked classroom management theory with practice.

Utilizing the theoretical framework of linkage (Allsop et al., 2006; Barksdale-Ladd & Rose, 1997; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes Group, 1990), subsequent student teacher interview questions sought to elicit each participant’s prior conceptions of effective classroom management practices, and to what extent student teaching might influence
those conceptions. Once participants felt comfortable, follow up interview questions dealt with the ways participants expected to gain classroom management knowledge from the practicum experience and the mentor teacher. Student teacher participants were encouraged to speak freely, to provide anecdotes, and asked probing questions to elicit rich data from their thinking processes. At the end of each interview I explained the purpose of the online journal, and requested permission from each participant to send them four online journals bi-weekly for the duration of the Fall 2012 student teaching semester. I took notes during the interview as well as audio-recording each one. All data was securely stored in my home laptop computer which is password protected.

Audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. According to Creswell (2008), transcribing data enables the researcher to stay close to the data and get a better feel for participants’ responses and meanings (p.247). Transcribing each interview myself allowed me to describe any nuances of speech, tone, gestures, facial expressions and body language I observed from participants.

**Online Journals**

Four online journals were developed for each participant to access and record their thoughts for the duration of their student teaching experience. The purpose for each online journal was to provide an informal venue for student teachers to describe their experiences with classroom management throughout the practicum, with a few guiding questions as prompts for the first three and a short checklist for the fourth one (see Appendix D). Participants emailed their online journal responses to me on a bi-weekly basis, and I collected and stored the data securely on my home computer.
**Focus Group**

The focus group was conducted with all five student teacher participants in December, 2012, near the end of the semester. The purpose for conducting the focus group was to elicit participants’ overall feelings about their initial semester of student teaching, their feelings about the effectiveness of the classroom management strategies they learned, their perceptions regarding the role of the mentor teacher, and the effect of student teaching on their sense of self-efficacy and on student engagement and motivation. Additionally, I sought to gain a better understanding of the degree to which classroom management knowledge had been linked through student teaching and university coursework. The focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes and was conducted at a local restaurant near the university so as to provide participants with comfortable surroundings as they voiced their thoughts and feelings. I used the focus group protocol to conduct the interview (Appendix D), which was audio-recorded and transcribed. As in the interviews, all data was securely stored in my home laptop computer, which is password protected.

The intent of the focus group was as a reflection-in-action session. I also wished to give participants the opportunity to reflect upon, discuss and share with each other their specific experiences with classroom management issues and whether university coursework aligned with the practicum regarding classroom management. Questions were semi-structured and focused on participants’ perceptions of the ways their classroom management conceptions had been influenced by the mentor teacher’s management style, and through university coursework. As the moderator/facilitator, my role was to guide the discussion and create a social atmosphere in which the student teachers freely expressed their perceptions.
Using a focus group format rather than individual interviews provided participants an informal setting to freely express and share their thoughts about classroom management. It was thought that a more casual setting would encourage these student teachers to better recall, reflect upon, and analyze specific issues that arose during the practicum than they otherwise would have done during an individual interview. Furthermore, it was hoped that participants would have established enough of a rapport with each other and with me to provide rich data.

**Observation**

I observed one session of a student teaching seminar course at the university that included information on classroom management strategies. The purpose for observing was to contextualize the various ways classroom management strategies were delivered to elementary student teachers prior to the practicum phase. I took notes on the classroom arrangement, the number of students, the lesson topic and the type of instructional delivery (lecture, group work, individual seatwork etc.). I compiled field notes and analytical memos which focused on the instructor’s approach to classroom management, student responses, and student questions or discussions.

Observing allowed me to view the ways student teachers’ classroom management perceptions were shaped by their discussions with the instructor and their peers, and the extent to which they made connections between their classroom management coursework and the practicum. Observation also allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of the way classroom management was discussed than interviews or a focus group alone.

**Document Review**

Several types of documents were reviewed during data collection. These included the university syllabus and course handouts, including articles, from one elementary
student teaching seminar. The purpose for reviewing these documents was to gain a sense of the ways university faculty approached educational theory and classroom management in their classes. I was interested in examining topics that dealt specifically with student behavior, relationships with the mentor teacher, classroom environment, and organizational design (lesson planning, transitions, and classroom routines).

**Data Analysis**

In qualitative research, data analysis is the process of managing, organizing and making sense of all the data that is collected during research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 95). Data analysis involves transforming all the raw, or untouched qualitative data that is collected in the form of field notes, reflective journals, analytical memos, interview transcripts and document reviews, into meaningful findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 95). Analyzing mounds of data is usually done in a series of continuous and overlapping steps that enable the researcher to check and cross-check emerging patterns and themes (Glesne, 2011). Early data analysis consisted of preliminarily exploring the collected data to get an overall sense of developing patterns or themes (Creswell, 2008). As I immersed myself in the interview audiotapes and observation field notes, I jotted down ideas and recorded initial hunches to get a sense of the data in its entirety before breaking collected data into smaller segments. I also wrote analytical memos on the potential effects of my positionality as a school principal on the data collection process (see Role of the Researcher, below).

My purpose during data analysis was to compare student teachers’ initial conceptions of classroom management from coursework and prior experiences, to their conceptions during and after student teaching. Therefore I segmented their responses into codes that represented their perceptions, feelings and experiences regarding classroom...
management. To maintain a neutral perspective, I compiled and examined multiple sources of data, discussed emerging themes with peer researchers, and offered to conduct member checks with participants to validate the accuracy of interview transcripts and my analysis of their responses. I also offered to conduct member checks with instructors so as to validate my impressions at a later stage in the research process and share any research findings with the department chair after my research was concluded.

After transcribing audiotaped interviews, I began the coding process. According to Creswell (2008), coding data is an “[inductive] process of segmenting and labeling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data” (p. 251). The purpose of coding data is to use evidence from the segments of collected data to note patterns and gradually develop specific themes that are connected to the research questions and literature review.

As I read through the data, I labeled segments of text with some initial codes related to setting, context, participant perceptions about classroom management, their experiences, relationships, concerns, behaviors, attitudes etc. Some of these codes were in participants’ own words and are known as “emic codes” or “in vivo codes” (Creswell, 2008).

**Thematic Data Analysis and Interpretation**

In qualitative research, thematic data analysis is the process of further chunking groups of codes into major ideas, or themes which connect back to the literature review and conceptual framework (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 131), and attempt to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2008, p. 254). Thematic data analysis should eventually lead the researcher to a consistent interpretation of the overall findings.
I used data summary tables, comparison tables, flowcharts, overlays, matrices and other graphic displays to establish relationships between codes and reduce redundant and overlapping coded themes (Glesne, 2011). This process provided me with a visual tool to represent chunks of coded data, patterns and themes in both logical and relational formats. Analyzing data thematically by cases also enabled me to conduct higher level analysis. I accomplished this by comparing perceptions among and between participants (within-case and cross-case examination) and investigating the extent to which my analysis was consistent with the existing literature (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008).

I also periodically submitted transcripts, coded data and summary tables to peer researchers for colleague checks (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008), and I continually corroborated evidence from transcripts, observational field notes and analytical memos to triangulate data and validate data analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2008).

The final stage of data analysis was interpretation. Creswell (2008) describes interpretation in qualitative research as the process of “making sense” of the data by connecting it to a larger phenomenon, namely the literature review (p. 264). In addition, interpretation involves creating a summary of findings and presenting the results of data analysis. Interpretation of findings involves synthesizing all thematic data and determining their relationship to the literature review and the theoretical framework of linkage. For my study, this was accomplished by comparing and contrasting my findings about student teacher perceptions to the literature review and noting any limitations, ambiguities or discrepancies that arose out of data analysis. Analyzing data within this context contributed to a more trustworthy interpretation of results (Glesne, 2011). Interpretation involved my questioning the extent to which data analysis was trustworthy, by engaging in reflexivity and thinking critically about the research process in its entirety.
(Glesne, 2011, p. 211). It also involved triangulation of data from various sources to achieve and maintain validity, continuous attention to any issues of researcher bias or subjectivity throughout data analysis, and the solicitation of data analysis feedback from participants and peer researchers to mitigate those biases (Glesne, 2011).

**Role of the Researcher**

According to Glesne (2011), researchers occupy a particular role in research that can be uncomfortable but can also be useful as a form of feedback. Researchers are also learners who can feel overwhelmed or anxious during data collection, and should therefore take time to reflect and interact with the data and their role in interpreting that data (pp. 59-61). Researcher subjectivity or bias is a type of reflexivity in which the research is viewed through various lenses, emotional reactions or sensitivities (pp. 151-153), that can and should lead to further research questions.

I assumed several roles throughout the research process. During data collection I became a reflexive learner-researcher (Glesne, 2011), or someone keenly aware of all of my “selves” in relation to elements of the research process including setting, participants and procedures (Hong, 2010; Kaufman & Moss, 2010). Because of my belief that explicit classroom management preparation in both the elementary teacher training program and in the practicum setting was inadequate to meet the needs of student teachers, I also became aware of my stance as an advocate for student teachers, or one who conducts qualitative research for the purpose of improving some aspect of society (Creswell, 2008; Glesne, 2011, p. 50).

As I conducted the study, I monitored the embodiment and position attributes (Glesne, 2011) that I brought to the setting, such as the fact that I was known to the participants as an experienced White, female administrator in a position of authority and
power in a nearby school district, as well as a researcher. While I reassured participants that my interest in their perceptions was purely as a researcher, I had to maintain awareness that my position as an administrator could have affected participants during data collection. Likewise, I was careful not to give participants leading questions that might provide responses they thought I wanted to hear. I ensured that my questions elicited only their perceptions, feelings and beliefs, by continually probing for specific examples from their experiences.

By conducting my investigation away from the elementary classroom itself, I hoped to create a safe place for student teachers to share their perceptions of mentor teachers and the ways in which they interact to transfer classroom management knowledge in the classroom. Since I had also worked previously with university faculty in my role as an elementary school principal, I hoped to be viewed as trustworthy by them and by the student teachers who chose to participate in my study. As I interviewed university faculty I continually monitored my stance to avoid being viewed as someone who would use research to undermine the teacher preparation program or the faculty-student teacher relationship (Peshkin, 2006).

To minimize the effects on data collection and analysis of my status as an authority figure and my personal beliefs as an advocate for student teachers, I strove to be acutely aware of all my subjectivities by continuously reflecting on them as they occurred (Peshkin, 2006). I created detailed analytical memos and reflections from observations, interviews, online journals and the focus group. I was also aware of the effects my research might have had on participants. It was important that I build trust and rapport with all the participants (Glesne, 2011). However, participants may have reacted to me in different ways depending on how they viewed my position: as a researcher, as an
administrator, or as an advocate for student teachers. No matter how I was perceived, data collection was affected from the time I entered the field, during the time it took to build these relationships, and as I exited the field of research. I needed to make allowances for these conditions.

The participants in my research also had the potential to affect me as a researcher, which could have led to ethical dilemmas. For example, as I gathered information from participants, I risked empathizing with and advocating for student teachers rather than maintaining a detached curiosity about the emerging themes. By viewing them through the context of my theoretical framework and research questions, my job was only to interpret the data I collected rather than to take action or right perceived injustices.

**Summary**

This qualitative case study investigated the perceptions of student teachers, specifically the extent to which student teachers felt there was a connection between the practicum and university coursework in constructing classroom management knowledge. The study drew on phenomenological approaches within the interpretivist tradition (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It was conducted at Southern Crest University, a large, public, urban university located in Southern California. The purposeful sample included five elementary preservice teachers and two teacher education faculty.

Data collection included individual student teacher interviews, a student teacher focus group, individual university faculty interviews, online student teacher journals, observations in a student teaching seminar, and document review. Data analysis and interpretation involved coding and thematic interpretation. Data collection took place
between September and December, 2012. Data from individual interviews, focus groups and online journals were used most extensively for this study.

The purpose for collecting data from multiple sources was twofold. First, coding data obtained from in-depth interviews and the focus group allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the personal classroom management experiences and perspectives of each student teacher. Second, triangulating data from multiple sources served to enhance the validity of the study results (Creswell, 2008).

I created matrices, flow charts and data summary tables for each participant, to more thoroughly examine student teachers’ personal conceptions of classroom management during and after the practicum.

I assumed several roles throughout the research process. One was as a reflexive learner-researcher. I also monitored the embodiment and position attributes (Glesne, 2011) that I brought to the setting as an experienced school principal, and I strove to be acutely aware of all my subjectivities by continuously reflecting on them as they occurred.
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This qualitative case study investigated the perceptions of elementary student teachers and the extent to which they felt there was a connection between the practicum and university coursework in constructing classroom management knowledge. It was conducted at Southern Crest University, a large, public, urban university located in Southern California. The purposeful sample included five elementary preservice teachers, all in their early 20s, who were in their first semester of student teaching. These student teachers have been given the pseudonyms Carly, Mary, Rachel, Andrea and Wanda (see Table 1 below for backgrounds and demographics).

Other participants were two teacher education faculty, Professor Julia Raines and Professor Harvey Stevenson (pseudonyms), who, at the time of this study, both taught sections of the first semester elementary student teaching seminar. Data collection included faculty and student teacher interviews, observation of a university seminar class, document reviews of supplemental classroom handouts, and a focus group interview. Data collection took place during the first semester of the practicum, from September through December, 2012.

This chapter is organized into five sections. Because the student teachers’ classroom management conceptions evolved in roughly linear fashion throughout the course of the program, the key findings are presented in chronological order of the student teacher experience: 1) student teachers’ classroom management conceptions prior to beginning the credential program; 2) the role of university coursework in the development of student teachers’ classroom management knowledge; 3) the role of the mentor teacher during the practicum; and 4) the student teachers’ post-practicum
conceptions of classroom management. This chapter concludes with a section summarizing the findings.

Table 1

Elementary Student Teacher Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Credential Program</th>
<th>School Placement</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carly</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>CEP</td>
<td>Non-Title I</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
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<td>Traditional</td>
<td>Title I</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>APP</td>
<td>Title I</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Asian Indian</td>
<td>APP</td>
<td>Non-Title I</td>
<td>K/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanda</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>CEP</td>
<td>Title I</td>
<td>K/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classroom Management Preconceptions: “They Don’t Know What They Know”

The student teachers’ prior conceptions of classroom management played a significant role in their acquisition of new knowledge as they began the teacher education program. At this point, all of the student teachers claimed that they believed in a student-centered (or constructivist) philosophy of classroom management, but three of them – Wanda, Andrea, and Rachel – actually described classroom management practices that were dramatically more teacher-centered, controlling and authoritarian. Student teachers were categorized in this study as more student-centered in philosophy if they emphasized constructivist principles (Freiberg and Lamb (2009; Kaya et al., 2010). In a constructivist classroom, responsibility for organizational and behavioral management systems is shared jointly by both teacher and students, and students have opportunities to demonstrate both leadership behaviors and self-control. Rewards and consequences are thus “intrinsic” (Freiberg & Lamb, 2009, p. 101) and agreed-upon, rather than handed down solely by the teacher.
Professor Raines, a Southern Crest faculty member and one of the seminar instructors, noted that student teachers’ preconceptions are “all over the board” and that “they don’t know what they know” about classroom management. They come to the credential program with a variety of cultural, educational and work backgrounds which affect their classroom management “knowledge base.”

The student teachers’ preconceptions were formed partly as a result of their prior educational, cultural and work experiences, and most of the effective classroom management strategies they described were referred to in isolation, rather than as part of a classroom management system. This section discusses the student teachers’ initial classroom management philosophies, their feelings of anxiety and apprehension toward classroom management, and contributing factors.

**Initial Classroom Management Philosophy: Teacher-Centered versus Student-Centered**

All the student teachers believed in developing positive relationships with students by establishing a student-centered classroom management system, but only two – Carly and Mary – had actually integrated these goals with conceptions of practice and were therefore categorized as student-centered. I defined a student-centered philosophy as being constructivist in nature, that is, non-interventionist or interactionalist, whereas a teacher-centered philosophy of classroom management was defined as being interventionist, controlling and authoritarian in nature (Putman, 2009).

The five student teachers all described their classroom management goals prior to the credential program using constructivist terminology; each stressed their most important goal as “creating a classroom community of learners.” Although four of them could not elaborate further on what a classroom community was, the student teachers all
mentioned learning the term prior to their teacher credential program, in a university course on child development and psychology. Only Carly was able to comprehensively describe a classroom community in constructivist terms, using words like “empathy,” “consideration,” and “positive reinforcement” when describing how to effectively manage students. Mary also used some constructivist terminology to describe her classroom philosophy, like “developing [students’] trust” and “earning respect” rather than “demand[ing] it” to describe that sense of community. However, she was unable to further articulate how to develop that trust and respect in students.

Rachel, Andrea, and Wanda also claimed to believe in a student-centered philosophy, yet they used teacher-centered terminology – that is, traditional, teacher-directed and rewards-based – to describe aspects of that philosophy. Rachel, for example, used interventionist terms including “boundaries,” “consequences,” and “drills,” to describe the ideal classroom management system: “The kids walk in [to the classroom], they go to their cubby, then … to their chair, then they’re quiet. I feel like that can make things more efficient, so you can get [to] learning faster.” Her need to maintain control over the students was evidence of a more teacher-centered philosophy of classroom management.

Andrea and Wanda had similar views about needing to maintain control. Wanda, for instance, worried about how she would get the students to listen to her and questioned her own effectiveness at “[creating procedures], boundaries and rules.” She had not had much prior experience with classroom management, and she emphasized the importance of the teacher’s role in establishing control over students, and creating structures to maintain a quiet, orderly classroom environment, “because if you let the students take control, or manage each other, it won’t be as structured.” Rachel liked structure also,
although she joked about a friend who taught a second grade class of “robo-second graders” who acted as though they had been “programmed.” She added: “That sounds really awesome to be able to have that kind of … quiet [in the classroom], and the kids have at least the illusion of listening.”

Rachel also believed in “creating a classroom community,” but she approached the management aspect in terms of establishing rules and boundaries: “That’s just so important … I feel like a lot of the time, the classroom can be chaotic … and it makes me more anxious when dealing with the students.” Andrea also expressed the desire to create a constructivist classroom, and hoped her mentor teacher would guide her to use constructivist strategies. At the same time, however, she was concerned that the mentor herself might not model appropriate techniques. “It’s not a perfect situation, you know … [the mentors have] been working for so many years. Some of them are closer to retirement, so they’re done, they [tell the students]: ‘Oh, my God, just stop talking!’”

Andrea’s apprehension stemmed from a prior experience as an after-school tutor at an inner city Chicago elementary school, where she had received virtually no teacher support in dealing with disruptive students who were often defiant and violent. She was therefore anxious about the level of support she would receive from her mentor teacher in the practicum, and worried about the type of management techniques that might be used by an older teacher.

The student teachers’ initial feelings of self-confidence depended on the amount of actual classroom management experience they had amassed prior to entering the credential program. Generally, the more experience they had had with actual classroom management situations, the more confident they felt about creating and establishing a behavior management system. Mary, for example, had worked as a high school coach,
and had extensive experience with classroom management, especially with older students. Mary was most comfortable with the organizational aspects of classroom management: “As far as the classroom setup … I have that under control.” Mary described her idea of a “classroom community” in terms of organization alone: “The students are facing the instructor … [and there is] small group instruction.” She was more uncertain about the behavioral aspects of classroom management, however, and could not elaborate how she would achieve that goal other than to cite isolated organizational strategies, like “scheduling time appropriately,” establishing “a logical set of rules and consequences,” and giving the students “clear expectations.”

Of all the student teachers, Carly exhibited the greatest level of self-confidence prior to entering the teaching credential program. Perhaps because she had been raised and educated in a different culture, and had been exposed to somewhat unique discipline situations in her educational background, she possessed a broader, more sophisticated understanding of classroom management than did the other student teachers, and she was confident in her ability to adapt to almost any classroom management situation:

You never know what happens in a classroom setting … You have to have the ability to improvise. Even though you have all that [classroom management theory] in your suitcase as a teacher, you don’t know what … your students bring in their suitcases … You always want to evolve.

Carly recognized that creating a classroom community involved establishing multiple and interconnected classroom management strategies, with a focus on students’ growth rather than teacher control. She grasped that an effective classroom manager had to be flexible and adapt to students’ needs. She viewed herself as a “role model” who believed in the concept of teamwork to motivate students to behave and learn:
In sports, you feel … frustration … when your players don’t get what you want …

At the elementary level, you have to be super sensitive … in some ways, [students] take you literally. In the classroom, you have to be really considerate of what they may feel, because we are the adults … and we know better than they do.

Carly’s classroom management beliefs aligned almost completely with her student-centered philosophy. She viewed her potential success as a classroom manager in terms of student motivation and learning, and she understood that her classroom management style was to some extent dependent on her ability to recognize and accommodate for her students’ individual learning styles: “You need to find something from each and every student … what motivates them, what engages them, and what pushes them to do not only the work, but to be involved wholeheartedly with whatever you have planned.” By contrast, the other student teachers came to the teacher education program with classroom management goals that narrowly focused on controlling the classroom environment, rather than on motivating students to learn.

Figure 1 below illustrates each student teacher’s initial classroom management philosophy as either teacher-centered or student-centered. Each student teacher was placed at a point on the continuum based on their stated beliefs, aspirations and expected behaviors. Wanda and Rachel, who had the least amount of prior classroom management experience, were placed at the left of the continuum, while Carly, who was placed furthest toward the student-centered side of the continuum, more fully grasped the teacher behaviors necessary to maintain a constructivist classroom environment. Andrea and Mary both had previously worked with students and had been exposed to at least
some aspects of classroom management; their statements aligned with both teacher-centered and student-centered philosophies.

**Figure 1. Student Teacher Philosophies Prior to Entering the Credential Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher-Centered</th>
<th>Student-Centered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanda</td>
<td>Carly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Mary</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of the student teachers’ initial classroom management philosophies was multifaceted and reflected a compendium of their preconceptions, knowledge, and beliefs. With the notable exception of Carly and Mary, three of them – Wanda, Rachel, and Andrea – espoused a more teacher-centered philosophy on the continuum. Professor Raines said that such a wide array of preconceptions makes it difficult for the university to adequately design classroom management content to meet all of their needs: “[The university needs to gain a] better understanding of what student [teachers’] needs are. They are not dealt with in a classroom management perspective, [rather] only in terms of curriculum.”

The next section explores influences on these initial beliefs as a result of the student teachers’ cultural and educational backgrounds, and their prior work experiences.

**Cultural and Family Influences**

The student teachers’ conceptions of classroom management were affected by the cultural and societal norms with which they grew up. Carly, for instance, provided rich descriptions of classroom management experiences from her time attending school in the Philliines, where treatment of students differed markedly from practice in the United States. Carly described how she was deeply influenced by a culture that condoned corporal punishment and student humiliation in the school setting:
As far as behavior, it’s brutal. Teachers are allowed to hit students … [if] the students would misbehave, they would have them ‘sit in the air’ … so they pretty much stand up, have their hands in front of them, and bend down tippy-toes. And that’s a punishment for not doing homework or an assignment.

Carly reflected on the influence her early education had on her subsequent classroom management philosophy. She described a memory from her childhood, when the teacher left the room on an errand and put Carly in charge of the class: “I didn’t know any better, so I got to [discipline] my own classmates.” When one of the students did not finish an assignment, Carly emulated her teacher by having the student “sit in the air.” After coming to this country to finish her education, she learned that “that was something so mean, and bad … I felt really guilty about what I did.” Carly said that her culture also did not take parent concerns seriously, because teachers were considered “always right.” This often resulted in teachers assuming almost unlimited power in managing their classrooms, which they often abused. Carly eventually immigrated to the US, where she learned that treating children with respect, rather than cruelty, was the norm.

Aside from Carly, only one other student teacher came from a different cultural background. Andrea was of Indian descent, was fluent in three languages, and had been raised by parents whose culture held that getting a good education was vital: “[F]or [my parents], education meant everything in the world.” Andrea’s beliefs about the appropriate way to handle classroom management issues arose from the consequences her parents had given her: “I [think I] would … just do whatever my parents did with me as a child,” although she did not specify what consequences her parents had used to motivate her or shape her behavior. Andrea wanted to create a “cohort feeling” in the classroom, but was unclear about how a teacher might use specific classroom
management strategies to achieve that feeling: “The teacher can do the management part by having everyone sit down in their seats for five minutes … and not have to constantly [tell the students to] sit down, be quiet, [and] listen to [her].” Andrea’s experience suggests a rather simplistic assumption that, like her, elementary students would naturally be motivated to learn. She grasped that the purpose for creating an effective classroom community was to create an engaging learning environment for all students, but she had very little understanding of how to achieve that sense of community holistically using effective classroom management strategies.

The other three student teachers were White and had all been raised in the US. Some had families whose backgrounds were in education. For example, some of Rachel’s relatives were teachers, which later influenced her decision to enter the teaching profession. She grew up listening to relatives discuss the ways they handled classroom management, which included jokes about not smiling until Christmas, or enforcing strict rules the first day of class. Consequently, Rachel wanted to maintain tight control over her classroom, and expected her students to think of her as “a very, very serious person who might have a burst of fun here and there.” Rachel also admitted to being anxious about student teaching: “I feel a lot more weight of importance in this … because you’re teaching people’s children. It is a huge responsibility. That weighs on my mind a lot.”

Educational and Work Experiences

The student teachers also developed some deeply ingrained beliefs about classroom management from their educational and work experiences. Their background knowledge evolved through classroom management situations they had experienced as children, and through their subsequent interactions with students in the classroom. They recalled quite a few simple classroom management consequences, which occurred for
infractions including excessive talking, not completing homework, or not paying attention during lessons. Mary said, “The teachers that I had used the method of putting your name on the board if you were misbehaving … and [as a result,] you didn’t have recess.” Some consequences were more humiliating, as noted by Wanda: “The teacher sen[t] the students that were misbehaving to other classrooms … to scare them.” Rachel also said that “[t]he teacher just yell[ed] at students to get their attention,” while Mary added: “I remember at the end of one week I got a sad face on Friday [for excessive talking], and I felt terrible.” These recollections contributed to the student teachers’ ongoing apprehensions about using punitive consequences to control the class.

The student teachers also recalled more positive examples of classroom management. Mary remembered “incentive jars … filled with marbles,” and collecting tickets that entitled students to pick a toy from a class treasure box at the end of the week. Wanda said that her primary grade teachers used hand signals to get students’ attention, which she believed was an effective form of behavior management: “[The teachers] set those boundaries and rules.”

In addition to their educational experiences, some of the student teachers had worked with students before entering their credential program. For example, Andrea had worked in inner city schools in Los Angeles, and on the South Side of Chicago as a second grade tutor in an afterschool program. She described the marked effect that these students’ behaviors had made on her classroom management conceptions:

I was assigned 12 students, I walk in and all I see are two kids throwing chairs across the room … So I [was] shocked, I was not introduced to the school this way … so I go in and I try to stop them, and one of them kicks me in the leg,
‘cause he was just so riled up, and they punch each other, there are “yo’ momma” jokes going right at each other. It was really difficult.

Andrea initially yelled at the students, until a security guard who worked down the hall explained that many of them had anger issues stemming from their home situations. This deeply affected her perceptions of effective classroom management. She was “a lot calmer with them” afterward, and was more willing to adapt her instruction to their individual needs.

By the time the student teachers began the credential program, they were more likely to emphasize their aspirations for establishing a classroom community in which students were intrinsically motivated to learn. Those who had majored as undergraduates in Liberal Studies or a field related to teaching also began to reflect on some of the prior coursework they had taken in behavior management and child development theories, and described how these theories contributed to their current conceptions of classroom management.

The Role of University Coursework

While each of the three credential pathways (Traditional, CEP or APP) at Southern Crest University offers coursework with its own unique exposure to child development, learning theory and behavior management, this coursework played only a limited role in constructing the student teachers’ developing conceptions of classroom management, at least prior to and for the first half of the practicum. From the fifth week to the end of the semester, the impact of university coursework began to subtly influence the student teachers’ perceptions of effective classroom management.

Before they began the practicum, prior university coursework contributed the least to developing the student teacher’s initial classroom management conceptions,
regardless of credential pathway. Other than their graduate level student teaching seminar, which took place during the same semester as the practicum, the student teachers could recall only one or two undergraduate-level courses as having provided any theoretical or practical references to classroom management. Furthermore, they could not explicitly describe how any of those theories were linked to actual classroom practice.

All five of the student teachers also felt there was a disparity between the amount of classroom management instruction and support they needed from their student teaching seminar, and what was actually provided through the first few weeks of the practicum. To present a balance of viewpoints from the university as well as from the student teacher participants, these findings are discussed from the perspectives of both the student teachers and two faculty members, Professors Julia Raines and Harvey Stevenson, who each taught sections of the elementary student teaching seminar during the Fall, 2012 semester.

Prior Coursework: Limited Connections Between Theory and Practice

Prior to entering the teacher credential program, the student teachers across the three education pathways were unable to recall learning much from their university coursework about theories of child development or behavior management. Carly, for example, said that in most of the classes she had taken, there was no real connection between classroom management theory and application: “I never really had a session where we focused … on classroom management.”

The only class that all of them remembered taking was an undergraduate-level course titled the Psychology of Education. This junior level class is a prerequisite for acceptance to the teacher credential program, and is designed for students who intend to pursue a degree in K-12 education. The course description states that the foundation for
the course is the “study of the theory of educational psychology,” including student motivation for learning, child development theory, classroom management, assessment, and differentiating for students’ learning styles, “culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds … [and] students with special needs” (Southern Crest Course Catalog, Fall, 2012). As part of the course requirements, students spend a minimum of 20 hours observing and/or participating in public school settings.

Mary, who was in the Traditional program, recalled, “In the [Psychology of Education] class, we discussed theories like Vygotsky and Piaget, but not how to implement those theories into classroom management.” Mary recalled learning only one behavior management strategy in this class, namely, to “write … classroom rules, that’s what’s been drilled into me,” but she did not specifically recall learning “how to set up my own [rules].”

Rachel was pursuing her teaching credential through the APP program. She also remembered a classroom activity from the course: “We watched a video about five first-year teachers … and we commented on various classroom management [scenarios] … how they deal with paperwork … with transition times … with students misbehaving.” Rachel recalled learning about two theorists in particular: “We’ve touched on Piaget and Skinner.” However, she could not describe who these theorists were, or what connection they had to classroom management, and said, “I don’t think they’ve influenced me.”

Andrea, who was also enrolled in the APP program, remembered watching the same video in her class, then filling out reflection worksheets on each classroom management scenario, and discussing how they would have handled each one. Although Andrea said the class was worthwhile, she felt it was somewhat disconnected from what goes on in the actual classroom setting, because “when you go into a classroom, it is very
different.” Nevertheless, Andrea believed it was important to learn some theory before trying to practice actual classroom management: “If I didn’t learn any [theory] and just went into a classroom … I don’t think I could do it.” Andrea thought that the purpose for learning behavior theory was so that the teacher could “manage a classroom [so that] … everyone feels safe.”

Although Wanda had also taken the Psychology of Education course as a Liberal Studies major in the CEP program, she was able to make only vague references to having learned about behavior management theory prior to beginning the teacher education program. In fact, she did not know the names of any theorists or what they stood for, but she did remember a saying she had heard in one of her undergraduate classes: “The … thing that was emphasized is that you’re not disciplining the student, you’re disciplining the behavior … You don’t take your … frustration out on the student. You try to change the [student’s] behavior.”

The only course Carly mentioned that covered classroom management issues was a special education class that, like the Psychology of Education course, was a prerequisite for entry into the multiple subjects teaching credential program. “Implications and Developmental Differences in the Field of Special Education” is described as enabling candidates to “gain knowledge and understanding of typical and atypical development and the implications for educating students with disabilities” (Southern Crest Course Catalog, Fall, 2012). Carly, like Wanda, was pursuing her credential through the CEP program, and had been a Liberal Studies major as an undergraduate student.

Interestingly, the views of both Professors Raines and Stevenson coincided with those of the student teacher participants regarding the role of university coursework in classroom management. They agreed that, regardless of credential pathway,
undergraduate and graduate coursework in classroom management theory was inadequate to provide a solid foundation in child development and behavior theory to support effective classroom management. Furthermore, they believed there was little connection between the theories presented and classroom management practices in a school setting.

Prof. Raines’ opinion about the lack of undergraduate coursework in theoretical foundations of classroom management was dismissive: “The student teachers should have already gotten [theory] in their previous classes … [C]oursework [in any of the credential pathways] doesn’t [cover appropriate] relationships with students.” Prof. Stevenson said that undergraduate coursework on child development and behavior theory was lacking in both the Traditional pathway and the undergraduate portion of the Comprehensive Education Program (CEP): “[Coursework] is heavy on [instructional] content,” especially within the Traditional teacher preparation program. Prof. Stevenson felt that the university’s Advanced Preparation Program (APP) was the best option for prospective teacher candidates who wished to ground their classroom management knowledge more thoroughly in theoretical foundations, although neither he nor Prof. Raines mentioned specific courses that were geared toward learning foundations of classroom management.

Whether they were in the Traditional, the CEP or the APP credential program, once the student teachers began the practicum semester, they were all placed in sections of the student teaching seminar. The seminar is a graduate level class that meets once per week just before and during the practicum to prepare them for the practical aspects of student teaching.

The Student Teaching Seminar: Minimal Classroom Management Content

Prior to student teaching, the five participants in this study indicated that there was a lack of classroom management content provided within the seminar. The Southern
Crest Course Catalog (Fall, 2012) describes the purpose for the student teaching seminar as “provid[ing] opportunities for candidates to reflect on and analyze field work experiences. Student teachers … learn to: 1) assess their own and pupil needs; 2) gather data; 3) analyze results; 4) problem solve; 5) modify teaching practices; and 6) determine implications of their experience for future instruction” (Southern Crest Course Catalog, Fall, 2012). The course description contains no explicit reference to candidates learning about theories of child development or classroom management, or connecting those theories to specific organizational and behavior management strategies, however.

Regardless of their credential pathway, the student teachers in this study all attended four sessions of the seminar prior to beginning their student teaching in a partner elementary school. They were introduced to the topic of classroom management in varying degrees, depending on the seminar class in which they were enrolled. Three of the student teachers were enrolled in Prof. Raines’ seminar as part of the CEP and Traditional programs, and two of those participants described some useful connections between her classroom management lectures, and what they subsequently experienced in the classroom. Wanda commented that:

[t]he way Prof. Raines has discussed [classroom management] is different from other professors. The others haven’t connected it to a work-related experience. They say, “You need to have good classroom management skills …” but they don’t [cite] good examples. Prof. Raines’ example is the best one that I’ve seen. I could connect it to the children.

Wanda was referring to one lecture in particular, in which Prof. Raines asked the student teachers to think about the way their boss or manager treated them on the job. Prof.
Raines was attempting to get the student teachers to see themselves as the “manager” and their students as the workers who deserve to be treated respectfully and fairly.

Carly was also in Prof. Raines’ seminar class. She remembered some important classroom management ideas from one seminar session: “[W]e talked about how rules are different from procedures … and you want to establish [those] for your classroom.” She particularly liked the way that Prof. Raines was able to break down the concept of classroom management and “relate it to life … our jobs … and the kind of manager you have. . . . It was [great] to see that you’re a teacher, you’re in charge, but you don’t have to be … a drill sergeant.” Carly also recalled a class in which Prof. Raines modeled her “student-centered philosophy [by acting] like a [classroom] teacher [would] … and she proctored the discussion [as] someone we [could] relate to.” Carly agreed with Prof. Raines’ philosophy: “As a teacher, you have to [be flexible] when a [classroom management] situation arises, even though you [may not] know what you’re doing.”

Not every student teacher felt this prepared, however. Mary was enrolled in Prof. Raines’ seminar, but she worried that she lacked skills in handling student behavior issues, and wished she could have been given more detailed background on classroom management in her seminar class before being placed in a classroom: “I would really like to know specific theories on classroom management [and] accepted … techniques … Even just some strategies to develop my own classroom management [because] I’m really lacking knowledge.” Mary believed it was important to learn some classroom management theory before going into the classroom: “[Y]ou need to learn the theories before you’re supposed to go into the classroom and apply the knowledge.” However, she thought it was just as important to actually see how a teacher integrated those theories
into actual classroom practice: “[U]ntil you try them or see [those theories] in action, it’s difficult [to get that experience].”

Rachel was working toward her credential through the APP program. Both she and Andrea, who was also in the APP program, were enrolled in a seminar class with a different instructor, and Rachel said that although she was learning a few tips from her required readings, such as how to deal with students who had ADHD, she did not feel that these strategies could realistically be applied in the classroom setting. She believed she had actually received more useful classroom management strategies from her classmates than from her seminar instructor: “We [all] comment on various classroom management [issues], like how [to] deal with … transition times, [and] with students misbehaving.” Rachel acknowledged that this hit and miss method of learning might not be the best way to learn effective classroom management.

Andrea also felt that the seminar should have given her specific classroom management strategies to succeed in the school setting: “I was hoping that the [instructor] would just tell me what to do … You talk about [classroom management]. This worked, this did not work … You see something, you … talk about it, and you take the best from it.” Andrea’s assumption was that the seminar would serve as a forum for student teachers to reflect on what they had experienced in the classroom setting, enabling them to generate a toolkit of classroom management strategies for their subsequent use.

Both professors agreed that there was a lack of classroom management content within the seminar. Prof. Raines said that student teachers learn only the basics about classroom management, specifically, “how to build [student] respect, set curriculum [standards] so [they are] achievable, [and] learn [about classroom] procedures, rules [and] expectations.” Prof. Raines further noted that none of the university credential program
pathways provided specific courses on classroom management, but rather, “just little pieces [of classroom management discussion] here and there.” For many student teachers, she believed that “theory in [the] seminar is too late,” since it is only a “culminating applications class,” and does not specifically address classroom management. Prof. Raines said that, as a result, most seminar instructors felt it was the student teachers’ responsibility to bring examples of actual classroom management issues to class, so that they could reflect on these realistic situations and problem solve them as a group. These remarks underscore Prof. Raines’ feelings of frustration regarding the lack of instruction in classroom management foundations in each of the three pathways, as well as her belief that the university could do more to adequately prepare prospective teachers in effective management strategies.

Prof. Stevenson’s views aligned with those of Prof. Raines. Although he cautioned that certain aspects of “instructional intelligence can’t be taught” in coursework alone, he nevertheless indicated that the university did have a duty to provide teacher candidates with a more thorough grounding in classroom management prior to student teaching: “The [student teachers] need more strategies to try, [perhaps] in a binder. Having a toolbox [of classroom management strategies] is crucial. Experience is also key, but that takes time.”

Prof. Stevenson said that student teachers enrolled in the APP credential program receive a better foundation in “neuro-developmental (social cognition) training, and are given more specific strategies, mindsets and awareness of [the relationship between theory and classroom management].” Furthermore, APP student teachers are “selected and interviewed” by university faculty based on their prior level of classroom experience. During class sessions, Prof. Stevenson regularly held open forum discussions with his
seminar students, so that they can “share what they [have seen] in their classes [at the school site], and reflect [on their experiences].”

Prof. Raines suggested that the university could strengthen its program in a number of ways. One would be the addition of a classroom management theory and strategies course to better prepare student teachers for the reality of the classroom: “It would be [ideal for the university to] actually [offer] an introduction to classroom management course. The [student teachers] need [to know] theorists and classroom management background.” Prof. Raines conceded, though, that such a class probably would not be offered in the foreseeable future, due to several problems including “issues of cost,” which determine the number of units allowed per student and the number of classes offered within the elementary education department, as well as the constant rotation of seminar instructors: “Course instructors keep changing, and the continuity of [instructional] delivery varies depending on foundational differences in [instructors’] clinical practices.”

One of the classroom management resources that Prof. Raines used to support her seminar students was a module developed for faculty use by the IRIS Center at Vanderbilt University’s Peabody College (IDEA and Research for Inclusive Settings, 2011). Prof. Raines used a module entitled “Encouraging Appropriate Behavior” (Curran, 2011), to discuss simulated classroom management with her students using published case studies. Prof. Raines said that she used these case studies with her class because they provide realistic behavior management issues that “student teachers can look for [to learn about] classroom management foundations.” She also had her students bring examples from the classroom to supplement her instruction on classroom management, although she admitted that the majority of her class was spent discussing curriculum and
instruction, and only a small portion was focused on classroom management. While none of the student teacher participants specifically mentioned utilizing the IRIS case studies to learn about classroom management, both Rachel and Mary did say that their seminar professors had encouraged them to reflect on actual classroom management situations during their seminar sessions.

Prof. Raines recalled that in past years, the university did offer both its Traditional and CEP teacher credential candidates a better foundation for classroom management, by coordinating methods classes in content areas, with field experiences and student teaching. Now, Prof. Raines explained, in order to boost her students’ feelings of success as classroom managers, she must regularly supplement her lectures on classroom management with computer-generated simulations, scenarios, case studies, and commercially produced classroom management programs.

Prof. Raines suggested that the university could improve the student teaching seminar experience, especially with regard to classroom management, by strengthening the “connection between first and second semester seminar faculty, to address any deficits [in student teachers’] classroom management knowledge.” She felt that doing so would provide more continuity in classroom management instruction for student teachers. As seasoned seminar instructors, both professors were most concerned about the long-term job prospects for student teachers who left the program without a solid foundation in classroom management theory and application.

As noted previously, while the student teachers’ earlier educational and cultural experiences had a great influence on their classroom management philosophies, their theoretical knowledge from coursework influenced their classroom management philosophies to a lesser degree. Once the student teachers entered the school setting for
the practicum, however, their classroom management preconceptions experienced a metamorphosis, due to the powerful influence of the mentor teacher. Their work with the mentor enabled them to develop new insights about effective classroom management by participating in hands-on, situational experiences in the classroom, something they had not had the chance to do prior to the practicum.

**Significance of the Mentor Teacher**

Regardless of what preconceptions they held before student teaching, all five student teachers noted in their online journals and in the focus group that they learned the most about classroom management strategies from the mentor teacher, rather than from university coursework.

At the beginning of the practicum semester, each student teacher was assigned to an experienced mentor teacher at a public elementary school. At Southern Crest, student teachers are typically placed by principals at neighboring Title I and non-Title I schools that offer to host them. Three of the student teachers were placed at Title I schools, which have a significant portion of the student population with incomes that fall below the poverty line. The other two student teacher placements were made at non-Title I schools.

According to Prof. Stevenson, in past years the university traditionally matched student teachers with their mentors in the nearby school district through his department: “I used to [make student teacher] placements and paired [them] up geographically [with partner schools].” Student teachers who lived outside the closest school district were placed by their own district in schools that agreed to work with Southern Crest. At the time of this study, however, time constraints prevented Prof. Stevenson and other placement specialists from researching each mentor teacher’s classroom management effectiveness or suitability for mentoring. The Southern Crest University website states
that “criteria for the selection of [elementary] partnership schools and [mentor] teachers are derived from the [state] Standards of Quality and Effectiveness for Professional Teacher Preparation Programs” (Southern Crest, 2013). There was no way to determine from the data, however, whether that criteria had been followed in placing the student teacher participants, nor was it clear from the data to what degree the student teachers themselves were aware of the criteria used to select their mentors.

This section examines the significance of the mentor teacher, and her contribution to each student teacher’s classroom management conceptions during the first semester of the practicum. It begins by describing the student teachers’ initial expectations for learning about classroom management from their mentors, and traces their evolving conceptions of classroom management through the first and second halves of the practicum. This section also discusses the student teachers’ perceptions about the mentor’s classroom management expertise and classroom management philosophy during the first half of the practicum, and the level of access to effective classroom management practices that the mentor granted to the student teacher during the second half.

**Student Teachers’ Initial Expectations and Impressions of the Mentor**

Four of the five student teachers looked to the mentor as the role model best positioned to guide them and practice effective instruction and classroom management strategies. Rachel, for example, was quite excited about working with her mentor: “I just really [want] to see a teacher in action!” Mary wanted a mentor who would help her reflect on the classroom management decisions she made, and who would support her and treat her as a colleague. Mary was also excited about learning effective classroom management strategies from her mentor teacher:
I just feel like I want to be a sponge and soak up as much as I can, and so I need someone that will do that for me and help me see where their thinking is, so that my thinking can line up with that.

For the first semester of the practicum, the student teachers spent 20 hours per week in the mentor’s classroom. During this time, they became immersed in the mentor’s organizational and behavioral systems, and observed her interactions with students. Comments from their online journals and from the end of semester focus group indicated that four of the five student teachers expected to learn the most about classroom management from their mentors. Mary commented: “I feel like I learned the most in the classroom … through observing my mentor teacher.” Andrea, too, echoed that “just being in the classroom … was the best way to learn.” Carly was the only student teacher who said she felt confident enough in her own classroom management abilities, and did not expect to need much guidance from her mentor.

The student teachers had varying expectations of their mentor teacher as a role model. Andrea said the ideal mentor was one who could “communicate,” while Wanda wanted her mentor to be supportive and grant her some “authority” in the classroom. Carly expected her mentor teacher to be a positive role model for student teachers: “[T]here should be a balance between being the teacher … and someone that a … student can approach whenever they need something.” She believed that an effective mentor teacher should be able to navigate between being an authority and a trusted advisor to students.

Initially, all of the student teachers professed to like and respect their mentors. Rachel commented, “I feel pretty comfortable. [My mentor is] a wonderful, easygoing person. She’s very similar to me, we have very similar backgrounds.” Mary echoed this
feeling as well, and asserted that she was looking forward to learning some useful classroom management strategies from her mentor teacher:

So I’d like to learn … I … want to know the reason behind certain things that they have going on in the classroom. I am very curious about why things are happening … and I’d also like someone that value[s] my input, and … allows me to develop some of my own ideas for the classroom.

All the student teachers wanted to work with a mentor who could help them create a classroom community of learners. They also desired mentors who they could trust and respect. Although the student teachers initially regarded their mentor teachers as highly competent and effective, by the fifth week of the practicum, they began to notice and reflect upon the underlying premises and theories upon which the mentor’s classroom management expertise and practices were based, and, in some cases, to question those practices.

Each student teacher wanted someone they could learn from and emulate, but they also expressed their need to understand the reasoning behind the mentor’s actions, particularly when dealing with more difficult behavior issues. Rachel, for example, indicated in one of her online journals that she had great respect for the depth of insight her mentor teacher showed in handling a delicate classroom management situation:

I … was giving [a math lesson], and all of a sudden my mentor teacher … [interrupted] … and then, afterwards she said, “the reason I stepped in is … all the kids were putting their heads down on their desks. And I [knew] it meant that they weren’t understanding the lesson … and they eventually just gave up, and that’s their signal of giving up.” I didn’t know that … [but] she … knows [their] signals, and that really helped me.
Mary, too, noted in the focus group that some of her mentor’s classroom management practices seemed unconventional, and she expressed the desire to understand the mentor’s reasons behind her actions:

[Even if something my mentor did] doesn’t sit well with me … I would take everything with a grain of salt. I’m not sure I would tell her that I disagreed [with her] … I don’t feel like it’s my place to criticize what she’s doing in her classroom … I would just ask her, “Why did you do that? What was your reason behind this?”

Judging from remarks made in the focus group and from their online journals, by the end of the first semester the five student teachers had all been given opportunities to participate in situated cognition, which in the context of student teaching is defined as the specific linking of theory and practice in backward or reverse fashion (Cuenca, 2011). In other words, the student teachers’ initial classroom management experiences occurred in a context-specific situation, namely, the classroom. As a result of their classroom experiences, all five student teachers began to more consistently apply in the classroom the constructivist theories and practices they remembered from prior coursework, from interactions with other student teachers, and from online journal self-reflections. They also began to more thoroughly compare these constructivist practices to those used by their mentors in the classroom setting.

**The First Five Weeks: Observation and Reflection of Philosophy**

For the first half of the semester, all the student teachers wrote that they perceived the mentor teacher to have extensive classroom management experience and skill. Except for Carly, they also believed that they would learn the most about classroom management from their mentors. Moreover, except for Carly, the student teachers expressed the hope
that the mentor teacher would transfer that classroom management expertise and knowledge to them. It was unclear from the data why they initially felt this way, or what effect their mentor’s classroom management philosophy or level of expertise might actually have had on the student teachers’ conceptions of classroom management. These issues could be considered limitations of the study.

All the student teachers except Carly initially emulated at least one of their mentors’ practices as they gradually assumed more responsibility in the classroom. As they observed their mentors’ practices during the initial four weeks, however, four of the student teachers began to note disparities between the mentor’s classroom management philosophy and constructivist principles of classroom management. Online journal data from the initial five weeks of the practicum indicate that every student teacher except Rachel began to notice some differences between their mentors’ classroom management strategies and constructivist principles, and Andrea actually cited a specific theory and contrasted it to her mentor’s practice.

Of all the student teachers, Rachel was the only one who initially emulated her mentor’s classroom management practices without question. Rachel wrote that she believed her mentor to have a great deal of expertise in handling routine behavior management issues, and she practiced what her mentor modeled. During her third week of student teaching, her mentor invited her to attend a parent conference. While they were out of the classroom, the substitute who covered the class reported that some of the students had “behaved very badly.” In response to their behavior, Rachel’s mentor teacher engaged the class in a long discussion to determine their consequence: “The [class] was made to stay in the first 10 minutes of lunch and eat silently that day.” Rachel said she approved of this punishment and “upheld what [the mentor] had said.” Rachel
accepted her mentor’s action completely, and, in fact, she subsequently copied her mentor’s lead: “Whenever the students misbehaved … I followed my mentor’s example and spoke to them as she had and in the manner that she did.” Rachel’s actions suggest that by closely observing, and then emulating her mentor’s management strategies, her evolving conceptions of effective classroom management practices were most influenced by the practices of her mentor teacher.

The other four student teachers also initially emulated their mentor’s strategies, although not to the same degree that Rachel did. Each noted various discrepancies between constructivist principles and their mentors’ classroom management practices. Wanda, for example, initially emulated her mentor’s classroom management practices without question. During a whole group activity in her Kindergarten class, several students simply shouted out the answer instead of raising their hands quietly. Wanda’s mentor verbally praised the students who had raised their hands, which Wanda herself later emulated. Wanda noted in her online journal, however, that using one strategy for all students did not always meet the needs of individual students, “because “[some of the] students are impulsive and shout out the answer [anyway]. With these students it would be best to implement consequences … They need the discipline in order to understand the concept of following rules.” Wanda said she understood the mentor’s reason for using praise to motivate the class, but she recognized that this strategy would not work with those who required more individualized attention.

Andrea also had some misgivings about some of her mentor’s classroom management practices. Andrea was unhappy about the constant noise level in her mentor’s classroom, but she also stated that she was uncomfortable when the mentor raised her voice to a yell to get the students’ attention, because “she would put the kids on
the spot.” However, Andrea initially gave her mentor “the benefit of the doubt,” even if she privately disagreed with those actions. She said, “in the beginning [of the semester], I’m [also] kind of harsh on [the students]. I’m kind of strict so they understand what I expect of them.”

Andrea was reluctant to emulate the mentor’s actions if they contradicted what she had learned in previous coursework. She recalled that her university professors reminded her to “never yell at students,” and referred to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, a theory which holds that students require certain basic elements before they can be ready to learn: “[Students] have to feel safe in order to participate, so I can’t put them on the spot and yell at them.”

Similarly, Mary wrote that her mentor teacher’s classroom management practices were too harsh. During her fourth week of student teaching, Mary observed that some of the students in her mentor’s class were not finishing their class assignments on time. The mentor teacher continually used negative consequences as a means to keep students on task rather than trying to understand why they were not engaged in the first place:

Study halls are scheduled throughout the day … If items are not turned in on time, the student will have his or her name placed on the board. Students are not allowed to go to recess or buddy time with the Kindergarten class until all of their work is finished.

Mary referred to a discussion in her student teaching seminar on student engagement and motivation, to test her own conceptions: “It seemed as though the students lacked motivation when they did not understand the assignment … [so] I created meaningful questions for students that directly related to their interest.”
Unlike the other four student teachers, Carly did not rely on learning classroom management from her mentor. In fact, she wanted to showcase her own strategies first, and explain her reasoning to her mentor afterward: “I’m pretty sure that along the way, I’m going to tweak some rules a little bit.” Carly believed that her prior classroom management experiences had prepared her to handle almost any issue, and that she needed “just the formalities.” Carly wrote that she found her mentor to be an experienced and fair classroom manager, but she did not believe that her mentor would transfer to her any new knowledge or skills. Rather, she believed that the role of the mentor should be to “see that you [are taking] the initiative of doing something that you think is going to work in the classroom.”

Along with the other student teachers, Carly agreed with most of her mentor’s classroom management practices and beliefs, although she did question some of her mentor’s strategies. During a visit to the science lab one morning, Carly’s mentor made a student “[sit] down outside the science lab … He didn’t get to participate [in the lesson] because he didn’t finish his work … To me it sounds practical because [if] you didn’t do your work, you don’t get to participate. But keeping him outside the whole time, that’s … too much.” Carly said she wanted to “take on the challenge” herself and find a way to motivate this student, instead of waiting for her mentor’s direction:

I would try my best to get into that little kid’s mindset … Then I would inform my [mentor] teacher … If [my strategy] did work, then hopefully she sees that there are other ways to get kids to [behave] … I just want to [showcase] my [classroom management] philosophy. If she notices it, maybe that would change her view of [how to work with unmotivated] students in the future.
According to Prof. Stevenson, the purpose of the practicum is not so much a laboratory for experimenting with new classroom management techniques, as it is a controlled arena for student teachers to emulate, then begin to practice strategies that were previously established by the mentor teacher. Indeed, data from four of the student teachers’ online journals suggest that they were initially passive learners; they followed the mentor teacher around, emulating her system of rewards and consequences, and rules and procedures. This fit with the student teacher seminar approach. Prof. Stevenson explained that, during the first half of the practicum, student teachers need to gain an overall impression of how the mentor’s classroom is run on a daily basis, as well as get a feel for the mentor’s management style as it compares with her own. Consequently, during the first two weeks of the practicum, student teachers were deliberately not given any specific instruction in classroom management, but were told only to “observe and learn [in general] about classroom management from the mentor [teacher], such as [her system of] rewards and consequences.”

Prof. Stevenson added that, during this time, student teachers were often overwhelmed with the demands placed on them to learn other elements of running a classroom, including planning lessons, learning instructional pedagogy, and giving assessments. He noted that the best mentor teachers were those who were able to demonstrate and reinforce effective classroom management with a minimum of explanation: “The fewer rules, the better. And [the mentor teacher needs to continually] reinforce [those rules].”

Prof. Raines, along with Prof. Stevenson, acknowledged that student teachers often did not have the ability to discern good examples of classroom management from poor ones at the beginning of the semester: “[Particularly] if classroom management is
seamless in the [mentor teacher’s] classroom, the student teachers don’t understand what is going right.” Prof. Stevenson further stated that the seminar initially was “heavy on content,” rather than on classroom management, because it was difficult to teach classroom management theory in isolation: “It’s a struggle for [student teachers to initially understand] the reasons for the mentor teacher’s [classroom management style].” Both professors’ remarks suggest that, unless they already possess a substantial background in constructivist classroom management theory, student teachers must rely almost entirely on their mentors to learn about effective practices in the classroom setting.

The mentor teacher’s classroom management philosophy.

Early in the practicum, the student teachers’ perceptions of their mentors were also influenced by the mentor’s classroom management philosophy and the reasoning behind her actions. Each of the student teachers spoke highly of their mentors, but in both their online journals and the focus group, four of the five student teachers also remarked on differences between their own philosophical beliefs about classroom management, and those of the mentor. Rachel, for example, whose classroom management philosophy was more teacher-centered, expressed a sense of conflict as she focused on the mentor’s use of strategies which did not align with her own interventionist style:

I think [my mentor teacher] has a good classroom, but I feel like maybe those first two weeks [of school], the law of the land [wasn’t] laid down strongly enough … She has a good plan, but it needs to be more solidified at the beginning of the year.

In particular, Rachel was uncomfortable about her mentor teacher’s “chaotic” management style, and wrote that she herself would have “drill[ed] it more” than her
mentor did. But she also praised her mentor’s depth of understanding for each of her
students’ needs. Rachel’s initial confusion about her mentor’s management practices
underscores her evolving awareness of philosophical differences between her and her
mentor, as well as her desire to align those philosophies through the reflective process:

I feel a little awkward talking to her about [classroom management], but I would
like to talk to her about it, if she thinks that she’s done a good job with the
discipline … because I feel like it might be a little lacking, and if she could go
back and do it again, [I would appreciate that].

Andrea’s classroom management philosophy was also teacher-centered, although
she stated during the focus group that her growing awareness of constructivist practices
made her feel uncomfortable with her mentor’s rather punitive classroom management
techniques. She said, “There were some times when I thought, I can’t believe you just did
that, or said that,” when her mentor handed out a particularly strong consequence to a
misbehaving student. One of the students in Andrea’s class used profanity on a fairly
regular basis, and she “tried talking to his mother, but [there was] no change.” Andrea
said she was trying to be patient and explain to the student that using bad language was
not acceptable, however her mentor teacher stepped in and “raised her voice [to a yell]
and told him to finish his work.” Andrea was shocked and confused at her mentor’s
response, because “my [seminar] professor always told us to never yell at a child.” Yet
over the next few days, she herself copied her mentor’s example, raising her voice to this
student in frustration: “Since it is the [mentor’s] class, I … follow what she does …
taking pauses, pulling the child aside, and just once, I raised my voice … However, she
does it more often.” Andrea attempted to justify the mentor teacher’s reasoning by
“giv[ing her] the benefit of the doubt … She probably has a reason [for her actions] …
I’m trying to learn the best [techniques] from her, and at least pick up whatever good she has to offer.”

Of the five student teachers, Wanda’s classroom management philosophy was the most teacher-centered, yet she, too, indicated confusion in her online journals about the reasoning behind some of her mentor’s classroom management practices. During her first week of student teaching, for example, Wanda was attempting to teach a whole-group lesson, and some students began “excessively talking.” Wanda’s mentor told her that “the students were going to see how far they could push me and get away with [misbehaving], so I had to come up with a positive way to reinforce good behaviors.” Wanda’s mentor directed her to implement a behavior consequence strategy using happy and sad faces, which caused her to feel uncomfortable with what she perceived to be negative behavior management. But Wanda admitted in her journal that “not everything works, and you just have to find the right program.” Wanda was frustrated and commented that even though she did not agree with her mentor’s management style, she herself was not “assertive and firm” enough with the students. Wanda also said that it was not her place to judge her mentor’s reasoning too hastily, “but if [something she did] was really bothering me, I … would tell her after class … ‘I don’t agree with what you did in the classroom … with this student.’”

Unlike Rachel, Andrea or Wanda, Mary’s classroom management philosophy was more student-centered throughout the practicum. However she, too, questioned in her online journals and the focus group whether her mentor’s classroom management philosophy was based on child development theories or was simply arbitrary: “There were times that even I wouldn’t know what [she thought] was okay and not okay.”
When placed with two mentor teachers who were team teaching in adjoining classrooms, Mary initially expressed dissatisfaction with both mentors’ lack of follow-through on rewards and consequences: “There is no clear-cut reason for how a student gets a ticket. Any time she wants to reward them, they get a ticket,” whereas her own mentor teacher used consequences more than rewards, such as “being forced to stay in for five minutes at recess.” Mary was uncomfortable with this lack of continuity between the two teachers, stating that such a system “doesn’t make sense to me.” She added that, “I don’t like [their system]. I’m a very clear-cut person, and I like structure … and a reason behind [that structure] … When there are no … clear expectations, it can’t be fair, because there is no way to justify [those expectations].”

In contrast to the other four student teachers, who all felt some degree of ambivalence about their mentors’ classroom management philosophies, Carly believed that her mentor’s classroom management style aligned almost completely with her own constructivist philosophy. Moreover, from the beginning of the practicum she was the only student teacher in this study to describe her mentor’s classroom management style in constructivist terms, noting in her online journal, for example, that she and her mentor both strongly believed in the “social aspect of learning.” One day, when the students were lining up for lunch, a student was disruptive and got out of line. Carly recalled in the focus group that she liked the way her mentor handled the situation:

My mentor [had him] go back to [his] seat, and [she] asked the class why [he] did such a thing. Everyone wait[ed] for the class to be quiet to line up again. My mentor teacher deduct[ed] a point from [his] table … and the student who [had been disruptive] was asked why the teacher took a point and he had to explain what he … could do differently next time.
Carly believed that her mentor’s response was appropriate because “as a team player, [students] … need to be responsible and considerate [of others] because [they] know people depend on [them] … We, as educators, can take advantage of [our students’] needs by implementing constructive rules and procedures for collaboration.” Carly also liked that her mentor treated her as a colleague: “My mentor teacher has a lot of faith in me … She gives me the opportunity to … grow as a professional by sharing [her] constructive feedback.”

Where four of the student teachers were most concerned with maintaining a respectful demeanor toward the mentor while in the classroom, Carly alone was not afraid to disagree with her mentor’s actions. Carly claimed in the focus group that she believed she already possessed the requisite tools to be an effective classroom manager, and said that she would not have hesitated to question her mentor’s practices and “showcase” her own approach if she thought she could do a better job:

> If you think that you can do something appropriate for the [behavior] situation…don’t be afraid …Your [mentor] teacher is there to help you. If she thinks that you’re not doing it right, she’s going to stop you … I know it’s like … crossing boundaries, but you have to think of yourself as … her colleague instead of [as] a trainee.

As we have seen, as the student teachers moved through the practicum they became increasingly aware of the ways their own classroom management philosophies compared with those of their mentors. They also began to reflect on the specific organizational and behavior skills their mentors used to conduct lessons, transition between activities, maintain traffic patterns, and deal with individual student needs. Additionally, they started to think about honing their own classroom management skills,
and to experiment with strategies they had learned in their seminar and in the classroom setting. Four of the student teachers believed they had learned the most about classroom management from observing their mentors, and all of them generally regarded their mentors as having adequate classroom management expertise. Through their mentors’ actions in the classroom, the student teachers gradually began to make comparisons between their mentors’ classroom management philosophies and their own. Their online journals and focus group responses suggest that at times, the student teachers struggled to make sense of their mentors’ reasoning, especially when they felt they would have handled a specific situation in a different manner from the mentor.

Between the fifth and tenth weeks of the practicum, the mentor’s overall contribution to the construction of classroom management knowledge appears to have been influenced by new knowledge that the student teachers were compiling from their seminar sessions, from each other, and from their activity log reflections as part of this study.

**The Second Five Weeks: Insights and Opportunities**

As described in their online journals, the second half of the practicum marked a pivotal turning point in the student teachers’ perceptions of the mentors’ level of classroom management expertise. Four of the five student teachers began to make connections between constructivist theories of learning and behavior and to question whether the mentor’s classroom management practices were aligned with those theories. During the last half of the practicum, their mentors’ management strategies were less likely to be emulated by the student teachers, particularly when those strategies did not align with constructivist principles. In addition, four of the five student teachers were given some opportunity to experiment with a few classroom management strategies.
themselves, under the guidance of the mentor teacher. Rachel was the only student
teacher who continued to merely emulate her mentor’s classroom management practices,
although she did make a few practical suggestions to her mentor teacher in the area of
organizational management.

Prof. Stevenson said that the last half of the practicum optimally provides student
teachers the opportunity to experiment with learned classroom management practices
“using existing [classroom] structures.” In other words, the student teachers are not
expected to implement altogether new classroom management strategies. Indeed, by the
midpoint of the semester, online journal data show that the student teaching seminar was
becoming a forum for the student teachers to reflect on their mentors’ behavior
management practices in the classroom, as well a place for the student teachers to discuss
constructivist theory and its application to classroom management practices. Similarly,
Prof. Stevenson noted in an interview that the student teaching seminar often becomes an
“open forum for discussion and reflection, and [a place] to share what [management
issues] student teachers see in their classrooms.”

Two of the student teachers – namely Carly and Wanda – believed that their
mentor teachers exhibited good judgment and skill in handling most classroom
management situations, and both participants consistently spoke highly of their mentors
throughout the last half of the practicum. Carly, for example, praised her mentor teacher’s
classroom management expertise throughout the semester, and said her mentor provided
“good modeling … whether for individual or group tasks.” She observed that “when [my
mentor gives clear instructions and] expectations are communicated at the level of
students’ understanding,” classroom management became easier. Carly’s own sense of
self-confidence was therefore reinforced as an expert classroom manager:
I am having a great time managing the [classroom] … My mentor was out for a day … and she asked me to take over the class. A substitute teacher was in the classroom but my mentor left everything to me. I was very excited about the experience, and I can proudly say that it went very well. I’ve received compliments and comments about how I handled the “challenge” [of managing a classroom] with enthusiasm.

Wanda, too, continued to laud her mentor’s depth of knowledge and expertise in using constructivist strategies to manage her students. During her last week of student teaching, Wanda wrote:

[From my mentor teacher] I have learned that, in order to keep the classroom running smoothly, there has to be consistency every single time … She is a great mentor, especially when it comes to classroom management and discipline. These are her strong points and I have been guided in the right direction.

By contrast, the other three student teachers – Andrea, Mary, and Rachel – expressed ambivalence about their mentors’ ability to manage a classroom using constructivist strategies. Andrea, for example, continued to express mixed feelings about her mentor’s use of effective classroom management practices. From the outset of the practicum, Andrea felt uncomfortable about some of her mentor’s punitive classroom management strategies, and she remained unconvinced by the sixth week of student teaching that her mentor possessed the requisite knowledge to successfully motivate and engage students. Andrea reflected that “being negative with students… yelling and giving them [a stern look] works instantaneously, but in the long run, it only hurts the relationship between students and teachers, and … students will [become] numb to it over time.”
Mary also wrote about her mentor teacher’s failure to address behavior using constructivist behavior strategies during her sixth week of student teaching. During a writing lesson in the school’s computer lab, Mary noticed several students exhibiting off-task behaviors such as talking or not using their time productively. Her mentor made no effort to address the issue, so Mary took the initiative and approached these students. She “made recommendations … about other tasks they could be working on.” Mary was puzzled as to why her mentor made no attempt to motivate or engage the off-task students: “I did not see a lot of response … from my mentor teacher. I explained to her the strategies I had used and she fully supported them, but [she] did not make an attempt to take any further actions [herself].”

By handling the situation herself, Mary demonstrated her ability to apply her growing knowledge and understanding of child development theory to the classroom setting. Furthermore, Mary noted in her online journal that her seminar instructor had helped her make more explicit connections between classroom management practices and constructivist theory, and “that classroom management really takes care of itself if the students are actively engaged in a task that is supported with meaningful instruction.” As a result, Mary was more careful to plan her lessons to meet the social-emotional, as well as the academic needs of her students:

In the lessons that I design, I [now] carefully target instruction to land within the students’ Zone of Proximal Development [from Vygotsky]. When I do this, I see that I reduce the number of students who are off-task and being disruptive … It just seems to come naturally.

Rachel, who for the first half of the practicum had been the only student teacher to emulate her mentor’s practices without question, suddenly began to note differences
between her mentor’s classroom somewhat punitive classroom management actions and the positive behavior management strategies she was learning during seminar sessions, including using both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to engage and motivate students. As she became more aware of explicit positive classroom management practices and constructivist theories she had learned at the university, Rachel began to pay particular attention to her mentor’s use of strategies that were not based on constructivist principles:

[My] professors have mentioned … that a teacher should never take away a student’s recess or lunch; they need those times to let off steam and play. During student teaching, however, I have [often] seen my mentor take up to 10 minutes off the entire class’ lunch period … I question [this practice].

By the final week of the semester, all of the student teachers indicated that through seminar discussions and classroom experiences, they were beginning to make some tentative connections to the constructivist theories that they had learned in prior coursework, although Wanda was unable to articulate more than a cursory reference to a theorist. Andrea cited Maslow when discussing a “differentiated instructional approach” to meet the needs of individual students. Mary spoke about Piaget when describing “the importance of developmentally appropriate curriculum,” and also referred to Vygotsky, stating that she “target[ed] instruction to land within the students’ Zone of Proximal Development.” Rachel did not mention a specific theory but was concerned about nurturing student self-esteem, and said that it was imperative that a teacher “never humiliate or shame a student when they are off-topic.” Carly wrote that she was influenced by her understanding of theory to motivate and engage students by making connections with them “based on what they already know,” although she did not mention a specific theorist by name. Wanda made only a passing reference to Skinner’s theory of
rewards and consequences, and mentioned “scaffolding” as something she had learned in class. Furthermore, Wanda was the only student teacher who continued to refer to her mentor’s expertise in terms of isolated, stand-alone procedures rather than in terms of student engagement and motivation.

These data suggest that the student teachers’ overall impressions about their mentors’ level of expertise and knowledge of classroom management contributed to their evolving conceptions of classroom management to some degree. With the exception of Wanda, four of the five student teachers began to notice the link between the management practices they were observing in the classroom setting, and constructivist theory that they had learned previously. In addition, under the guidance of their mentor teachers, four of the five student teachers now began to practice these strategies themselves in the classroom setting.

**Some authority to discipline students.**

During the last five weeks of the practicum, online journal and focus group data indicate that the mentor teachers began to provide four of the five student teachers controlled opportunities to use classroom management strategies, including praise, encouragement, and rewards. Consequences given by most of the student teachers were limited to verbal reminders to stay on task. It is unclear from the data whether the student teachers were reluctant to assert greater authority in the mentor’s classroom.

These data align with the concept of Limited Peripheral Participation (LPP), in which the expert (the mentor teacher) initially models and scaffolds practice (classroom management) strategies, then introduces the novice (the student teacher) to the periphery of the larger community of practice, by encouraging her to gradually test those strategies in the classroom (Swabey et al., 2010). Indeed, Prof. Stevenson said that by the end of the
first semester of student teaching, the mentor teacher should feel somewhat confident in the student teacher’s ability to deal with most classroom management issues, and that student teachers should take a more active role in handling routine behavior and organizational issues. Prof. Stevenson indicated that mentors should intervene under only two circumstances: “when the safety of students [is threatened], and when mistakes in content will adversely affect student learning.” Prof. Stevenson acknowledged that mentor teachers “may have trouble turning classroom management over to the student teacher,” and that occasionally “[the mentor’s lack of confidence constrains the] student teacher to work within the confines of the [mentor’s] classroom [style].”

The data indicate that four student teachers took some initiative to test their own classroom management practices in the final weeks of the practicum, with mixed results. For example, Wanda suggested to her mentor that students be allowed to use the restroom immediately after recess, so that instructional minutes would not be lost, and was pleased when her mentor teacher “agreed to this procedure.” Yet at the end of the tenth week, Wanda said that her classroom management practices were still controlled by her mentor teacher:

[T]he same rules that I have are the rules that [my mentor] has, unless she has a different rule, then [the students] have to follow her rules … And if I have any problems with [student behavior], then I have authority … [but] not that much … I would [still] have to check back with her.

Andrea also found it difficult to contradict her mentor:

During my last week of student teaching … one kid straight up kicked another … and it hurt him. He was down, he was crying, and what do I do? I said [to the kicker], “I’m going to change your [behavior] card.” [But] they’re Kindergartners,
they forget [what they did] in a matter of 35 seconds … This constant public humiliation, I didn’t like it.

However, Andrea did suggest an alternative strategy to her mentor in this case: “I [asked] her, can we at least write a note to his mom, saying this is what happened?” Andrea did not say whether her mentor allowed her to write such a note, although she hinted at being the more effective classroom management practitioner: “Most of [the students] respond to my mentor when she raises her voice, but they also respond well to me when I don’t!”

Mary and Carly asserted their management style more often. By the end of the practicum, Mary wrote that her mentor had gradually allowed her “the opportunity to make my own decisions, and then we [reflected] upon what worked and what didn’t.” Carly also used her skills to “negotiate goals” with students who appeared unmotivated, and noted that her mentor teacher felt confident in her ability to manage the classroom as a colleague: “The students and I have great connections and it’s evident when they ask me for help … [T]hey understand that I am not the class helper, but a teacher as well.”

Of all the student teachers, Rachel took the least initiative in practicing the classroom management strategies she had learned. Rachel said she simply copied her mentor’s management style because “I want to … emulate the way [my mentor] interacts with the students because I don’t know much otherwise, and I don’t want to upset her if I do something differently.” Instead of practicing the classroom management strategies she had learned, Rachel tried to reason with students to avoid handing out consequences. Rachel said she hoped that discussing a student’s behavior in terms of its effects on others would create empathy within that student, but the student she spoke to did not respond to her strategy until her mentor gave a consequence as a motivator.

In one of her online journals, Rachel admitted that it was
difficult [to practice classroom management] in a student teaching setting because it’s not my classroom. I … feel strange disciplining a student in any major kind of way. It’s … hard to know what kind of reaction you’re allowed to have with the students in someone else’s classroom.

By the end of the semester, Rachel began to approach her mentor teacher more often and ask for advice about specific classroom management situations, although she said she still was unable to initiate any management practices of her own. Even though Rachel claimed her mentor teacher allowed her a good deal of access to practicing classroom management, Rachel’s reluctance to assert her own management practices suggests that her mentor may not have given her enough access to the practice of teaching, or enabled her to construct knowledge and make vital connections to theory and content learned in coursework, which is a hallmark of LPP (Swabey, et al., 2010).

As we have seen, up until the fifth week of student teaching, the majority of the student teachers were just beginning to understand the importance of child development and behavior theory and its applicability to effective classroom management practices. The theoretical foundations the student teachers had been taught in their coursework remained largely dormant, to the extent that the student teachers were intensely focused on the practicum and the mentor teacher as their most important source of classroom management information.

During the second half of the semester, these connections between theory and effective management practices became somewhat stronger. The student teachers began to make more explicit connections to theoretical foundations as they critiqued their mentors’ specific management strategies, and they began to note disparities between the mentor’s style and the theory they had learned previously. As evidenced by their online
journal reflections, most of the student teachers began to make more solid connections between the various aspects of theory, organizational skills, and strategies that they had been unaware of at the start of the practicum. Within the conceptual framework of linkage theory, the student teachers were given opportunities to engage in realistic classroom activities, where the classroom itself was a laboratory whereby they could gain mastery of classroom management skills (Allsop et al., 2006; Goodnough, et al., 2009).

**Post-Practicum Conceptions of Classroom Management**

What had the student teachers learned about classroom management as they completed their first semester of student teaching? This section traces the shift in the student teachers’ perceptions of their classroom management philosophy as they made connections in varying degrees between theory and practice. It then describes their sense of self-efficacy at the end of the practicum, and finally, discusses the impact of their self-efficacy on motivating and engaging students to learn.

Data from online journals and focus group data show that, although all five student teachers showed somewhat more of a student-centered orientation by the end of the practicum, three of them – namely Wanda, Andrea and Rachel – still remained mainly teacher-centered in their focus, as they had been before the program. In contrast, Carly and Mary, who both had begun the practicum with more student-centered philosophies, had shifted even closer toward a more student-centered approach by the end of the semester. It is unclear from the data why the other three student teachers did not experience as dramatic a shift in philosophy, although they indicated that they had experimented with a variety of classroom management strategies during student teaching.

By the end of the practicum, Carly and Mary had also expressed a growing sense of confidence, or efficacy, in their classroom management abilities. They reflected that
their capacity to engage and motivate students to learn had increased as well. The other three student teachers also indicated in the focus group that they felt ready to take a more active role in effectively managing student behaviors with less oversight from their mentors, although they did not express the same degree of confidence in their ability to effectively engage and motivate students.

All five student teachers had also become somewhat aware of the connection between effective classroom management, and student engagement and motivation. Of the five, Wanda was the only student teacher who did not appear to make active connections between constructivist theory and practice. Wanda also did not perceive herself to be more confident in her ability to engage and motivate students, and her classroom management philosophy remained decidedly teacher-centered as a result.

**Shifts in Classroom Management Philosophy**

In their final online journals and in the focus group, four of the five student teachers asserted that they had closely observed, then gradually experimented with, management strategies in the classroom. As they reflected on the effectiveness of those strategies with their mentors and with other student teachers, Mary and Carly articulated their classroom management philosophies even more markedly than at the beginning of the program. Mary, for example, recognized that “immediate and specific praise works best for my students. I’m starting to see the importance of classroom management, and I feel that I will utilize more strategies as I continue my time in the classroom.”

Carly maintained her student-centered classroom management philosophy throughout the practicum. She continued to make connections between constructivist principles and effective classroom management and said in the focus group that her seminar class had helped her become even more aware of the connection between
positive behavior management strategies and student engagement in her third grade classroom: “One of the strategies that I developed … this semester is [using] wait time for students to respond [to a question].” In her sixth week of student teaching, Carly wrote in her online journal that “students will develop respect [for] the rules and procedures because they feel that you care about them.” She was most concerned about “making connections” with students by providing “good modeling” techniques to help them learn new material, and added that it was important to understand the reasoning behind negative behaviors so that she could find ways to prevent those behaviors from occurring in the future.

Mary also said she had made important connections between classroom management coursework and practice, although she did not provide specific examples in her online journal. She noted that discussions in her seminar classes had “placed a great [deal of] emphasis on educational philosophies,” and that the process of “differentiat[ing] instruction to meet the needs of all learners” contributed to her acquiring a more student-centered philosophy.

The other three student teachers experienced smaller shifts in their classroom management philosophies. At the beginning of the practicum, Rachel had a decidedly teacher-centered philosophy. She believed in the importance of establishing her authority as a means to control the class. After completing her first semester of student teaching, Rachel still maintained that structure and discipline were important, however, she said she had made some connections between student behaviors, and child development theory in her seminar sessions, and she learned that using a quiet voice to get students’ attention worked better than a loud voice did:
When the kids started losing control, at the beginning [of the semester] I would say [in a loud voice], “Class!” I wouldn’t be yelling, but I would be speaking firmly. [But] by the end of [the first semester] I [learned to] just sit and say, “You all want to get to silent reading today, well … if you’re not quiet and on task right now … I’ll wait until everybody’s quiet.” And then I would just sit at the desk, and look at them, and eventually they’d start [telling] their friends [to be quiet].

Neither Andrea nor Wanda was able to gain more than a limited understanding of constructivist classroom management principles during the practicum. Andrea, for example, was only able to explicitly connect constructivist principles to one actual behavior management practice in the classroom. During her final week of student teaching, for example, Andrea said she grasped that using consequences to manage student behaviors caused students to “[become] numb to it over time,” and that she actually achieved better results with her students when she avoided all negativity. Wanda felt that her classroom management skills were still being formed through “a lot of trial and error,” and she continued to dwell on the mistakes she had made in the classroom rather than on what she had learned. Of all the student teachers, Wanda showed the least awareness of the connection between child development theory and positive behavior management.

Thus, apart from Wanda, the data show that four of the five student teachers gained a good deal of classroom management knowledge during the first semester of the practicum, and they began to make connections between classroom management scenarios and theory through various activities, discussions and reflections. These student teachers also gained a sense of accomplishment, self-confidence and satisfaction as they
became more adept at applying constructivist strategies in the classroom. Their self-confidence in turn led to feelings of increased self-efficacy.

**A Spectrum of Student Teacher Self-Efficacy**

Poulou (2007) defines student teacher self-efficacy as “a teacher’s judgment of his or her ability to execute particular courses of action and bring about desired goals” (p. 192), while Putman (2009) describes efficacy as a student teacher’s belief in her in ability to use certain behaviors to produce effective classroom outcomes. This qualitative study was not designed to precisely measure self-efficacy and its contributing factors. A general sense of the student teachers’ sense of self-efficacy was derived primarily from statements made in their final online journals.

Data from this study indicate that for all five student teachers, there appeared to be a link between their classroom management philosophy before student teaching and their sense of self-efficacy by the end of the semester. In other words, those who had more of a student orientation prior to the practicum ended up with more self-efficacy afterward. On the other hand, data from this study did not suggest a clear connection between the student teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and other factors, such as university coursework and their experience with the mentor teacher.

Could this connection between initial classroom management philosophy and later self-efficacy be a coincidence? Further research using both qualitative (individual and focus group interviews) and quantitative (survey) methods would be needed to examine the significance of this connection.

Interestingly, this finding appears to conflict with other research suggesting that preservice teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy prior to entering a teacher credential program continue to be influenced to a significant extent by their subsequent experiences
during student teaching (Rajuan et al., 2007; Stoughton, 2006). Within the scope of this study, it is unclear from the data to what extent the student teachers’ subsequent experiences in the classroom setting, or their reflections during the student teaching seminar, similarly influenced their sense of self-efficacy by the end of the practicum. Certainly, all of the student teachers said that they had been provided multiple opportunities to gain classroom management experience in the classroom setting, regardless of their credential pathway. In addition, all five had at least some opportunity to reflect on their experiences during sessions of their student teaching seminar.

Yet despite being exposed to a wide variety of classroom management situations, the student teachers’ sense of self-efficacy at the end of the practicum appears to be linked to their initial classroom management philosophy from before the credential program. Indeed, three of the five student teachers – Wanda, Andrea and Rachel – who began the semester with less confidence and a classroom management philosophy that was more teacher-centered, continued to believe that a teacher-centered classroom management style was most appropriate, even after all their experiences.

The other two student teachers, Mary and Carly, who had entered the practicum with higher self-confidence and more student-centered orientations, exhibited greater self-efficacy at the end of the semester. Carly, for example, entered student teaching with a strong sense of self-confidence in her ability to effect positive change in student achievement. Even in her first online journal, Carly wrote that she was “quite confident in how I handle [classroom management].” Throughout the semester, Carly said her mentor teacher had recognized her proficiency in classroom management and gave her wide latitude to test her classroom management strategies.
Carly’s feelings of efficacy remained high throughout the practicum. She wrote in her final online journal that she felt ready to take on almost any behavior challenge in a school setting: “As a teacher, I understand that you need to be conscientious of what goes on in and out of the classroom to make better connections to what and why students are ‘acting’ the way they are.” Carly also indicated that she felt well prepared to handle not only routine classroom procedures, but major discipline situations as well, such as students who refused to comply in class and students who might lash out at others. Furthermore, she felt confident in her ability to establish a positive relationship with students in the classroom, and said that “I [am] appreciative of the students’ [needs].”

Unlike Carly and Mary, the other three student teachers had entered their credential programs with less initial self-confidence and philosophies that were more teacher-centered and controlling. Rachel, for example, worried that “the kids will see that I don’t know what I’m doing.” By the end of the practicum, Rachel continued to focus narrowly on the importance of organization as a means to control the classroom environment: “Everything in the [classroom should have] its place and most importantly, the teacher knows where everything is.” Rachel acknowledged her lack of self-efficacy in her final online journal, and said she was still unsure of herself in the event of major discipline issues such as dealing with noncompliant students, or resolving a bullying situation.

Similar to Rachel, Andrea also retained aspects of her initial teacher-centered philosophy during and after the practicum. She confessed in her first online journal that “I don’t have much patience” for students who engaged in certain inappropriate behaviors, such as cursing. A classroom management error she had committed in being sarcastic with kindergartners early in the practicum continued to affect Andrea’s
persistent lack of self-confidence. Furthermore, Andrea had difficulty connecting the theory she had learned to the management practices she was experiencing in her classroom. By the end of the semester, Andrea continued to experience difficulty differentiating classroom management depending on her students’ needs, and she continued to lack self-confidence.

Wanda’s sense of self-confidence improved the least during the practicum. In her early online journals, she wrote that she was attempting to be “assertive and firm” with the Kindergarten and first grade students, but later confessed that classroom management continued to be “really hard.” By the end of the semester, Wanda remained convinced that classroom management was difficult.

To what extent do credential programs expect to influence student teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy? Prof. Raines cautioned that, although the university provides a framework within which student teachers can learn to become proficient at classroom management, neither coursework nor classroom experience can be expected to instill a sense of confidence in student teachers. She explained that in both the CEP and Traditional credential programs, promoting teacher efficacy “is not a universal concept. Student teachers must [gain self-confidence] on their own.”

Still, Prof. Raines suggested that university faculty could do more to understand and appreciate student teachers’ need to improve their self-confidence as classroom managers: “Student [teachers’ efficacy] needs are not dealt with from the perspective of classroom management, [but] only in terms of curriculum.” In other words, by recognizing the efficacy needs of student teachers and providing a stronger foundation in classroom management, the university would, in turn, enable those student teachers to more successfully meet the academic needs of their students.
instructor, Prof. Raines asserted that she herself “wants student teachers to be happy … to feel successful … and to work hard within a system [that has a great many] challenges.”

However, as the student teachers completed their first semester of the practicum, they began to recognize the importance of understanding theories of child development, and how best to create an effective classroom environment to motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning. How, in turn, did the student teachers’ post-practicum conceptions of classroom management affect their perceptions of student engagement and learning in the classroom setting?

A Classroom Community of Learners: Student Engagement and Motivation

The student teachers’ evolving knowledge of classroom management practices enabled them to grasp the connection between constructivist classroom management practices and student engagement and motivation in the classroom setting. Interestingly, Mary and Carly, who had the most student-centered philosophy at the beginning of the practicum, not only had the greatest sense of efficacy but also were best able to motivate and engage students to learn, with the aid of classroom management strategies.

By the end of the practicum, all of the student teachers believed that using classroom management practices based on constructivist theories promoted student responsibility, engagement and motivation for their own learning. In other words, they believed that utilizing these practices promoted a classroom community of learners. The five student teachers all expressed varying degrees of awareness of the connection between effective classroom management, and student engagement and motivation. They were able to practice instruction, create lesson plans, use teacher movement and proximity to maintain student attention, apply the concept of wait time, establish
adequate classroom structures, procedures and routines, model expected behaviors, and give positive praise to reinforce those behaviors.

Carly and Mary were notable for making explicit connections between classroom management, student motivation, and instruction. For example, Carly used the concept of depth and complexity to motivate and challenge the class to take responsibility for their learning, and she tried to create differentiated lessons that were exciting. She sought to establish a classroom environment where students’ curiosity would lead to sustained learning in every content area, with a minimal level of behavior issues: “You want to bring authentic materials into the classroom, because kids are always curious, and you want to tickle their curiosity.”

Like Carly, Mary had gained a deeper level of comprehension about the link between effective classroom management practices and student engagement during her first semester of student teaching. At the beginning of the practicum, Mary’s mentor teacher told her she was “up in front of the classroom [too] much,” and “need[ed] to move around.” During the next week, Mary’s mentor teacher scripted Mary’s movement around the room, as well as her proximity to students, and noted both on-task and off-task student behaviors: “I noticed that as I walked around the classroom more, [the] students were paying [more] attention.”

By contrast, after ten weeks of student teaching, Rachel, Andrea and Wanda still tended to rely on isolated management strategies, rather than on creating a system of positive reinforcement, to motivate students. Nevertheless, they all began to see links between their actions and the effect those actions had on students’ engagement and motivation. For example, Rachel learned to use the concept of wait time to increase student participation: “Then I tried to [choose] students who [didn’t answer all the time]
… they felt so validated when they got it right … and I saw them continuing to be more engaged and to participate [more].” Similarly, Andrea learned to use wait time to be silent when Andrea herself became suddenly quiet, rather than using a loud voice to speak over the class like her mentor had. Wanda did not move much past the concept of establishing her authority in the classroom, and she continued to focus on stand-alone strategies to gain a measure of control over her Kindergarten students.

Both professors stated that student teachers should be able to make some connections between theory and effective classroom management practices by the end of their first semester of student teaching. Prof. Stevenson said that ideally, student teaching should prepare candidates to create classroom environments that allow for student engagement and motivation, where “routines are run by students who self-[monitor].” Prof. Raines added that student motivation should be the overarching goal of classroom management coursework: “[Student teaching] seminars should focus on how to build [student] respect, set curriculum [goals] so they are achievable, [and determine classroom] procedures and expectations … You can’t have [student engagement] without good classroom management.”

Summary

This case study found that four of the five student teachers were able to make important connections between constructivist classroom management theory and effective classroom management practices during their first semester of student teaching. Four factors in particular contributed in varying degrees to their growth and development in the area of classroom management. These factors were the student teachers’ classroom management preconceptions; university coursework; the student teachers’ perceptions of
and work with their mentor teachers; and their post-practicum reflections about effective classroom management.

Prior to student teaching, the most important influences on their evolving classroom management knowledge were their preconceptions and classroom management philosophy. University coursework had only a small influence on these conceptions before they began student teaching, regardless of credential pathway or prior exposure to child development and learning theory, or classroom management content. However, after about five weeks in the classroom setting, the student teachers began to make important connections between the classroom management practices they were experiencing with their mentor teacher, and the theory they had learned through coursework.

Once the student teachers entered the practicum, the most significant influence on their developing conceptions of classroom management were their perceptions of their mentor teacher’s classroom management philosophy, their perceptions of the mentor’s ability to model effective classroom management practices, and their reflections on constructivist classroom management strategies. The most interesting outcome of the study was the comparison that all the student teachers began to make between the mentor’s strategies, and the child development and behavior theory they had learned through previous coursework.

The final factor that shaped the student teachers’ conceptions about classroom management was the effect that student teaching had on their developing sense of efficacy as educators, and the connections the student teachers were able to make between constructivist management practices and student engagement in the classroom. Notably, there appeared to be some connection between the student teachers’ classroom
management philosophy before the practicum, and their sense of self-efficacy by the end of the semester.

While none of the student teachers explicitly mentioned learning any constructivist theory in their seminar sessions, they all agreed that these sessions had provided an important forum in which to reflect on the link between effective classroom management practices and general constructivist principles.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

Introduction

This qualitative case study investigated the perceptions of elementary student teachers and the extent to which they felt there was a connection between their practicum experiences and university coursework in constructing classroom management knowledge. The study was conducted at Southern Crest University, a large, urban public university in Southern California, in the Fall semester of 2012. Five elementary student teachers who were beginning the first semester of the student teaching practicum, and two university faculty members participated in this study.

This chapter begins with an overview of the study, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the study findings within the conceptual framework of linkage theory and situated cognition. The chapter also includes implications for educational practice; recommendations for future research with elementary student teachers; and a concluding summary statement.

Summary of the Study

This case study sought to determine whether the teacher preparation program at a large, public university in Southern California adequately prepared preservice teachers for the reality of classroom management issues. The purpose of this study was to investigate elementary student teachers’ perceptions of the ways their university coursework and their interactions with mentor teachers were linked to promote classroom management knowledge construction.

The main data source for this case study were five elementary preservice teachers who attended Southern Crest University full time in the K-5 multiple subjects teaching credential program and were in the first semester of their student teaching practicum at
both Title I and non-Title I schools. Criterion based sampling was used to select the participants, who were enrolled in one of three credential pathways at Southern Crest University (Traditional, APP or CEP). Other participants were two university professors who taught the seminar section of the practicum during the Fall, 2012 semester. Qualitative data collection methods included: 1) semi-structured interviews with the five student teacher participants; 2) a bi-weekly, online journal that provided for student teachers to record their reflections about classroom management during their 10-week practicum experience; 3) a focus group interview conducted with all five student teacher participants at the end of the Fall, 2012 semester; 4) an observation in a university student teaching seminar; 5) document review of course syllabi and handouts; and 6) semi-structured interviews with two university professors who taught sections of the first semester student teaching seminar during Fall, 2012.

Audiotaped interviews were transcribed verbatim. Data analysis consisted of coding segments of text related to setting, context, participant perceptions about classroom management, their experiences, relationships, concerns, behaviors, attitudes etc. I interpreted the data by synthesizing thematic data and by comparing and contrasting my findings about student teacher perceptions to the literature review and noting any limitations, ambiguities or discrepancies that arose out of data analysis.

Findings are summarized below for each of the six research questions.

1) How did elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices prior to their practicum experience?

The student teachers’ prior conceptions of effective classroom management practices played a significant role in their acquisition of new knowledge as they began the teacher education program. At this early stage, all five student teachers claimed that they
believed in a student-centered (or constructivist) philosophy of classroom management, but three of them actually described classroom management practices that were dramatically more teacher-centered, controlling and authoritarian. The student teachers’ preconceptions were formed partly as a result of their prior educational, cultural and work experiences, and most of the effective classroom management strategies they described were referred to in isolation, rather than as part of a classroom management system. Even though all of them believed in developing positive relationships with students by establishing a student-centered classroom management system, only two student teachers had actually integrated these goals with conceptions of practice before they began student teaching. Notably, the two student teachers who had had the most experience with actual classroom management situations were more confident about creating and establishing a behavior management system during the practicum phase.

2) How did the elementary teacher education program at a large urban, public university prepare preservice teachers in classroom management?

Until the fifth week of the practicum, all five participants felt that university coursework in child development, learning and behavior theory played a limited role in constructing their developing conceptions of classroom management. Before they began student teaching, none of the participants could recall learning much from their university coursework about theories of child development or behavior management. During the first few weeks of the practicum, all of the participants indicated that there was a lack of classroom management content provided within the seminar. However, during the last half of the practicum, the student teachers began to make stronger connections between constructivist theories of learning and behavior from coursework, and behavior and organizational management practices in the classroom setting.
3) What role did student teachers perceive the mentor teacher to play in reinforcing the link between university coursework and classroom management knowledge?

The mentor teacher played the most significant role in the participants’ construction of classroom management knowledge. Four of the five student teachers looked to the mentor as the role model best positioned to guide them and practice effective instruction and classroom management strategies. The student teachers’ perceptions of their mentors were influenced by the mentor’s classroom management philosophy, as well as what they perceived to be the reasoning behind her actions. During the first half of the practicum, most of the student teachers observed, then emulated their mentors’ classroom management practices, although they questioned the mentor’s reasoning behind many of those practices. In the second half of the practicum, lessons from university coursework began to subtly influence the student teachers’ perceptions of effective classroom management, and they began to reflect upon the underlying premises and theories upon which the mentor’s classroom management practices were based. As a result, all five student teachers began to more consistently apply the constructivist theories and practices they recalled from prior coursework and to compare those practices to the ones used by their mentors.

4) How did the elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices after their practicum experience?

After the practicum, the student teachers said they had begun to make more explicit connections to theoretical foundations as they critiqued their mentors’ specific management strategies, and they began to note disparities between the mentor’s style and the theory they had learned previously.
5) How did the elementary student teachers perceive effective classroom management practices to be linked to instruction?

All five participants believed that using classroom management practices based on constructivist theories promoted student responsibility, engagement and motivation for their own learning. In other words, they believed that utilizing these practices promoted a classroom community of learners. However, only two of the student teachers expressed increased feelings of capability, or efficacy, in their ability to practice effective classroom management strategies, as well as confidence in their capacity to engage and motivate students to learn. At this time, all five student teachers had also become somewhat aware of the connection between effective classroom management, and student engagement and motivation. Those student teachers who had begun the practicum with more of a student-centered orientation appeared to have gained more self-efficacy afterward. However, this link could have been due to coincidence. Data from this study did not suggest a clear connection between the student teachers’ sense of self-efficacy and other factors, such as university coursework and their experience with the mentor teacher.

A discussion section follows which provides an analysis and interpretation of the findings, using linkage theory as a conceptual framework.

Discussion

This section analyzes the findings in light of the larger body of literature and within the conceptual framework of linkage theory. It begins by discussing and interpreting the student teachers’ classroom management philosophies both before and after the practicum, then examines the connection the student teachers made between classroom management theory from coursework and their practice in the classroom.
setting. Finally, it discusses the impact of the student teachers’ classroom management knowledge on student engagement and motivation.

**Little Change in Classroom Management Philosophy**

All the student teachers entered the practicum claiming to espouse a student-centered philosophy, regardless of credential pathway or school placement. Furthermore, they all hoped that their mentors would model student-centered practices and teach them how to create a classroom community of learners. Surprisingly, however, three of the student teachers’ classroom management philosophies at the end of the practicum (Andrea, Rachel and Wanda) appeared to remain more teacher-centered, while the other two (Carly and Mary) moved even closer toward a more student-centered orientation. This finding contrasts with Wynn and Kromrey’s (2000) study, which found that student teachers’ concerns about managing a classroom undergo a metamorphosis from teacher-centered to student-centered as they go through the practicum. One possible explanation for this difference could be that, even after ten weeks in the practicum, the student teachers had not had adequate time to experience success with classroom management strategies, and so were limited in their ability to view themselves as student-centered practitioners.

It is also unclear as to whether a connection existed between the participants’ initial classroom management philosophy and their sense of self-efficacy in handling behavior issues. Indeed, two participants – Carly and Mary – entered the practicum believing they had some proficiency with classroom management; these two also espoused a more student-centered philosophy prior to the practicum. From the start they viewed the class as a cohesive team, and were intent on finding ways to motivate and engage them in instruction, rather than on how well they could maintain control. The
other three participants (Andrea, Rachel and Wanda) experienced much less growth in their feelings of self-efficacy; they also remained more teacher-centered in their orientations after the practicum. This tension in the data is intriguing, given that other researchers have observed a link between initial student teacher philosophy and later sense of self-efficacy (Clement, 2002; Putman, 2009; Stoughton, 2007; Wynn & Kromrey, 2000).

It could be that Carly’s and Wanda’s initial sense of self-efficacy enabled them to downplay any feelings of apprehension they might otherwise have had toward the organizational and behavioral challenges in the classroom setting, and focus instead on integrating classroom management with instruction. Their initial confidence could have given them a head start on making useful connections between the theoretical foundations they were learning during the seminar, and management practices in the classroom setting.

On the other hand, Rachel, Wanda and Andrea had much less self-confidence in their classroom management abilities prior to student teaching; the seminar did little to increase their sense of self-efficacy by the end of the semester. Their feelings of confidence might have become stronger had they been given additional time in which to practice classroom management and reflect more deeply on theory in the seminar.

**Linkage Theory: Connections Between Theory and Practice**

No matter which credential pathway they had chosen, all of the student teachers in this study were able to make some important connections between theory and practice through their practicum experiences. These connections can best be analyzed within the conceptual framework of linkage theory, whereby theory and content that student teachers learn from coursework are presumed to be linked to their actual classroom
practice, and are supported collaboratively by university faculty and site-based mentor
teachers (Allsop et al., 2006; Barksdale-Ladd & Rose, 1997; Cuenca, 2011; Holmes
Group, 1990). The three key components of linkage theory – namely, situated cognition,
Limited Peripheral Participation (LPP), and reflection-in-action – all played significant
roles in the student teachers’ construction of classroom management knowledge.

Linkage theory was an appropriate framework to study these connections for three
reasons. First, for the duration of the practicum, the participants were continually exposed
to new knowledge about behavior and organizational management, both within the
classroom setting, and through theory from the seminar. Second, under the guidance and
control of the mentor teacher, they had opportunities to apply what they were learning by
increasingly engaging in realistic classroom management strategies. Finally, through trial
and error, from discussions in their seminar, and through the reflexive process, the
student teachers constructed new knowledge about classroom management, which they
could apply to future situations. A discussion of each of the key components of linkage
and their influence on the student teachers’ developing conceptions of classroom
management follows.

**Situated cognition.**

Situated cognition is an important aspect of linkage, in which student teachers
connect classroom management theory and practice in reciprocal fashion, beginning from
experiences in the field, then link those experiences to theory (Cuenca, 2011; Lave &
model, in which student teachers experience organizational and behavioral management
practices in a context-specific setting (the classroom) while taking university coursework,
enables student teachers to make important connections between theory and practice
during the student teaching phase (Anderson, Reder & Simon, 1996; Çakmak, 2008). As student teachers are given opportunities to construct new classroom management knowledge within the classroom, they become more adept at generalizing that knowledge and applying it to subsequent situations (Cuenca, 2011).

In this study, the student teachers’ initial classroom management philosophies were significantly influenced by their classroom management preconceptions. Regardless of the credential pathway in which they were enrolled, the student teachers began the practicum semester with deeply held preconceptions about classroom management that arose from their cultural, educational and work backgrounds. For the most part, the coursework they had taken prior to the credential program had little immediate influence on their preconceptions about effective classroom management practices, and they could not explicitly describe how the theories they had learned in their university coursework were linked to actual classroom practice. Furthermore, they were unable to describe the connection between constructivist classroom management practices and instruction, and they lacked confidence in their ability to positively affect student learning. As a result, three of the five student teachers espoused a more teacher-centered philosophy toward classroom management.

By contrast, the student teaching seminar had a limited impact on the student teachers’ classroom management conceptions, at least for the first half of the practicum. Regardless of which credential pathway they had taken, or who they had as their seminar instructor, the student teachers initially perceived a lack of classroom management content, instruction and support within the student teaching seminar. Even though they had attended four sessions of the seminar while completing fieldwork at the partner school, none of the student teachers claimed to have learned much about classroom
management during those sessions. These feelings were due in part to a lack of classroom management content, lack of exposure to realistic classroom management situations at their partner schools, and lack of time in which to reflect on those situations.

By the time the student teachers entered the practicum, they suddenly shifted their attention to the school setting. They became excited and apprehensive about the prospect of student teaching in the classroom, and they became more focused on learning classroom management content in the classroom. The student teachers entered the practicum phase with feelings of ambivalence, excitement and apprehension about managing a classroom, despite 20 hours of observation and fieldwork experiences before they began student teaching. For most of them, observation and fieldwork alone did not provide adequate opportunities to observe, practice, and critically reflect on key components of classroom management, which in turn would have created important connections between theory and practice before they had actually begun the practicum.

Other research (Gallagher, 2009; Minor et al., 2002; Moore, 2003; Putman, 2009; Stoughton, 2006) also suggests that what most significantly impacts student teachers’ developing conceptions of classroom management are their prior conceptions, rather than the coursework they take. Parker and Brindley’s (2004) study found that, since preservice teachers themselves may not be aware of the degree to which their prior conceptions play a role in feelings of apprehension about managing a classroom, educational institutions should pay closer attention to designing programs that facilitate preservice teachers’ acquisition of classroom management knowledge (p. 4). Indeed, situated cognition may be a useful framework through which universities can more deeply study the contexts from which student teachers’ classroom management preconceptions arise.
Within this study, it was not altogether surprising that the student teaching seminar lacked adequate classroom management content, given the lack of prior coursework on classroom management (especially within the APP program), and the enormous amount of instructional and curricular content that needed to be covered during weekly seminar sessions. The two university seminar professors who participated in this study also presumed that the student teachers already possessed some basic knowledge of child development and behavior theory through prior coursework, by the time they entered the seminar. As a result, the amount of direct instruction on classroom management in the seminar varied depending on the instructor. Any discussions or reflections about classroom management relied more on case studies and simulations, and less on context-specific situations.

Ideally, the student teachers’ conceptions of classroom management knowledge might have been better shaped through the sharing of observed classroom management practices, critical reflection on possible outcomes, and making theoretical connections at the seminar. Wilke and Losh (2008) note that preservice teacher candidates may benefit less from instruction that conceptualizes classroom management strategies, and more from understanding in depth about the context-specific situations in which those strategies should be employed. In other words, the student teachers in this study may have benefited more from hands-on learning and discussion about actual classroom management situations.

Once in the practicum, the student teachers in this study utilized a situated cognition model to construct new classroom management knowledge. Four of the five participants initially looked to their mentor to provide the bulk of classroom management knowledge, although they were unable at first to make clear connections to theory.
Possibly because she possessed more self-confidence, Mary began to make those connections between theory and practice more rapidly than Rachel, Wanda or Andrea. It was not until the second half of the semester that the student teachers began to actively draw upon the theoretical foundations they had previously learned, to look more closely at their mentors’ practices, and to compare the reasoning behind those practices to those espoused by theorists. The exception to this pattern was Carly, who was the only participant to enter the practicum with an understanding of the connection between theory and practice.

**Limited peripheral participation.**

Limited Peripheral Participation (LPP) is a component of linkage theory in which a student teacher learns experientially about instruction and classroom management from the mentor teacher (Swabey et al., 2010), initially without the full burden of responsibility. In this study, the mentor teacher played a major role in influencing the student teachers’ classroom management conceptions. Other research aligns with this finding in emphasizing the key impact of the mentor teacher on student teachers’ evolving conceptions of classroom management (Clement, 2002; Glenn, 2006; Rajuan et al., 2007; Stanulis & Russell, 1999). For the student teachers in this study, the mentor teacher was not only a pivotal source of classroom management knowledge, but she also controlled their level of access to effective practices.

The significance of the mentor can best be viewed through the lens of LPP. During the first half of the practicum, all of the mentor teachers granted the student teachers varying degrees of access to their community of practice in the classroom without placing on them the full burden of classroom management authority or
responsibility. Each of the mentor teachers modeled at least a few of their classroom management strategies for the student teachers, which some of them initially emulated.

By the middle of the semester, the student teachers began to actively compare their mentors’ practices to constructivist principles they were learning in the seminar sessions. They began to question the theoretical basis for their mentor’s practices, which further increased their understanding of classroom management. By the end of the practicum, the student teachers had all been given controlled opportunities to participate in realistic classroom management activities under the guidance of the mentor teacher. The mentors initially used scaffolding to guide the student teachers once they began practicing these strategies themselves, then gradually allowed the student teachers some degree of initiative in handling minor behavioral and organizational issues. Other studies support the importance of the mentor teacher as the one who initially scaffolds the instructional process, introducing the student teacher to the periphery of the community of practice (Çakmak, 2008; Clement, 2002; Kirshner & Whitson, 1998; Moore, 2003; Putman, 2009; Swabey et al., 2010).

Although all the student teachers claimed that they had learned the most about classroom management from their mentor teachers, this could have been because they happened to be more focused on the mentor as a source of information, rather than on what they were learning during their seminar sessions. Further research would be needed to explore this trend in the data. Additional research might also investigate how student teachers could take a more active role in their own growth, through the implementation of specific activities associated with LPP. These activities might include but not be limited to: interviewing the mentor teacher; debriefing classroom management situations with the
mentor and other student teachers; and recording impressions and new knowledge about classroom management strategies in a reflective journal.

**Reflection-in-action.**

The final component of linkage theory is reflection-in-action, which, applied to this study, is defined as the observation and discussion by student teachers of expert teacher practices and behaviors as a means for student teachers to create viable understandings of instructional and classroom management knowledge (Allsop et al., 2006). Utilizing ongoing reflection-in-action practices during the practicum would have fostered student teachers’ critical connections between classroom experiences and university coursework. Within the framework of linkage, meaning might therefore have been constantly re-created, as linking theory to practice flows freely through the reflective process.

During this study, the participants all engaged in reflection-in-action through their online journals, through the focus group, and during discussions in their seminar. Each had opportunities to explore multiple aspects of classroom management from a situational perspective, including the reasoning behind their mentors’ actions and their own, the underlying theory behind effective practices, and their own role in becoming practitioners of effective classroom management. In their bi-weekly online journals used in this study, during seminar discussions, and from the focus group at the end of the semester, the student teachers critically engaged in the reflective process as a means for self-analysis and knowledge construction (Finders & Rose, 1999). All the participants also indicated their appreciation for the opportunity to engage in reflection, perhaps because the process enabled them to increase their awareness of effective classroom management practices and compare notes in the focus group.
In this study, engaging in the reflective process also deepened the participants’ capacity to engage and motivate students to learn, especially for Carly and Mary. Rachel, Wanda and Andrea also indicated that they felt ready to assume a more active role in managing student behaviors with less oversight from their mentors, although they did not express the same degree of confidence in their ability to effectively engage and motivate students. Other research supports the contention that reflection in action enables student teachers to create viable understandings of instructional and classroom management knowledge (Ethell & McMeniman, 2000); however, there is a lack of current literature on whether reflection in action causes student teachers to actually utilize effective classroom management practices.

As we have seen, by the end of the practicum all five participants in this study were able to establish tentative connections between theory they had learned in coursework, and constructivist management practices in the classroom setting. To what extent were the student teachers subsequently able to incorporate these practices into instruction?

**Impact on Student Engagement and Motivation**

By the end of the practicum, all of the student teachers had grasped the vital connection between an effective classroom management system and effective instruction. However, Mary and Carly were the only two who were able to move beyond isolated management strategies, and actually practice motivational techniques. Both of them engaged students by differentiating instruction for multiple student ability levels, by continually monitoring the room, by using proximity and wait time to promote student responsibility, and by giving positive praise to students to reinforce optimal behaviors.
Other research supports this finding. For example, Snoeyink (2010) suggests that the quality of a student teacher’s instruction is to a great extent dependent on her ability to continually scan the classroom and make sense of student interactions on a continuous basis, so that she can prevent behavior problems from interfering with instruction. Indeed, a student teacher’s inability to establish effective organizational and procedural systems can actually interfere with her ability to deliver meaningful instruction (Meuwissen, 2005). By the end of the practicum, Wanda, Rachel and Andrea were able to grasp the fact that instruction and classroom management were linked, although they had difficulty implementing more than isolated management strategies in their classrooms. This could have been due to a lack of opportunity or time to integrate lesson design and classroom management, or it could have been because they had less self-confidence in their management abilities prior to entering the practicum. It is possible that an additional semester of student teaching might have enabled these three participants to strengthen their understanding of the connection between effective classroom management and student engagement.

**Study Limitations and Delimitations**

Limitations of this study included the use of qualitative data collection and analysis which provided only a partial window into the ways in which student teachers perceived assimilation of their practicum experiences with university coursework. While their perceptions may provide insight into the experiences of this sample of student teachers, they cannot be generalized to a larger population, nor can they in any way be taken to be exhaustive or encompassing. Many other ways of constructing classroom management knowledge might exist which were not described within the scope of this study.
Given the time constraints of data collection – one semester – it is not possible to know what the findings would have been had data collection been extended into the second semester of the practicum. Also, within this study, there was a lack of observation in the classroom setting, and the results were based solely on the student teachers’ perceptions. Therefore, it is possible that the participants’ perceptions might have been at odds with their actual behaviors as student teachers.

Since the sample was so small for each of the credential pathways, the degree to which university coursework may influence other student teachers in each of these pathways cannot be generalized to the larger population of teacher education programs. Although no systematic differences were noted in the student teachers’ perceptions of classroom management, it should be acknowledged that the two student teachers who were enrolled in the APP program might not have taken prior coursework in child development or behavior theory, even though they shared similar structured experiences during the teaching seminar and practicum. Also, it was not possible within the scope of this study to examine either the criteria used to select the mentor teachers, or to determine how the mentors were matched with the student teacher participants. Factors such as the mentor teacher’s background, knowledge of theory, or classroom management philosophy may have influenced their interactions with the student teachers.

For all five student teachers, there appeared to be a link between their classroom management philosophy before student teaching and their sense of self-efficacy by the end of the semester. However, this finding must be viewed with caution, as this study was not designed to precisely measure student teacher self-efficacy. The link between the student teachers’ initial classroom management philosophy, and their sense of self-efficacy at the end of the practicum could be a coincidence, and factors such as the role of
the mentor, the setting in which the student teacher was placed, or the influence of subsequent coursework, must be considered. Additional research using both qualitative (individual and focus group interviews) and quantitative (survey) methods would be needed to examine the significance of these influences.

In addition, the purpose and design of this study may have focused the student teachers’ attention more sharply on theory than they otherwise would have done during their first practicum experience. Thus, the student teachers’ classroom management conceptions may have been influenced somewhat artificially, either by trying to please the researcher by citing theory, or by focusing their attention on the connection between classroom management practice and theory during the study.

Furthermore, this study was limited in its inclusion of only two university faculty participants, which cannot be considered indicative of the views of other faculty members. The results must therefore be viewed with caution. Further research using quantitative surveys and qualitative, in-depth interviews with a larger sample of university faculty would be needed to present a more comprehensive picture of the university’s contribution to classroom management knowledge construction.

Finally, this study was conducted within the confines of a university-partner school model for student teacher placements. Future research using practicum models other than the one used in this study, such as a Professional Development School or co-teaching model, might provide additional insight into student teachers’ evolving perceptions of classroom management knowledge.

**Implications for Practice**

Results from this study may serve to inform teacher education practice by suggesting improvements to programs that link the practicum phase, and specifically the
mentor teacher’s role, more closely with university coursework in classroom management. Specifically, the findings of this study imply the following recommendations for practice:

- To further enhance student teachers’ classroom management knowledge construction using a situated cognition model, greater emphasis in each of the three credential pathways (APP, CEP or Traditional) should be placed on the connection between university coursework in classroom management content and theory, and practice in the classroom. Additionally, student teachers should be offered more structured opportunities to engage in critical self-reflection about specific classroom management situations, which they can utilize as a tool to self-correct perceived errors in management strategies.

- Strengthen the collaboration between seminar professors and mentor teachers, so that deficits in student teachers’ classroom management knowledge can be addressed early in the practicum, and reinforced later. Working in teams, first and second semester seminar instructors should engage in ongoing dialogue and collaboration, to address perceived deficits in student teachers’ classroom management knowledge for the duration of the practicum, and to provide student teachers with more resources that will enable them to gain self-confidence in their ability to effectively manage a classroom and engage students in their own learning.

-Credential programs need to address the connection between preservice teachers’ initial classroom management philosophy and later self-efficacy, and to understand how credential programs expect to influence student teachers’ feelings of self-efficacy. This might involve surveying preservice teachers’ preconceptions
about classroom management practices and philosophy prior to entry into a credential program, then designing coursework that addresses deficits in candidates’ feelings of self-efficacy through the use of effective management practices.

- Student teaching seminars should include weekly assignments for student teachers to engage in, and reflect upon actual classroom management situations. Seminar sessions should include class discussions and critical reflection of these situations, to provide all student teachers with a toolkit of actions, and possible outcomes for future classroom management situations they might encounter.

- Finally, teacher education programs should consider placing student teachers in the classroom setting at the beginning of the semester, rather than after four weeks. This might enable university credential programs to strengthen the link between classroom management theory and practice by providing extra time for student teachers to observe the mentor as she establishes procedural and managerial systems with the class. In addition, it might lessen the student teachers’ feeling of being subordinate to the mentor, and create an atmosphere in which students view the mentor and the student teacher as a team.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

As a result of this study, a number of questions arose as to how best to serve the classroom management needs of student teachers. Future research should therefore address the following issues:

- Additional qualitative and quantitative studies should be undertaken to determine what supports, both in the student teaching seminar and in the classroom setting, would further strengthen the connection between constructivist theory and
effective classroom management practices during the first semester of the practicum.

- Additional qualitative and quantitative studies should be conducted to explore whether and to what extent a connection exists between initial classroom management philosophy and later self-efficacy, so that credential programs can be strengthened to influence those feelings of self-efficacy. Future research might better determine to what extent during the second semester of the practicum, a student teacher’s prior classroom management conceptions, classroom management philosophy, and knowledge of classroom management practices continue to influence her feelings of self-efficacy. Further research should also focus on these factors as they shape student teachers’ evolving knowledge of constructivist practices.

- Using various models of the practicum (PDS schools, co-mentoring, etc.), additional studies might investigate the various ways that university faculty and classroom mentor teachers work together during the second semester of student teaching to strengthen the link between classroom management theory and practice.

- Using LPP as a framework, qualitative research should explore what supports the university might put in place to better prepare mentor teachers to assist student teachers in the classroom setting. Should universities require mentors to complete a semester of professional development or induction prior to the student teaching phase? What evidence would be needed to ensure that this professional development had instilled within the mentor a sense of collegiality and support for
student teachers? How would prospective mentor teachers continue to demonstrate growth in this model?

Conclusion

This study served to inform teacher education practice by documenting how student teachers construct classroom management knowledge during the first semester of student teaching and suggesting improvements to programs that link the practicum phase, and specifically the mentor teacher’s role, more closely with university coursework in classroom management. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to our understanding of the need for the inclusion of practical classroom management topics at the university level, in addition to the theoretical foundations currently emphasized. This is significant, as it will lead to a more thorough grounding for novice elementary student teachers in classroom management issues and enhance their effectiveness and sense of self-efficacy as they enter the teaching profession.
References


Gallagher, T. L. (2009). Teacher candidates’ questions within the context of an educational psychology course. *Teaching Educational Psychology, 5*(2), 50-60.


Appendix A

Elementary Student Teacher Interview Protocol

Prior Conceptions:

1. When you hear the term “classroom management,” what comes to mind?

2. Could you describe any memorable experiences with classroom management you had before you entered this program?

3. How would you describe your overall philosophy toward classroom management?
   a. Describe your philosophy about student behavior. How do you see yourself:
      more student-centered, or more teacher-centered?
   b. How did you come to feel that way?
   c. Who or what influenced your philosophy?

4. In your opinion, what do you think is the best way to use classroom management to help all students learn?

University Coursework Conceptions:

5. What did you want to learn about classroom management in the teacher education program?

6. What specifically was emphasized from your classes about student discipline?
   a. What do you wish you had learned in class that you didn’t learn?
b. Please give me an example of any connection you see between student learning theory and classroom discipline.

7. Please tell me how the topic of classroom management was discussed in any of your other education classes.

8. In your opinion, how well did your classroom management philosophy align with what you were taught?
   a. Please give me an example of any connection you see between student learning theory and classroom organization.

9. Based on what you learned in the teacher education program so far, what would you say is the best way to motivate students?

**Student Teaching – Initial Conceptions:**

11. Now that you are about to start student teaching, what kinds of management issues do you think you might encounter in the classroom setting?
   a. What are some classroom management issues you are worried about?

12. When it comes to student discipline, what is the most important issue you would like to discuss with your mentor?
   a. What guidance would you like from your mentor teacher that would encourage you to test your own classroom management skills in this area?

13. Suppose you are student teaching in a classroom with a group of students who have learning disabilities and exhibit off-task behaviors. What steps would you take to get them back on task?
a. How would you know whether your strategy had worked?

14. How effective do you think you will be as a classroom manager during student teaching?
   a. What do you consider your classroom management strengths?
   b. What are your weaknesses in this area?

15. What else would you like to learn about classroom management during student teaching?

Closing Questions:

Do you have anything else to add at this time? Thank you for participating in this interview!
Appendix B

Faculty Interview Protocol

University coursework:

1. What is your personal philosophy about classroom management?
   a. What is your philosophical approach to student behavior and discipline?

2. Could you please explain how classroom management is taught in the university curriculum?
   a. Give an example of some of the theoretical foundations student teachers learn concerning student learning and discipline.
   b. Please explain some of the theoretical foundations student teachers learn concerning student learning and classroom organization.
   c. How does coursework teach about relationships with students?

3. What courses do you currently teach?
   a. When and in what context do you cover classroom management issues?
   b. About how much of your classroom discussions are devoted specifically to the topic of classroom management?
   c. What are the reasons for that?
   d. Please describe some of the theories you want student teachers to know regarding classroom management, before they enter the practicum.
   e. What seminar activities do you think would help students feel more prepared to handle actual classroom management issues? (simulations, projects, papers, assessments etc.)
4. Elementary preservice teacher candidates most likely come into this program with a wide variety of background knowledge and prior beliefs about teaching, including beliefs about classroom management. How would you describe some of the prior beliefs about classroom management that you have seen in your students?
   a. How do students’ beliefs affect how or what you teach about classroom management?
   b. How do you help student teachers address classroom management issues with specific groups of students (ELs, gifted, those with disabilities etc.)?

Student Teaching:
5. Ideally, what kind of elementary classroom environment would reinforce the classroom management knowledge that student teachers should have learned through coursework?
   a. What organizational structures should be in place for the student teacher?

6. The student teachers at this university are typically placed with partner elementary schools. Please walk me through your role during the student teaching practicum.
   a. How are the mentor teachers at these schools chosen?
   b. What knowledge, skills, or beliefs do you look for in a mentor teacher?
   c. How should mentor teachers scaffold for student teachers in the area of classroom management?
7. How much freedom should the student teacher be given to test theories in behavior management?
   a. At what point should the mentor teacher intervene if the student teacher is having difficulty handling a behavior issue?

8. (For University Supervisors Only): Please tell me about a time when a student teacher confronted a difficult behavior during a lesson.
   a. What steps did you take to discuss the situation with the student teacher?

9. (For University Supervisors Only): Tell me about a time when a mentor and her student teacher disagreed philosophically about classroom management or student discipline systems.
   a. How did you handle this situation with the student teacher?
   b. How did your philosophical background influence the way you handled this situation with the student teacher?

**Impact of Classroom Management on Instruction:**

10. In your opinion, what is the connection between classroom management and student achievement?

11. In your experience, how do classroom management issues affect a student teacher’s feelings of success?
   a. (For University Supervisors Only): Tell me about a time when one of your student teachers struggled with classroom management issues during the practicum. How did that affect her ability to be an effective instructor?
b. (For University Supervisors Only): Can you tell me about a time when a student teacher’s feelings of success were negatively impacted due to a classroom management situation?

c. What, in your opinion, should be done to assist a student teacher with poor confidence in her ability to handle classroom management situations?

12. Ideally, what would be the best way for the university to prepare elementary preservice candidates for classroom management issues?

**Closing Questions:**

*Do you have anything else to add at this time? Thank you for participating in this interview!*
Appendix C

Elementary Student Teacher Focus Group Protocol

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for taking the time to come together for this focus group discussion with me today.

Purpose of the focus group:

As you know, this focus group is being held to learn about your experiences with classroom management as a student teacher during the past semester. I would like to hear your honest opinions and feelings. You may make comments, and agree or disagree with others in the group at any time. Since this focus group is being audio recorded, I would appreciate only one person speaking at a time. Also, please be respectful of others’ feelings and opinions.

Timing:

Today’s group will last approximately 90 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

University Coursework Conceptions:

1. Now that you’re done with student teaching, looking back, what was your experience like with classroom management?
   a. How did that relate to what you learned in your program?

Student Teaching Conceptions:

2. Could you please give an example of an especially challenging classroom management issue you encountered during student teaching, and what influenced your response to it?
3. Please describe how you felt about your mentor teacher’s classroom management philosophy when you first began student teaching.
   a. What did you learn about behavior management from the mentor teacher that most affected your relationships with students?

4. Overall, was there any difference between what you learned in the university and in the elementary classroom regarding classroom management?
   a. Which setting (university/classroom) do you feel had the most influence over your classroom management approach?
   b. Why do you feel that way?

5. Tell me about a time where you learned something about the connection between classroom management and instruction.

6. Overall, looking back, has your view of classroom management changed in any way since you started student teaching? If so, in what way? Under what conditions?
   a. Can you imagine applying any education theory to your classroom management toolkit when you become teachers?

7. If you could give some classroom management advice to new student teachers, what would it be?
   a. Do you have any suggestions for the teacher education program on this topic?

Closing Questions

Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Have you said everything that you anticipated wanting to say but didn’t get a chance to say?
Appendix D

Elementary Student Teacher Online Journal

Purpose:
The online Journal provides an informal way to describe how you feel about classroom management during the practicum experience. You will receive a new online Journal every other week via email, which contains a few questions about classroom management issues, and your perceptions about these issues. Please complete the online Journal and email it back to me by the due date.

Confidentiality:
Your feedback is confidential, and no part of the online Journal will be shared with anyone other than the researcher and her Faculty Advisor.

Directions:
The first three online Journals will contain three to four open-ended questions regarding various aspects of classroom management. Please give your honest feedback in response to these questions.

The final Online Journal contains a short survey about issues that may arise in the classroom setting.

Online Journal 1: Questions:

1. Please list one or two classroom management/discipline/behavior issues you have encountered these past two weeks:

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
2a. What steps did **you** take in response to these issues?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

2b. What steps did **your mentor** take in response to these issues?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

3. What people, strategies, experiences, or theories influenced your response to and view of these situations?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

4. In general, how has classroom management been going for you these past two weeks?

Feel free to add reflections or comments:
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
Online Journal 4: Classroom Management Checklist

Please place an X next to the response that best describes your feelings

1. My coursework in the teacher education program has helped me understand and apply theories of learning to behavior situations.

   Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □

2. I feel well prepared to handle the following classroom procedures:
   - Classroom Transitions
     Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □
   - Lesson Planning for Various Ability Levels
     Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □
   - Managing Daily Schedules
     Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □
   - Facilitating Small Group Instruction
     Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □

3. I feel well prepared to handle minor discipline situations with students (off-task behaviors i.e. playing, leaving seat, talking, etc.)

   Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □

4. I feel well-prepared to handle major discipline situations such as:
   - Students who refuse to comply in class
     Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □
   - Students who injure other students
     Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □
   - Students who bully other students
     Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □

5. My mentor teacher models positive behavior management strategies

   Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □

6. My mentor’s discipline style is based on theories of child psychology (Vygotsky, Piaget, Skinner, etc.)

   Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □

7. I agree with the discipline approach my mentor uses in class:

   Not at all □  Somewhat □  To a Great Extent □
8. I feel confident in my ability to establish a positive relationship with students in the classroom.

Not at all ☐ Somewhat ☐ To a Great Extent ☐

9. Regarding classroom management and student discipline, please describe any connection you see so far between what you have learned from your coursework, and what you are learning as a student teacher:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
You are being asked to participate in a research study. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

**RESEARCH TEAM**

**Researcher:** Lorie Thompson  
Department: Doctoral Student, Educational Leadership & Policy Studies  
Telephone Number: (818) 970-4581

**Faculty Advisor:** Susan Auerbach, Ph.D.  
Department: Educational Leadership & Policy Studies  
18111 Nordhoff St.  
Northridge, CA 91330- Mail Drop 8265  
Phone: 818/677-2591

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**
The purpose of this research study is to examine the ways that university coursework and the practicum in the elementary classroom contribute to student teachers’ knowledge of classroom management. My intent is to inform policy and improve the overall teacher preparation experience at the university. Classroom management is defined as the competency of a teacher or student teacher in strategies to address and manage student behavior and procedural matters in the classroom setting (Gilberts & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997).

**SUBJECTS**

**Inclusion Requirements**
You are eligible to participate in this study if you are

- an elementary student teacher attending CSUN full time (12+ units) for the 2012-2013 academic year who is beginning your first semester of student teaching
- a CSUN faculty instructor or student teaching supervisor in the Elementary Education department for the 2012-2013 academic year

**Time Commitment**
This study will involve approximately three to four (3-4) hours of your time for the Fall, 2012 semester (for elementary student teachers). This study will involve approximately one (1) hour of your time for the Fall, 2012 semester (for CSUN faculty).

**PROCEDURES**
The following procedures will occur (For student teachers and faculty): You will be asked to participate in one interview at the beginning of the Fall, 2012 semester, which will last approximately 60-90 minutes. (For student teachers only): Approximately every two
weeks during the time you are student teaching at a partner elementary school, you will be asked to complete an ongoing Activity Log, which will be sent to you via email. Near the end of the Fall, 2012 semester you may be asked to participate in a focus group discussion, which will last approximately 60-90 minutes. During the focus group you will be asked to reflect upon your experiences as a student teacher and as a student in the credential program.

**RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**
This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life. However, given the purpose of this study on issues that may be personal, some interview questions could be more sensitive, including questions related to experiences with and/or perceptions of university faculty, elementary school teachers, administrators or students. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. If, after your participation in the study, you feel that you need to seek support services, please contact CSUN’s University Counseling Services in Bayramian Hall, Suite 520, phone number (818) 677-2366, (818) 677-7834 (TTY), or email: coun@csun.edu. You may also contact the CSUN College of Education Credential Office at (818) 677-2586.

**BENEFITS**
*Subject Benefits*
The possible benefits you may experience from the procedures described in this study include developing greater awareness of and insight into classroom management and instructional practices, which may be helpful for you personally or professionally.

*Benefits to Others or Society*
In addition, findings from this study may contribute to our knowledge of teacher preparation and classroom management, as well as ways to improve the overall student teaching experience for teacher candidates at California State University, Northridge.

**ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION**
The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

**COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT**
*Compensation for Participation*
If you are selected to participate in the study, you will be given a $20 Starbucks Gift Card. In addition, if you complete all parts of this study, you will receive mentoring support from the researcher.

*Costs*
There is no cost to you for participation in this study. You will not be reimbursed for any out of pocket expenses, such as parking or transportation fees.

**WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES**
You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately.** The research team may also end your
participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Subject Identifiable Data
All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed and replaced with a pseudonym. All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be kept separate from the research data.

Data
All research data will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected or has encryption software. The audio recordings will also be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected or has encryption software.

Data Access
The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will use pseudonyms and will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention
The researchers intend to keep the research data until the research is published and/or presented and then it will be destroyed.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.
If you are unable to reach a member of the research team listed on the first page of the form and have general questions, or you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT
You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep.
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

I agree to participate in the study.

____________________  __________________
Subject Signature  

___________________________________________________ 

Printed Name of Subject  

___________________________________  ____________________  

Researcher Signature  

Date  

___________________________  

Printed Name of Researcher