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Student perception of behavior management systems

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STUDENT PERCEPTION OF BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

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The following qualitative study focuses on how students perceive classroom

behavior management systems. The process of research consisted of observation of

students in their natural classroom setting, the completion of the *Student Beliefs of*

Discipline Inventory Survey by the students, and informal interviews. A total of twenty

seven fourth and fifth grade students participated in the study. The major themes of the

study consisted of the students' perception of responsibility in the classroom and the

common misbehaviors identified by the students. The results of the study concluded that

a majority of the students want to have some responsibility for decisions in the

classroom. Another finding identified talking to others during instructional time as a

major misbehavior in the classroom. The results of the survey find that a majority of the

students prefer to have a voice in the classroom and responsibility for making decisions

in the classroom. Additionally, the students also responded to the amount of

responsibility the teacher should have in the classroom. According to the study, the

students believe the teachers should have more responsibility in creating and modifying

classroom rules than responsibility for disciplining students who misbehave in the

classroom.

ACKNOWEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

"Dan, do you have your math homework from last night? It was

on page 57, problems one through fifteen" asked Mrs. Cleese.

"Um..." Dan muttered as he shuffled through the belongings of his

desk. "I can't find it."

"We went through this yesterday Dan. No homework, no recess.

Go to the board and write your name under recess, then write math next to

your name in parenthesis."

It was the middle of November, and for the third time that week Dan didn't have

his homework completed. At least three out of the five days in the week, Dan was

missing at least one assignment. It was a rare occurrence when Dan had his homework

and was allowed to go outside for recess. Dan, like several other students in the class,

was abusing the behavior management system established in the classroom, and routinely

failed to complete his homework assignments. Additionally, as the school year

progressed, a trend developed of more students failing to complete their homework

assignments and staying inside for recess to finish their incomplete assignments.

Over the course of ten weeks during the fall semester of 2003, I was required to

make weekly visitations at Oxford Township Elementary School in southern New Jersey.

At the Oxford Township Elementary School, I observed Mrs. Cleese and Mrs. Idle's

fourth grade inclusion classroom. The teachers created a behavior management system

which required the students to stay inside for recess if they failed to complete their homework assignments. My visitations at the school were very beneficial, and a great educational experience, but one difficult question plagued me: Do all behavior management systems work? I was drawn to this question over a year ago, because of the continuous trend that occurred in my placement at Oxford Township Elementary School. On a routine basis, Mrs. Cleese and Mrs. Idle kept the students inside for recess because they did not complete their homework assignments. As the school year progressed, I noticed a trend of the same group of five to seven students being kept inside for recess for not completing their homework assignments.

During recess, the students who failed to complete their homework assignments were required to finish those assignments during recess. The students would return to the classroom after purchasing their lunch, and would eat in the classroom while completing their assignments. In the beginning of the school year, the students understood the significance of the behavior management system and the importance of completing their homework assignments. The number of students who were kept inside for recess in the beginning of the school year was significantly lower than the number of students kept inside for recess in December. Interestingly, as the school year progressed, the number of students punished for incomplete assignments increased. Some of the students began to abuse the system established in the classroom. Why do homework at home when you can complete it at school and still receive full credit for the assignment?

RESEARCH QUESTION

From my observations at Oxford Township Elementary School, I developed an interest in behavior management and became curious about how students reacted to

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behavior management systems used in their classroom. The purpose of this study, then, is to determine how students react to behavior management systems and whether the students view the system as effective or ineffective. Does the attitude of one student affect the rest of the class regarding the behavior management system of the classroom? The study also looks at possible ways to modify the behavior management to accommodate the needs of the students in the classroom.

<div align="center">*BACKGROUND INFORMATION*</div>

As I researched the topic of behavior management, I noticed a trend that focused on what types of behavior management systems are successful in the classroom; however, little was said about how they affected the students in the classroom. The lack of research on how students perceive discipline and behavior management systems in the classroom gave me more motivation to pursue my questions of study.

The way in which students view behavior management systems established in the classroom is important to study because it can influence the teacher to modify the behavior management system to meet the needs and interests of the students in the class.

A survey was conducted with 134 sixth grade students from three Indiana school districts dealing with the behavior management system used in their classrooms. Each student was instructed to write a brief, anecdotal narrative dealing with a time in which they were disciplined by the teacher for misbehaving. Each student was also instructed to explain whether they felt the discipline used by the teacher was effective or ineffective. Responses of a third of the students reported that rote punishment was the most effective strategy employed by teachers (Tulley & Chiu, 1998). Rote punishment, in this instance,

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refers to a punishment in which the student copies the classroom rules a certain number of times or writes an essay about their misbehavior in the classroom.

Prior to conducting this survey, Chiu and Tulley (1997) developed a survey based on the research conducted by Charles H. Wolfgang (1980), and surveyed a population of 712 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students attending school in eight different elementary schools located throughout Indiana. The students were instructed to complete the Beliefs on Discipline for Children (BDIC) survey (Tulley and Chiu, 1997). The BDIC is based on Wolfgang's Beliefs on Discipline Inventory, which asks teachers to respond to a series of questions about their beliefs on classroom discipline (Wolfgang, 1980). The BDIC survey consisted of various scenarios which the students responded to by selecting one of two choices. Each scenario dealt with a specific behavior problem and asked the student to choose the appropriate form of discipline. The students were instructed to read the scenarios independently and respond to them with the appropriate form of discipline. Each response on the survey reflected Wolfgang's ideas regarding the three most common discipline approaches used by teachers in the classroom: Rules-Reward Punishment Approach, Relationship-Listening Approach, and Confronting-Contracting Approach. According to Wolfgang's theories (1986), the Rules-Reward Punishment Approach is derived from the theories of experimental behaviorist psychologists, the Relationship-Listening Approach is derived from the theories of humanistic and psychologists and the Confronting-Contracting Approach is derived from the theories of social and developmental theory. Since students react to discipline in various ways, a successful behavior management system should consist of elements from each of these approaches.

Wolfgang (1980, 1996, and 1999) has conducted many studies dealing with behavior management systems, and has written numerous books and professional journal articles dealing with behavior management. His research addresses types of behavior management systems and the ways in which teachers handle behavior management in the classroom, and his views and ideas support those of other prominent figures in the education field, such as Thomas Gordon, Rudolf Dreikurs, and William Glasser (Wolfgang, 1980). It is important to look at these ideas and theories when creating a behavior management system, because they are based on how students react to different types of discipline. In *Discipline and the Social Studies Classroom, Grades K-12* Wolfgang (1995) emphasizes the importance of giving students the educational experiences needed to grow into morally responsible individuals. When a young child is faced with unfair and unequal discipline, the child remains in the first stage of their moral development. The child will never take social responsibility for his or her actions, and will remain fearful of authoritative figures throughout his or her adult life (Wolfgang, 1995).

According to Wolfgang, "it is ineffective to tell a student what not to do, rather, the teacher is encouraged to tell the misbehaving student what to do. "No Stop" statements are used if the incident is serious and substantial harm may occur imminently" (Wolfgang, 1999, p. 6). By establishing a discipline system that respects the students, teachers enable them to grow into the next moral development stage.

In order to effectively control the classroom, then, the teacher must understand the needs of the students. If the student finds the behavior management plan established in the classroom effective, the student will be more likely to obey the classroom rules.

Thus, by studying the ways in which children react to discipline, we can have a better understanding of how to effectively use behavior management strategies in the classroom.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are several limitations to the study. One of the most significant is the response that students give on the *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey.* Students surveyed may exaggerate their feelings about the discipline approach by either praising the system used or speaking extremely negative about the system. Prior to the students completing the survey, the individual proctoring the survey must emphasize the importance of completing the survey honestly. The results could become skewed if the students completing the survey fail to honestly critique the established behavior management system.

A second limitation to the study is the number of participants. Only 27 students in a fourth and fifth grade multiage classroom are participating in the survey. In addition, the students spend two years in the same second and third grade multiage classroom, and another two years in the same fourth and fifth grade classroom, which only exposes them to a total of four behavior management systems (kindergarten, first grade, second and third grade, and fourth and fifth grade classrooms). Since the students have not been exposed to a variety of behavior management systems, they may have a limited opinion towards the behavior management system in the classroom (especially the fifth grade students who have been exposed to the same system for two years).

Finally, a limitation to this study involved the open-ended questions that appear at the end of the *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey.* The first open-ended

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question instructs the students to write about a time in which they were disciplined for misbehavior, but some of the students may believe they have never misbehaved. This belief may be due to a lack of discipline by the teacher or unclear definitions of the types of misbehaviors that can occur in the classroom. If a large majority of the participants believe they have never been in trouble, then their opinion of the behavior management system may possibly be skewed because the student believes that the system effectively manages behavior.

ORGANIZATION OF THESIS

The following chapters look at prior research conducted on the topic of study (Chapter 2), the methodology and a context of the study (Chapter 3), the results of the study (Chapter 4), and the final conclusion and implications of the study (Chapter 5). In each chapter, I detail the research that has been conducted during this study and how this information can be applied in the classroom. In the following chapter, a discussion of the related research on the topic of behavior management systems is presented.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

INTRODUCTION

In order to create an environment in which all students can learn, it is imperative that the teacher establish a behavior management system that will help the students monitor their behavior in the classroom. The behavior management system established in the classroom can be used for the entire class, or can be modified for individual students who need additional encouragement and acknowledgement of their behavior.

According to many of the authors who have written about behavior management over the last ten years, there are various guidelines that must be used when creating and establishing a behavior management system in the classroom. Alderman (2001) argues that a sound behavior management system is a prerequisite for creating learning in the classroom. Additionally, the most critical factor of a behavior management system is to promote on-task behaviors (Alderman, 2001). Alderman provides several guidelines on how to create a successful behavior management system and many of them are repeated throughout the works of other educational theorists who have written and studied behavior management.

SUCCESSFUL BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

According to many of the educational theorists, such as Alderman, Charles H. Wolfgang, Rudolf Dreikurs, and William Glasser, one of the primary guidelines of a

successful behavior management system is that the teacher must have the student focus on the desired behavior rather than the problem behavior.

While the rules of the classroom and school should be known to the entire student population, the teacher should discipline students privately. The teacher's voice is one of the most commonly used discipline tools in the classroom, and it often becomes the least effective because the students become trained to not respond to the teacher's voice. Rather than publicly disciplining the misbehaving student in front of the class, the teacher should administer private discipline. When a teacher elects to publicly discipline a student, the teacher loses power in the classroom because she is interrupting the other students' activities. The teacher retains more power in the classroom, when the discipline used with a student remains private (Alderman, 2001).

When developing a behavior management system for the classroom, many educational theorists believe the system should not focus on the negative. Students should not focus on their negative behavior, nor should negative consequences be administered for their misbehavior. Dreikurs (1968) believed that it was unnecessary to use punishment, negative reinforcement, praise, or positive reinforcement but instead believed that natural and logical consequences and the process of encouragement were more beneficial. On the other hand, Alderman (2001) believes negative consequences are the most critical and important aspect in creating, establishing, and maintaining a well disciplined and positive classroom.

THE TEACHER BEHAVIOR CONTINUUM

Charles H. Wolfgang is one of the most prominent writers on the subject of behavior management systems. Writing several books, numerous journal articles, and

conducting various studies, Wolfgang has developed several theories on how to use discipline in the classroom without interrupting the flow of the students' education. In order for a behavior management system to be established effectively in the classroom, it must contain the teacher behavior continuum.

According to Wolfgang (1996):

> [The teacher behavior continuum is] a systematic teaching process that a teacher may use daily to intervene with the kinds of misbehavior normally seen in most students in classroom settings. The teacher behavior continuum contains a group of five general teacher behaviors (Looking, Naming, Questioning, Commanding, and Acting [Physical Intervention]) placed on a continuum, suggesting that actions may move from minimum teacher intrusion or power to maximum teacher control. (p. 7)

The teacher behavior continuum is not an actual behavior management system, but rather the five different phases that teachers use when disciplining misbehaving students (Wolfgang, 1996). The first phase of the teacher behavior continuum is the Looking phase, which consists of the teacher using various forms of looking, touching, and sounds to inform the student of his behavior. If the Looking phase is unsuccessful, then the teacher increases his or her role as disciplinarian by confronting the student verbally in the Naming Phase. The teacher refrains from publicly disciplining the student, but rather talks to the student softly. The third phase of the teacher behavior continuum is the Questioning phase, in which the teacher quietly asks the student what he should be doing at that moment. The teacher does not point out what the student is doing incorrectly, but rather asks the student what he or she should be doing. If the third phase

is not successful, then the teacher moves to the fourth stage, which is the Commanding phase. The teacher has been patient with the student, but now has to be direct with the student and tell him or what to do. This command is usually followed with a promise of a consequence if the student does not do what he or she has been directed to do. The final phase of the teacher behavior continuum is the Acting phase, in which the teacher physically blocks or restricts the student in order to prevent an action from occurring. The teacher takes on this role when students are physically fighting with one another, and the teacher must separate the two students before someone becomes hurt during the conflict (Wolfgang, 1999).

WOLFGANG'S THREE FACES OF DISCIPLINE

There are three faces of discipline that a teacher uses in the classroom; each face relates to one of the five groups teacher behaviors of the teacher behavior continuum. Like the teacher behavior continuum, Wolfgang believes the teacher uses more discipline with each face of discipline he or she uses. The first face of discipline is the Relationship-Listening face, which correlates with the first two faces of the teacher behavior continuum, Looking and Naming. Of the three faces of discipline, the Relationship-Listening face is the least invasive and views children as being "inherently good." When a child does misbehave, it is because the child is suffering some form of inner emotional blockage and needs attention to fill that void. The teacher forms a relationship with the child based on trust and does not judge the child based on his or her prior actions. Instead the teacher encourages the child to talk to the teacher about his problems, while the teacher listens and provides input for the student (Wolfgang, 1996)

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The second face of discipline is the Confronting-Contracting face. On the teacher behavior continuum model, the Confronting-Contracting face correlates with the Questioning and Commanding phases. At the Confronting-Contracting face, "the misbehavior is viewed as the student's poor or ineffective attempt to gain social acceptance or to build self-worth by getting attention from the teacher or peers, or by exerting power over them" (Wolfgang and Kelsay, 1995, p.180). The theories, ideas, and concepts developed by Wolfgang dealing with the Confronting-Contracting face are based on Rudolf Dreikus's Adlerian Therapy and William Glasser's Discipline Model (Wolfgang,. 1996).

The final face of discipline teachers' use in the classroom is the Rules and Consequences face, which correlates with the final two phases of the teacher behavior curriculum, Commanding and Acting. Of the three faces of discipline, the Rules and Consequences face is the most dominating and controlling. When teachers use this face they are being assertive with the student, using actions based on "philosophy and methodology that clearly states rules for behavior and assertively takes actions through reward to get the positive behavior sought by the teacher" (Wolfgang, 1996, p. 7).

WILLIAM GLASSER'S CHOICE THERAPY

Charles H. Wolfgang's theories and ideas were developed from the behavior theories of William Glasser and Rudolf Dreikurs. Choice therapy is based on Glasser's beliefs and ideas that "all of our behavior is our constant attempt to satisfy one or more of the five basic needs that are written into our genetic structure" (Glasser, 1998, p. 18). Choice theory emphasizes an individual's need to develop responsibility for their actions, and to find satisfaction of their own needs without disturbing the needs of others

(Marandola and Imber, 1979). Throughout their life, individuals are trying to maintain their five basic elements of happiness, which are the need to survive and reproduce, the need to belong and to love, the need to gain power and acceptance, the need to be free, and the need to have fun (Rose, 2003). When all five basic needs have been met, then the individual is capable of maintaining an appropriate behavior throughout the day.

An individual's needs cannot be met at all times, and when this happens the individual applies all of his or her energy into satisfying their needs. The individual's total behavior drastically changes in an attempt to satisfy their needs. If the individual fails to meet his or her basic needs, then the individual becomes withdrawn, and removes him or herself from the situation (Rose, 2003). In his book *Choice Theory in the Classroom*, Glasser states that "we always choose to do what is most satisfying to us at the time" (1998, p. 21). Glasser is referring to the fact that an individual is constantly struggling to maintain all five basic needs at all times and will achieve this goal by any means necessary.

Students in the classroom are constantly struggling to meet the five basic needs of life. Their attitude during school will change if they have not eaten breakfast in the morning, fought with their parents the night before, or if they are busy making jokes with their friends rather than doing their assignments. These are examples of the five basic needs, and when they aren't met it is not the teacher's responsibility to punish the child for their misbehavior, rather they should attempt to satisfy the child's needs (Glasser, 1998). For example, a teacher can have a supply of food in the classroom for students who came to school hungry or allow time during the day to allow the students to converse with friends and neighbors.

Since the individual's behavior is based on their attempt to satisfy their personal needs, Glasser feels that punishments and external reinforcements are ineffective, unethical, and have the possibility to destroy internal motivation within the student. Methods such as punishment and external reinforcements see "people (and especially children) as objects to do things to rather than seeing them as individuals to work with" (Malone, 2002, p.10). As an educator, it is important to realize the significance of a child's behavior and how outside elements can cause a student's attitude in the classroom to change dramatically.

When a school district has successfully maintained the student's basic elements of need, then the school district becomes a quality school. The students are able to learn in the classroom because their five basic needs are continuously being met by the school system, which results in less stress for the student over whether his needs have been fulfilled. A quality school has six characteristics which make it a positive learning environment: (1) it establish trusting and respecting relationships; (2) the focus of the school is on useful information; (3) both the students and the teacher perceive student work as excellent; (4) the entire population of the school, both teachers and staff, not only know what Choice Therapy is but also how to implement it in the school and classroom; (5) the students have high scores on standardized tests and proficiency tests; and (6) the students want to be in school (Rose, 2003).

The Choice Theory advocates that the student set realistic goals for him to achieve positive behavior. The goals established by the student can also be used as a self-regulatory behavior system, which helps the student achieve their goals and maintain a positive behavior. The goal which the student establishes for him or herself should

include the following characteristics. First, the student must have enough time and the prerequisite skills to achieve the goal. Second, the student must have confidence in his ability to achieve the goal. The student must also be able to measure his achievements to determine whether he has met his goals. Additionally, the student must have a desire to achieve an established goal. The student must constantly be reminded of the goal so that he remains focused on his achievement. The sixth characteristic of a set of established goals is that the student must be motivated to achieve the goal. Finally, the student must be committed to achieving the goal and cannot give into outside temptations which would cause him to not achieve his goal (Malone, 2002).

<center>*ALFRED ADLER'S ALDERIAN THERAPY*</center>

In addition to being influenced by Glasser's Choice Theory, Wolfgang also developed his ideas from the Alderian Therapy developed in the 1970's by Alfred Adler. Alfred Adler, a Viennese psychiatrist, "believed that the central motivation of all humans is to belong and be accepted by others" (Wolfgang, 2001, p. 115). All human behaviors occur due to a subconscious motivation to achieve one of three things in their life at that moment: (1) to gain attention from others, (2) to gain control or feel powerful, (3) to seek revenge (Shulman and Dreikurs, 1978).

In addition to the subconscious motivations that exist within humans, Adler also believed that there are five principles that direct individual's actions. First there is a need for people to feel a belonging within society. Additionally, every action the individual takes has a purpose, and cannot be fully understood by others unless the individual knows what was trying to be achieved when the action was committed. The third principle of behavior states that all people are decision-makers. Each action the individual takes in

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life was done by a decision made by the individual, whether consciously or subconsciously. The fourth principle of behavior states that all individuals are whole individuals, and their actions and behaviors cannot be understood through partial characteristics and observations. Finally, individuals react to situations due to the perception of the incident, rather than the reality of it (Dreikurs, Cassel, and Ferguson, 2004).

RUDOLF DREIKURS

Rudolf Dreikurs worked closely with Adler, and further developed Adler's ideas after his death. According to Dreikurs, all children need to feel encouraged by their peers, teachers, and family, because it "stimulates the child to do his best and enables him to recognize his abilities" (Dreikurs, Cassel, and Ferguson, 2004, p. 36). A disruptive, misbehaving child acts out due to feeling discouraged by others. The child is acting on a faulty sense that his misbehavior will result in social acceptance that he feels that he deserves. According to Eva Dreikurs Ferguson, "a child needs encouragement like a plant needs sun and water. Unfortunately, those who need encouragement most get it the least because they behave in such a way that our reaction to them pushes them further into discouragement and rebellion" (Dreikurs, Cassel, and Ferguson, p. 75, 2004). Teachers and administrators should avoid criticizing children because it makes them feel discouraged and develop a sense of uncertainty. The child will become hostile to those who have made him feel discouraged, and will be reluctant to learn new, acceptable behaviors.

Dreikurs studied children's behavior, and theorized why children misbehaved. Children attempt to reach a certain goal, but the goal which they are attempting to reach

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results in the child misbehaving. A majority of the misbehaviors that occur in the classroom are the result of four different mistaken goals; to gain attention, to gain power, to gain revenge against someone or something, and to purposefully display levels of inadequacy. Children use inappropriate behaviors in hopes that they will be accepted by their classmates, and fill one of the mistaken goals (Dreikurs, 1968). Additionally, Adler proposed three additional reasons for misbehavior in children, which are the goals of getting, self-elevation, and avoidance. When children are acting to "get" something, they are in demand of an object or attention. Self-elevation refers to an attempt to be the best at something; however, the individual sacrifices the expense of others to achieve their best. Finally, children misbehave in hopes of avoiding a punishment or failure at an objective or assignment (Bitter, 1991).

Both Adler and Dreikurs believed that the use of rewards and punishment can have a negative affect on the child because it does not give them the intrinsic motivation necessary to help them learn new, acceptable behaviors. Rewards and punishments are only a temporary solution to the problem, but do not prevent future incidents from occurring because the child does not learn from his mistakes.

THE FIVE SUBSYSTEMS OF BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Wolfgang used Adler, Dreikurs, and Glasser's theories to develop an appropriate system of behavior management that can be used successfully in the classroom. In order to create an effective management system in the classroom there must be five subsystems established within the management system: a limit-setting system, a professional administrative back-up system, an incentive system, an encouragement system, and a classroom management system. The limit-setting system allows the teacher to take

action against the students who are disrupting the class by preventing the teacher from educating the students. In this system, the teacher has the ability to stop the student from misbehaving by applying power over the student.

The professional-administration back-up system is the second subsystem of the management system, and allows the teacher to assert further discipline towards students who continue to be a disruption to the class. The teacher can enlist the assistance of other staff members, such as the principal, professional development staff, and counselors to help deal with student's behavior. The incentive system is the third part of the management system, which allows the teacher to use incentives such as rewards and tokens to influence the students to work and behave in a positive manner. This system also hopes that the students will be able to use behaviors that they have yet to acquire through their educational experiences. The next piece of the management system, the encouragement system, is a more individualized and personal system, directed at students who refuse to behave during class. The final piece of the management system is the classroom and school management system, which deals with the way in which the teacher uses the classroom environment. This system focuses on how the classroom is designed, the layout of the student and teachers desks, how the students are chosen for group projects and how the teacher establishes rules in the classroom.

LIAN HWANG CHIU AND MICHAEL TULLEY

In 1997 and 1998, Lian Hwang Chiu and Michael Tulley began to study students' perceptions of the behavior management systems used in their classrooms. In 1997, Chiu and Tulley conducted a study on 712 students from three Midwestern school districts to determine what type of discipline the students preferred. The students, ranging in grades

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four through six, were administered a survey based on the Beliefs on Discipline Inventory survey developed by Wolfgang and Carl D. Glickman to determine what type of discipline approach students preferred and to determine if there was a relationship between the approach students' preferred and their gender, academic achievement level, and their grade level (Chiu and Tulley, 1997).

The Beliefs on Discipline Inventory for Children (BDIC) was a modification of the survey created by Wolfgang and Glickman, and consisted of twelve statements which the students responded to by choosing one of two response choices. The teachers read the instructions and the entire survey to the students, and then instructed the students to read the survey independently and respond to the statements. Additionally, the students were asked to describe the type of student they were by identifying their gender, grade level, and academic achievement level. Students identified their academic achievement level based on two criteria: high-achieving students consisted of students whose grades consisted of only A's and B's (no more than half of their grades could consist of B's). Low achieving students were identified as students whose grades were lower than A's, and over half of their grades consisted of B's or lower (Chiu and Tulley, 1997).

Over 59% of the students who completed the survey preferred the Confronting-Contracting approach over the Relationship-Listening approach and the Rules-Reward Punishment approach. Additionally, the survey revealed that more high-achieving students preferred the Confronting-Contracting approach, while more low-achieving students preferred the Rules-Reward Punishment approach (Chiu and Tulley, 1997).

The second study conducted by Chiu and Tulley was in 1998 and also looked at student's perceptions of classroom behavior management systems. The study was

conducted on 134 sixth grade students from three Indiana school districts. Rather than complete a questionnaire survey, the students were asked to write a brief, anecdotal narrative of a time in which they were disciplined for inappropriate behavior. The definitions of "discipline problem" and "discipline" were not identified to the students, because Tulley and Chiu wanted to see what types of behaviors the students identified as inappropriate and what types of discipline strategies teachers employed when they dealt with these types of behaviors. Additionally, they also wanted to identify what extent students considered the strategies employed by the teachers as being effective or ineffective (Tulley and Chiu, 1998).

Of the 134 anecdotal narratives, five types of misbehaviors were identified by the students: disruptions, defiance, aggression, incomplete work, and various other behaviors. Among the five types of behavior problems, students identified six different strategies employed by teachers to deal with these behavior problems: rote punishment, removal punishment, explanation, presentation punishment, threats and warnings, and ignoring the behavior. Of the six different discipline strategies, the students identified rote punishment as the most frequently used discipline strategy, and also identified it as the most effective of the six strategies (Tulley and Chiu, 1998).

CONCLUSION

When implementing a behavior management system in the classroom, Wolfgang believed that it must consist of various elements for it to be successfully implemented. The behavior management system must not focus on the problem behavior; rather encourage the student to focus on the desired behavior. Additionally, a level of encouragement must be displayed by the teacher, in order to help the student maintain

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their basic needs and goals. When the teacher helps the student maintain their basic needs, then the student has the ability to academically and behaviorally perform well in the classroom environment.

Additionally, in order for a behavior management system to be effective, the teachers must be consistent and fair about the level of discipline used on the students. The teacher cannot use the same punishment for every student, because the discipline will not have the same effect on each student. Rather than use the same type of discipline for each student, the teacher must understand what the students value and find effective. As a result, the teacher must establish an effective discipline system in the classroom, along with a reward system which balances the discipline system. The teacher cannot combat student's misbehavior by relying on an effective reward system, because the teacher will be ignoring the student's incorrect behavior. While the teacher will reinforce the student's good behavior with rewards, the teacher may inadvertently encourage misbehavior due to the lack of punishment used in the classroom.

In the following chapter, the methodology of the study will be explained in detail. Additionally, the make-up of the classroom in which the study was conducted will be described.

CHAPTER 3

CONTEXT AND DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter the design of the research and methodology are presented. This chapter also describes the context of the study which consists of detailed descriptions of the participants and setting of the study.

CONTEXT

COMMUNITY

Camelot Township has a population of 47,114 people, with an average household income that ranges from $50,000 to $75,000 a year. Additionally, a majority of the population of individuals over the age of 18 have either a high school diploma or a Bachelor's degree in some type of professional field. Due to the large population, the Camelot Township School District consists of eleven schools: one Preschool/Kindergarten Center, six elementary schools (consisting of grades one through five), three middle schools (consisting of grades six through eight), and one high school complex (consisting of grades nine through 12).

Camelot Junior Elementary School is one of the six elementary schools in the district, with a student population of 557 students (91 first graders, 103 second graders, 118 third graders, 127 fourth graders, and 118 fifth graders). English is the primary

language of almost all of the students (96.4% of the student population), with a minority of students speaking Spanish as their native language.

The school district has a comprehensive language arts and literacy program that runs from kindergarten through fifth grade. Additionally, students in third and fourth grade begin an expanded World Language program in which they begin to learn Spanish and in fifth grade the students are exposed to more advanced topics in Spanish. Fifth grade students also begin to develop skills and study the French and German languages. During the 2004-2005 academic school year, a new standards based math program was introduced in the school, Everyday Math, in which the students are exposed to the same math concepts throughout the year, but at advanced levels.

There are three gifted and talented programs at Camelot Junior Elementary School: the TAG program, the MARS program, and the PEP program. First and second grade students are exposed to a gifted education program called the Primary Enrichment Program (PEP). Students in grades three through five can participate in the Talented and Gifted Program (TAG), while fourth and fifth grade students can participate in MARS, which is a subject area enrichment program in communications and mathematics.

The number of students in each class is relatively small, with roughly 20 students per classroom. There are six first grade classrooms (including one Transitional first grade class) with an average class size of 18 students, four second grade classes with an average of 20 students, four third grade classes with an average of 21 students, and five fifth grade classrooms with an average class size of 24 students. Additionally, there are two multiage classrooms (a second and third grade multiage class and a fourth and fifth

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grade multiage class). The multiage classes have a larger class size of 30 students per class.

THE CLASSROOM

The setting in which I conducted my study took place in the fourth and fifth grade multiage class taught by Mr. Chapman and Mrs. Jones. After completing their second year in the second and third grade multiage class, the students enter fourth grade in the fourth and fifth grade multiage class. Over the next two years, the students complete a two year curriculum that is supported by reading books related to the social studies and science themes. There are a total of 30 students in the class (14 fourth grade students and 16 fifth grade students). Of the 30 students in the class, 27 received permission from their parent or guardian to participate in the survey.

Table 3.1: Classroom Demographic Characteristics (found on page 26) provides a list of the 27 students who participated in the study. There are three African American students, one Asian student, and 24 Caucasian students who participated in the survey. Participants consisted of 12 female students and 15 male students in grades four through five. The 27 students ranged in ages from nine to eleven; there were 121 fourth grade students and 15 fifth grade students. Pseudonyms have been used for the names of the participants, school district, and teacher involved in this study to protect their identities.

The heterogeneous group of students represents a range of abilities in the classroom; each student counter balances each others' strengths and weaknesses. The class consists of 11 exceptional children: eight students are classified with a learning disability, and three students are gifted and talented students. The eight students classified with a learning disability have an IEP (individualized education plan) with

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specific modifications to help assist them during instruction. The students' disabilities range from autism to specific learning disabilities. In addition to the eight classified students, there is a girl in the class, Sally, who has been referred to the Child Study Team (CST) due to the difficulties she faced in class. Sally had difficulty with comprehension and her mathematical skills. The Child Study Team was conducting a series of tests to determine if "Sally" had a specific learning disability.

There are two types of programs for students who excel in school, the MARS program and the TAG program. The gifted students attend a special academic class which challenges their mental abilities through advanced skills in language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. For example, the students completed an extensive unit on the Roman Empire and a unit on measurement and distance in which they measured and drew a scale map of the entire school. Three of the students in the class attend the TAG (Talented and Gifted) program three times a week.

There are six students (including the three TAG) students who attend the MARS program throughout the week. MARS is an advanced enrichment program in the subject areas of mathematics and reading. The six students in the class participate in the reading spectrum of the enrichment program.

TABLE 3.1: CLASSROOM DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Student Number	"Student Name"	Ethnicity	Gender	Grade Level	Academics
3	Arthur	African American	Male	Fourth	
4	Robin	Caucasian	Female	Fourth	
5	Tim	Caucasian	Male	Fourth	
6	Connie	Caucasian	Female	Fifth	
7	Roger	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	MARS
8	Dennis	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	IEP
9	John	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	IEP
10	Carol	Caucasian	Female	Fourth	IEP
11	Terry	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	MARS, TAG
12	Maria	Caucasian	Female	Fourth	MARS
13	Eric	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	MARS, TAG
14	Graham	African American	Male	Fourth	
15	Angela	Caucasian	Female	Fifth	IEP
16	Cheryl	Caucasian	Female	Fourth	
17	Linda	Asian	Female	Fourth	MARS
18	Kelly	Caucasian	Female	Fifth	IEP
19	Courtney	Caucasian	Female	Fifth	IEP
20	Michael	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	TAG, MARS
21	Herbert	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	
23	Bruce	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	IEP
24	Thorne	African American	Male	Fifth	
25	Thomas	Caucasian	Male	Fifth	
26	Sally	Caucasian	Female	Fifth	Referred to CST
27	Beth	Caucasian	Female	Fourth	IEP
28	Debbie	Caucasian	Female	Fourth	
29	Harry	Caucasian	Male	Fourth	
30	Bert	Caucasian	Male	Fourth	

During the 2004-2005 academic school year, the Camelot Junior Elementary School administration began to implement a new set of rules in the school; CJ Rules. The entire student population was exposed to the school rules on the first day of school and was expected to follow the rules each day. In each of the classrooms in the school, the CJ Rules are displayed in the classroom along with the consequences if one of the rules is broken. Each classroom has a different set of consequences for the students if they break one of the rules of the school.

There are eight school rules which the students have to follow. The CJ Rules are:

1. Be a friend.

2. Listen to and respect all adults.

3. Treat our school with kindness and care.

4. Keep your hands, feet, objects, and unkind words to yourself.

5. Be prepared for class, listen carefully and follow directions.

6. Raise your hand to speak or to leave your seat.

7. Walk quietly in the hallways.

8. Treat others the way you would like to be treated. Be kind and polite.

If the student follows all of the CJ Rules and has less than 10 warnings for the month, then the student has the opportunity to participate in the Fabulous Friday activities that occur once a month. During Fabulous Friday, the students switch classrooms and participate in various activities such as sports, arts and crafts, or other forms of entertainment.

Each classroom in the school has a different consequence system that accompanies the CJ Rules. In the fourth and fifth grade multiage classroom, the teachers use a three card color coded system for behavior management purposes. The students receive one of three cards (green, yellow, or red) depending on their behavior. A green card is given when the student is on-task or has been caught doing a kind act for another student. A yellow card is given when the students are disruptive and have been told several times to settle down and become on-task again. Finally, a red card is given when the student is severely off-task and being disruptive to the other students. A student who is given a red card is often exhibiting behaviors that are extreme (fighting, cursing, and talking back to the teacher) and is sent straight to the principal's office.

In addition to the color coded card system, the fourth and fifth multiage grade class uses a warning system that accompanies CJ Rules. After the first offense the student receives an oral warning (a W), and after the second offense the student receives a box around the first letter of their name on the board. (For example if a student named Christopher received a second warning, a C would be written on the board with a box around it.) The third offense is the student receives a check next to their name, and a note is sent home. The fourth offense is a second check next to their name and an after school detention.

The teachers keep track of each student's offenses for the month on a behavior chart. If the student receives more than ten checks for the month, then they lose their Fabulous Friday privileges for the month. Additionally, when the student receives a

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yellow card, the student receives the consequences for the second offense (a box around the first letter of their first name).

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to collect valuable and reliable data on how students perceive classroom discipline and behavior management systems utilized in the classroom, it is important to consider the primary source of data: the students. To conduct my study, I used a qualitative data collection approach in which I utilized observations, informal interviews with the students, and a survey which will provide student insights on behavior management systems.

There were three phases of data collection used during my research and data collection. Initially, through the use of a qualitative research approach in ethnographic studies, I was able to obtain an understanding of the unique classroom management system of the classroom through observations. Data collection during these observations was recorded in a teacher field observation journal. After becoming familiar with the settings and behavior management system of the classroom, the students completed the *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey,* which consisted of various types of questions on their beliefs on discipline. Finally, after completing the survey, I conducted several interviews with students regarding the behavior management system in the classroom (Creswell, 2003).

DATA SOURCES

I utilized three types of data sources: observations, a survey, and informal interviews with the students. These types of data sources were used to evaluate the use of behavior management systems in the classroom, their personal beliefs about discipline,

and the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the behavior management system used in the classroom. I began my research through the use of observations, in order to gain a better understanding of the classroom and how the teachers of the classroom manage the students. During the observations, I concentrated on three things: (1) Was each student given fair discipline? (2) What types of behaviors were disciplined in the classroom? (3) How did each student respond to the discipline?

After several weeks of observations, the students completed a survey, *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey*, which can be found in Appendix A. The survey consisted of twelve multiple choice questions and two open-ended questions in which each student selected the choice that best represented their opinion of a specific situation. After completing all of the multiple choice questions, the students answered two open-ended questions in which the students identified a time in which they were disciplined for an inappropriate behavior and how they were affected by their discipline approach.

Finally, informal interviews were conducted with the students regarding the behavior management system used in the classroom. The interviews were conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the classroom structure and student perception of the behavior management system used in the classroom. During the interviews with the students, I asked them to clarify on their open-ended responses and reflect on the way in which they felt at the time of the discipline.

DATA ANALYSIS

After the completion of my data research, I analyzed my data by comparing the results of the survey with the observations I made throughout the research. Do the students perceptions of discipline and behavior parallel with the behavior of the students

during class activities? Are there any discrepancies or deviations that occurred during data collection?

Additionally, tabulations of the frequencies and percentages of the results of the students' surveys were recorded in a table and analyzed to determine what type of behavior management system students prefer. During the analysis of the data, themes and trends found in the surveys were identified, and the results compared with the observations made during the research. Answers were sought to answer the question: Do a majority of the students prefer a certain aspect or trait that correlates with a specific behavior management system?

Finally, interviews were conducted to clarify any questions regarding the students' responses to the open-ended questions. Interviews were also conducted with students who showed a discrepancy between their behaviors in class and their comments on the survey.

CONCLUSION

Over the course of a three month period, data was collected in the classroom. During this three month time period, the students were observed in their natural classroom setting and were instructed to complete the *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey*. In the following chapters, I analyze the data collected during my research and report the results of the surveys completed by the students.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

In the following chapter the data collected during my research is analyzed and central themes are formulated. This chapter provides an analysis of student behaviors and responses dealing with their perception of classroom discipline. I used three different data collection approaches during this study: (1) classroom observations, (2) the student survey *Students Beliefs on Discipline Inventory Survey* and (3) informal interviews with students after the completion of the survey. During the collection of data, several central themes appeared through out the study. The four central themes of the study are: (1) the role of the student in the classroom, (2) the role of the teacher in the classroom, (3) common behaviors labeled inappropriate, and (4) the students' preference in behavior management.

DATA COLLECTION

As stated in Chapter 3: Context and Design of the Research, I used three sources of data: field observations, a student survey with narrative responses, and informal student interviews. Initially, I observed the students in their natural classroom settings and recorded my observations in a teacher-researcher field journal. During this time period I collected data on the behavior of the students during the school day and how they reacted to being disciplined as a result of their inappropriate behavior.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

During the classroom observations, I concentrated my research on the type of

misbehaviors that occurred in the classroom and the discipline the students received in

correspondence with the misbehavior. Additionally, I also noted the student's reaction

towards the discipline they received.

One of the most significant pieces of data I collected during this time period was

the observations of several students who displayed disruptive and uncooperative

behavior. Shore (2003), defines disruptive behavior as a student who "makes noises,

giggle(s) uncontrollably, call(s) out answers, refuse(s) to follow your directives, get(s)

out of his seat, sharpen(s) his pencil in the middle of a lesson, talk(s) frequently with his

friends, make(s) wisecracks, clown(s) around, make(s) fun of other students, and throw(s)

objects" in the classroom (p.85). Throughout the data collection of the study, these types

of misbehaviors were commonly identified by the students, especially talking with

friends during instructional time.

It was January and Arthur, for the second time that day,

interrupted the teachers' instruction to sharpen his pencil. At the time,

the students were receiving verbal instructions from the teacher and

had no need for writing instruments.

"Arthur, hand me the pencil and sit in your seat! This is the

second time today that you interrupted the class by sharpening your

pencil. You now have a check next to your name, and if this happens

again I'm calling home" Mr. Chapman told Arthur.

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"This isn't fair!" Arthur said loudly, "I was only sharpening

my pencil! How am I supposed to do my work without a sharpened

pencil?"

The situation just presented occurred in late January and Arthur was still behaving

in inappropriate ways, which resulted in the disruption of the class. Mr. Chapman and

Mrs. Jones realized that something needed to be done because Arthur's behavior was

only getting worse as the school year progressed. An individualized behavior

management system was developed for Arthur, which would recognize both his positive

and negative behaviors in the classroom. The new system was based on a scale of 1-3

points, and was sent home with Arthur each night for his guardians to read and sign.

During each period in the day, Arthur's behavior was scaled, a "3" represented that he

did everything he was supposed to, participated in class, and was attentive during

activities. A "1" was the worse score Arthur could receive, and represented Arthur's

inattentiveness during class.

Two months after the new behavior management system was

established with Arthur, his behavior had changed drastically. During

a science lesson on the layers of the Earth, Mr. Chapman observed

Arthur not focusing on the lesson presented by Mrs. Jones. Mr.

Chapman quietly and nonverbally signaled to Arthur the number "2"

with his fingers. Arthur shook his head in agreement to Mr. Chapman

and turned to the appropriate page in the science textbook. After the

lesson was complete, Mr. Chapman called Arthur to his desk to talk

about the incident.

"Do you know why I called you over here?" asked Mr.

Chapman.

"Yea, I was playing with my pen cap instead of listening to

Mrs. Jones" replied Arthur.

"I'm going to give you a 2 for this period, but I'm going to

write in the Comment box that you weren't focused at the beginning of

the lesson, but became focused later on. Do you think that is fair?"

asked Mr. Chapman.

Arthur agreed with the discipline and the comments Mr.

Chapman made on his behavior sheet. For the remainder of the day

Arthur received 3's for each time period and completed all of the

required tasks of the classroom.

In this situation, the teachers refrained from publicly disciplining Arthur, which

kept the students remained on their tasks. By making a small hand gesture to Arthur, Mr.

Chapman did not exceed the bounds of the Looking phase of the teacher behavior

continuum (Wolfgang, 2001). After the instructional period was complete, Mr. Chapman

took the discipline further by asking Arthur what he did wrong. By doing so, Mr.

Chapman remained in control of the classroom and still managed to discipline Arthur

privately.

A second misbehavior I observed in the classroom was the lack of completed

assignments turned in by the students. A number of students consistently failed to

complete important assignments, and often did poorly on tests and quizzes that correlated

with the homework assignments.

In April 2005, the students completed a culminating activity in which they created museum exhibits dealing with various topics on the Holocaust. For three weeks, the students completed research on the computer and in the library. On the day of the presentation of the exhibits, the students took turns visiting each museum exhibit. Graham, Courtney, and Cheryl created an exhibit on Theresienstadt.

The students created a game in which the visitor rolled a large dice with questions on each of the six sides. When I visited the group, Graham was in charge of presenting the information.

"What is Theresienstadt?" I asked Graham after rolling the dice.

"Theresienstadt is a place in Czechlosvakia. You can roll the dice again." Graham replied.

"What else can you tell me about Theresienstadt?" I asked.

Graham, unsure of what to say, replied with hesitance,

"Um...I'm not really sure."

Graham clearly could not answer any of the questions on the dice about his presentation. Later during the social studies period, I observed Graham tossing a football to another student, interrupting the student speakers at each of the museum exhibits, and wondered around the classroom aimlessly. Not only did Graham not care that he received a failing grade for his poor participation and unclear answers during the presentation, but over the next two weeks he received three detentions for talking back to

the teacher, stealing another student's snack, and forging his parents' signatures on his detention slips.

I observed a majority of the students not completing homework assignments, and wondered whether they considered failing to completing homework assignments a misbehavior. The teachers attempted to resolve the situation by writing the names of the students who failed to complete an assignment on the board, but the system failed to grab the student's attention. After ten weeks of observations, I administered the *Student Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey* to the class. Since the students were to respond to an open-ended question in which they would have to identify a time in which they were disciplined for misbehavior, I was curious as to whether the students would identify lack of completed homework assignments as misbehavior.

STUDENT BELIEFS OF DISCIPLINE INVENTORY SURVEY: OBJECTIVE SECTION

On April 15, 2005, the students completed the *Student Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey*, which consisted of two sections: 12 multiple choice questions that dealt with the role of the student and teacher in the classroom and two narrative response questions in which the students wrote about a time in which they were disciplined. The first section of the survey asked the students to choose the response that they felt best represented their ideal classroom situation. Each question asked the students to choose one of two responses. The following is an example from the *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey*:

2.) When selecting a seat:

A.) Generally, I believe that the teacher should assign seats in the class.

B.)   Generally, I believe I should have some choice as to

where I sit.

Each response of the question represented the desired role of the student or

teacher. For example, in the question presented in the above example, response A

represents the student's desire to have the teacher choose the seating arrangement in the

classroom, while response B represents the student's desire to choose their own seat in

the classroom.

TABLE 4.1: RESULTS OF THE STUDENTS BELIEFS OF DISCIPLINE INVENTORY SURVEY

QUESTION NUMBER	TYPE OF QUESTION	RESPONSE A	RESPONSE B
1	When I make a decision:	93%	7%
2	When selecting a seat:	19%	81%
3	Teachers need to realize that:	15%	85%
4	When classrooms get noisy, I wish the teacher would:	78%	22%
5	If I break a classmates tape player that was brought to school, the teacher should:	33%	67%
6	If the whole class agrees that a classroom rule is not fair and should be removed, but the teacher disagrees, then:	4%	96%
7	If I do not join in a group activity:	30%	70%
8	During the first week of class I would like the teacher to:	59%	41%
9	I would like the teacher to:	85%	15%
10	If I interrupt my teacher by talking to a neighbor:	15%	85%
11	A good teacher:	52%	48%
12	When one of the "better" students does not complete an assignment on time, the teacher should:	26%	74%

In order to prevent the students from selecting the same letter throughout the

entire survey, the representation of the responses was changed throughout the survey. In

Table 4.1: Results of the Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey, the percentage results for each of the questions is represented. The responses shaded in gray represent the responses which show a desire of the students to be responsible decision makers in the classroom.

Questions in the first part of the survey are divided into three categories based on the individual with the responsibility for decision making in the classroom. The first category of questions consists of questions one, three, seven, and nine and requires the students to determine how much responsibility they want in the classroom. Questions in this category are based on the student's responsibility for decision making, their views of their decision making skills, and how the teacher should perceive the student's decision making skills. The second category of questions, consisting of questions ten, eleven, and twelve, deals with the second central theme of the study, the teacher's responsibility in the classroom. The remaining questions on the survey form the final theme of the study, the student's preference of responsibility between the student and the teacher.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Over half of the student population participating in the study preferred to have some form of responsibility in the classroom, especially in the decision making process. The remaining 48% of the student population preferred to have the teacher make a majority of the decisions in the classroom. These students would rather have a structured management system established in the classroom, where the teacher chooses where the student sits in the classroom, the specific activities of the student, and the rules, rewards, and discipline of the classroom.

The questions within this category represent the ways in which students make decisions. Additionally, the questions in this category ask the students to respond to the reaction of other people's opinions about the decision they made and who influences the student's decisions. It is important to have an understanding of the student's values and influences because it determines his or her behavior. A student who is influenced by the media, such as movies or television, may exhibit behavior that is inappropriate.

Question 3 of the survey asked the students to respond to respond to the statement: "Teachers need to realize that: (A) no matter what my home life and school situations are, I should be given the opportunity to choose and make my own decisions or (B) no matter how much teachers help me in school, I am still influenced by my family, neighborhood, peers, and television." Only 15% of the student population chose response A, that teachers should respect a student's decision no matter what their personal situation consists of, while the remaining 85% of the student population chose response B, that a student's decision is influenced by outside factors. One of the most interesting responses I within question 3 was with Roger's response. Roger chose response B to the statement, but crossed out neighborhood and television from the response because these outside factors do not influence his decision making process, while his family and peers played a large role in his ability to make responsible decisions. *Figure 4.1: Question Three Response* represents the response that Roger gave on his survey.

TABLE 4.2: QUESTION THREE RESPONSE

3) Teachers need to realize that:
A) No matter what my home life and school situations are, I should be given the opportunity to choose and make my own decisions.
B) No matter how much teachers help me in school, I am still influenced by my family, ~~neighborhood~~, peers, ~~and television~~.

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CLASSROOM

The next category of questions deals with the second theme of the study: the responsibility of the teacher in making decisions in the classroom. The questions within this category dealt with the types of responsibilities the teacher should have in the classroom, such as disciplining students for talking at inappropriate times and the consistency of discipline in the classroom.

Table 4.2: Teacher Responsibilities in the Classroom illustrates the students' preferences and beliefs of the responsibilities of the teacher within a structured management system. A structured management system refers to a behavior management system in which the teacher creates the foundations and aspects of the system prior to the arrival of the students. In this type of behavior management system, the students have little to no voice in the creation of the system. The eight categories found within the graph are taken from eight of the twelve questions dealing with teacher responsibility in the classroom. Each responsibility represented in *Table 4.2: Teacher Responsibilities in the Classroom* had a possible 27 responses. According to the student population, a teacher should have more responsibility in the classroom in the areas of creating and changing school rules, than in areas of discipline of interruptions and the assignment of seats.

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TABLE 4.3: TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE CLASSROOM
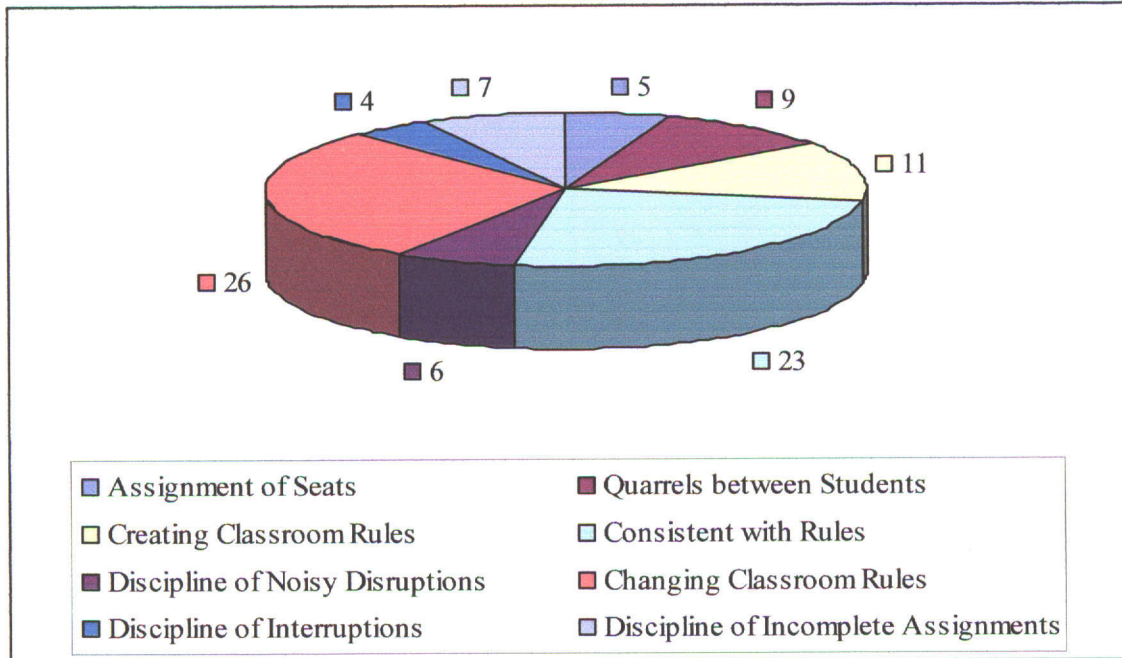
The student population decided that it was more important for the teacher to help

the students change a rule that was considered unfair in the classroom, than create the

classroom rules prior to the arrival of the students. Question eight on the survey deals

with the issue of who should make the rules in the classroom, the teacher or the student?

The difference between the two responses was within a small margin, 59% of the

students felt that the students should assist in making the rules of the classroom (response

A), while 41% of the students felt the teacher should make the rules of the classroom

prior to the arrival of the students (response B).

There were two parts to question eight: who should make the rules and who

should decide where the students sit in the classroom? This question alone would be

interesting alone to do further studies on because it asks the students what's more

important to them: have the chance to create the rules in the classroom or deciding where

they want to sit in the classroom. Even though response B of question eight does not specifically state the students wouldn't have the choice to sit where they would like, it is implied in the question due to response A.

When questions eight and two are analyzed together, you have a better feel of the classroom environment the students' desire. A majority of the class preferred to have the ability to sit where they wanted in the classroom, while only 19% of the class felt more comfortable if the teacher assigned seats in the classroom.

The final question on the survey that the students responded to dealt with the responsibility of the teacher to discipline students who fail to complete homework assignments. Question 12 on the survey asked the students to respond to the following statement:

    12.)   When one of the "better" students does not complete an assignment on time, the teacher should:

        A.)   Assume the student has a good reason for not turning it in and allow them extra time to complete it.

        B.)   Tell the "better" student the assignment is late, and together decide what consequences should follow.

According to the students, 17% of an effective behavior management system is the teacher's consistency in disciplining students. Question 12 on the survey not only deals with the question of incomplete homework assignments, but the consistency of the teacher in disciplining students. Does the teacher allow the "better" student to have extra time to complete the assignment or should the teacher give the "better" student the choice of a series of consequences. Response A is not fair to the other students because the

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teacher automatically assumes that the "better" student has a good reason for why the assignment is incomplete. Response B is a flexible approach to disciplining the student, but the teacher should be consistent with this approach and assume that all students have a reasonable excuse as to why the assignment is not complete. Response B was chosen by 74% of the class, who felt it was fairer that the teacher provides various consequences and decisions with the student, and the teacher and student decide together as to what consequence would be the most fair in the situation.

STUDENT BELIEFS OF DISCIPLINE INVENTORY SURVEY: NARRATIVE RESPONSES

After completing the twelve multiple choice questions, the students completed two narrative response questions. The two narrative response questions asked the students to (1) describe a time in which they were disciplined for inappropriate behavior and (2) whether they felt the type of discipline used by the teacher was effective or ineffective. The responses for question one were difficult to analyze with the responses with question two, because a large majority of the students failed to describe the type of discipline used by the teacher. As a result, informal interviews were conducted with several students to learn more about the type of discipline used by the teacher.

The narrative response portion of the survey was designed to determine the types of behaviors students interpreted as inappropriate. When the survey was distributed to the students, the definition of misbehavior was not provided to the students because I wanted the students to provide behaviors they perceived as inappropriate. The behaviors identified by the students fell into two major categories: 48% of the students identified being disruptive in class due to talking to a neighbor and 15% of the students claimed to never been in trouble. The remaining 37% of the misbehaviors identified by the students

were classified in the "Other" category, because they were isolated incidents of students

misbehaving in school. For example, Harry identified a time in which he was disciplined

for knotting everyone's sneaker laces together during Preschool. *Table 4.3:*

Inappropriate Behaviors Identified by Students illustrates the types of behaviors

identified by the students as inappropriate.

TABLE 4.4: INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS
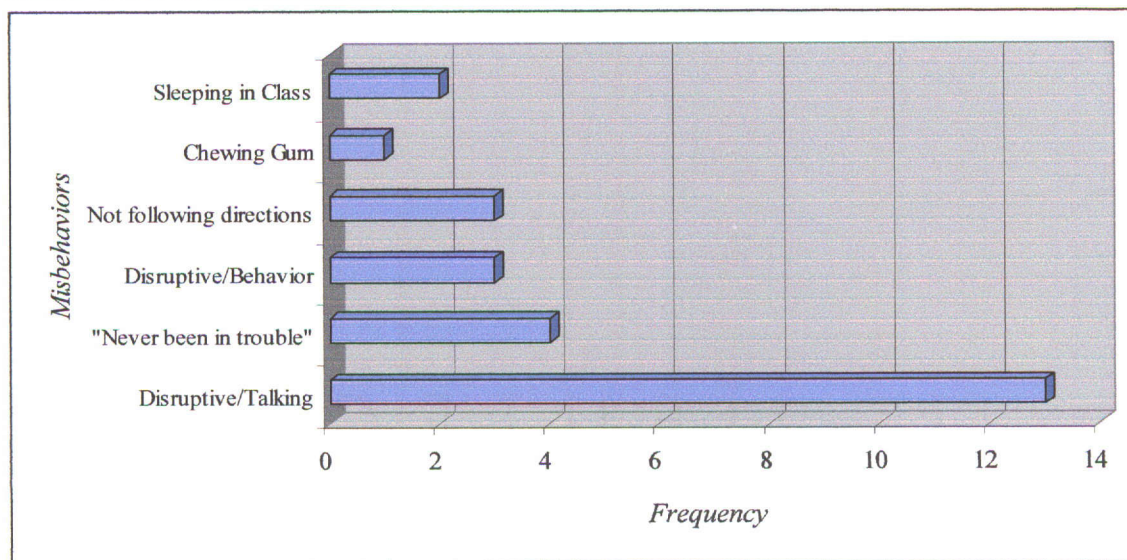
Throughout the second part of the survey, not a single student identified

incomplete homework assignments as an inappropriate behavior. When a student fails to

complete their assignments, then the teacher does not have the opportunity to assess the

students on the new skills and strategies they have acquired (Shore, 2003).

"NEVER BEEN IN TROUBLE"

The 15% of the class who claimed they had never been in trouble in school may

have different definitions of misbehaviors. The misbehaviors defined by one student may

be inappropriate to another student, but to the individual who defined them, they may be

appropriate. For example, one student may find it acceptable to not complete

assignments, while another student finds it unacceptable to not complete assignments.

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When students are disciplined for inappropriate behavior, they are usually confused and often claim "they don't know what they did wrong." It is important for teachers to define the types of inappropriate behaviors that are not acceptable in the classroom, by doing so; the norms of the classroom will become evident. A student needs to be aware of why they are being disciplined by the teacher to fully understand the impact of the discipline. In addition, a student who is punished for a behavior the student believes is appropriate will find the discipline used ineffective because he or she doesn't understand why he or she is being disciplined.

For example, one of the students who claimed that she had never acted in an inappropriate manner actually missed several assignments during the weeks prior to the survey. Two weeks before the students completed the survey, Angela did not complete an important social studies assignment. The students did not view this as an inappropriate behavior because the teachers never established incomplete assignments as misbehavior. While the student didn't receive a consequence from the teacher, she consequently did poorly on her social studies test because the student was ill prepared.

DISRUPTIVE AND UNCOOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR

As stated earlier, Shore (2003) classified students who talk frequently with his or her friends as a disruptive and uncooperative behavior because the student is disrupting valuable, instructional time. Of the misbehaviors identified by the students, 48% of the student population identified a moment in which they were disciplined for talking to a neighbor during instructional time.

Question 10 on the objective section of the survey asked the students to determine their preference on what the teacher should do if the students are caught talking to their

neighbor during instruction. The students had two options to choose from: (A) I should be moved away from others so that I don't waste any more class time or (B) I would like the teacher to tell me when I become disruptive, and remind me of how it would make me feel if someone interrupted me. A major of the student population (85%), chose response B, preferring that the teacher notify the student of their disruptive behavior and remind them of how they would feel if they were being interrupted.

Disruptions during instruction are an inevitable part of teaching, however, a teacher can establish expectations of the students' behaviors early in the year. During the beginning of the school year, the teacher should define unacceptable disruptions and establish systems in the classroom where the students can have the opportunity to converse with one another without disrupting valuable instructional time.

INFORMAL STUDENT INTERVIEWS

For the second set of questions on the student survey, the students wrote about a time in which they were disciplined for misbehavior exhibited in the classroom. A number of the students discussed the misbehavior disciplined and whether the discipline was effective or ineffective, but never explained what the discipline was. In order to gain a better understanding of the misbehaviors, I conducted several informal interviews with the students. During the informal interviews, the students and I discussed the misbehavior identified by the student and the discipline approach used by the teacher.

A majority of the students I interviewed identified elements of the behavior management system established in the fourth and fifth grade multiage classroom. (A complete description of the fourth and fifth grade multiage behavior management system can be found in Chapter 3.) Of this group of students interviewed, the most frequent

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method of discipline received was the student was given a yellow card for talking in class.

DISRUPTIVE/UNCOOPERATIVE BEHAVIOR

One of the first student interviews I conducted was with Terry, who identified a time in which he was talking during a social studies presentation as misbehavior he was disciplined for. According to his narrative response, he started to talk to one of his neighbors before a student presentation in social studies. When he started to converse with his friend the presentation began. Mrs. Jones gave Terry a yellow card for talking during the presentation.

Terry's narrative response was one of the few surveys with an explanation of the discipline received included in the description of the behavior. Terry believed the discipline used by Mrs. Jones was appropriate and effective but did not explain why. During one of the class's daily walks around the perimeter of the school, I asked Terry to explain why he felt the discipline was effective. According to Terry, "it was effective because I didn't like being in trouble." Terry elaborated on the situation further, explaining to me that it was the first time he misbehaved in class and the teacher acted fairly in disciplining him in the situation.

As we were discussing discipline, Beth interrupted the conversation to put her input into the situation. According to Beth's narrative response, her name was written on the board for talking during a lesson. She felt the discipline was ineffective because she continued to talk in class because she has ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). During the observations I made in the classroom, Beth was disciplined for talking in a number of ways: her name was written on the board, she was given yellow cards, several notes were

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written to her parents in her school agenda book, and the scaled point sheet created for Arthur was used with Beth for a trial basis but nothing appeared to be successful.

During our conversation, Beth explained to me that it was difficult for her to control herself because she enjoys talking. According to Beth's narrative response, the discipline was ineffective because she "still calls out by accident." Even though Beth found the discipline ineffective, she gave no suggestions on how she could improver her behavior.

The final interview was conducted with Maria, which we discussed the discipline approach used when she was caught talking to another student in the hallway. Maria found the discipline effective but didn't explain what the discipline used was. During our conversation, she explained to me that she was standing in line in the hallway and told a joke to her friend. The teacher asked Maria if her conversation with her two friends was necessary at that time and place. Maria felt scared of further discipline and quickly ended the conversation with her friends, remaining quiet for the remainder of the time in the hallway.

"STOP LIGHT" BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Why do some behavior management systems effectively modify the student's behavior through the use of meaningful rewards and disciplines, while other behavior management systems fail to maintain a positive and constructive learning environment? During my observations of the classroom, I noticed three consistent strategies within the "Stop Light" behavior management system of the fourth and fifth grade multiage classroom. The behavior management system consisted of a set of rules that encompassed both school and classroom rules and was posted in the classroom, the

teachers of the class provided the students with their expectations and provided the students with incentives, and the teachers always made eye contact with the students.

One of the most important aspects of the behavior management system is the privacy of discipline with the students. When a student in the class is disruptive, the teachers in the class either take the student in the hallway or silently hand the student a yellow card to manage the student's behavior. Additionally, the consequences and discipline are consistent with the student's behavior.

When the either teacher is disciplining the student, the teacher maintains eye contact with the student, which makes the student feel like an adult. By maintaining eye contact with the student, the child with most likely take responsibility for their actions and accept the discipline approach the teacher uses. The student uses the experience to learn, which helps them develop into morally, responsible individuals.

Finally, the teachers in the classroom provide the students with expectations. When the students are given an assignment or project, the teachers provide the students with a rubric. The teachers discuss with the class their expectations of the assignment. Additionally, when a behavior problem erupts in the classroom, the teachers discuss the problem with the entire class in hopes that the students will understand why the behavior is inappropriate.

CONCLUSION

A majority of the student population completing the survey stated that they wanted a voice in the classroom and they wanted the responsibility of helping to create classroom rules, choosing where they were seated in the classroom, and solving their own personal conflicts with other students. The purpose of the student survey was to research

students' perceptions of classroom behavior management systems, and the best way to truly understand their perception is to administer the survey on the first day of class. By doing so, the teacher gains a better understanding of the students' preference in classroom discipline. The teacher should have two behavior management systems prepared for the classroom prior to the first day of class: a structured system based on the teacher's ideal rules and procedures, and a flexible system created with the assistance of the students. After administering the survey, the teacher can determine what type of behavior management system the students prefer, structured or flexible, and establish a specific system based on the students needs and interests in the classroom.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

Introduction

Each classroom is diverse due to the vast amount of cultural, religious, and ethnic backgrounds of the students. Each individual in the classroom also possesses unique educational experiences which create a diverse learning environment for the teacher to manage. One way the teacher can learn more about her students is through the *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey*. By administering the first portion of the survey, the teacher can acquire the knowledge needed to create a successful behavior management system. Additionally, on the first day of school, the teacher should provide the students with expectations (both academic and behavior) for the school year. The teacher should define these expectations with students on the first day of school.

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings and conclusions of the study, interpretation of the results, the implications, and recommendations for further research have been presented.

Results of the Study

Over the course of ten weeks in the fall of 2003, I was required to make weekly visitations to Oxford Township Elementary School. During those ten weeks of observations, I began to develop an interest in behavior management and began to question how students perceived classroom behavior management systems. When I

began my study at Camelot Junior Elementary School, I expected the students would identify three major misbehaviors in their narrative responses: failure to complete homework, discipline for fighting with another student, and talking with a friend or neighbor during instructional time.

While I observed a number of students failing to complete important homework assignments, I was amazed that not a single student identified failure to complete homework as misbehavior. During my observations, on a regular basis, three to five students failed to complete homework assignments, and many of the students often were disciplined for doing so. Discipline consisted of either their name being written on the board under the incomplete assignment or the student received a "0" for the assignment. When the student received a "0" as a grade, it usually brought the student's grade down significantly.

Prior to the collection of data, I assumed that fighting between students was common in classrooms and that at least 10% of the narrative responses would identify a time in which a student was disciplined for fighting. Like the misbehavior of failure to complete homework, not a single student identified fighting as misbehavior. Unlike failure to complete homework, I never observed fighting in the classroom, perhaps because the students had been in the same class for almost four years and close bonds had formed between many of the students.

A majority of the narrative responses consisted of times in which the students were disciplined for talking during instructional time. This type of misbehavior was commonly observed in the classroom. No matter how the students' desks were arranged

in the classroom, the students till managed to talk with one another, perhaps they were friends with everyone in the class.

The "Stop Light" Behavior Management System

After the students completed the *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey*, it became apparent as to why the behavior management system established in the fourth and fifth grade multiage classroom was effective: it encompassed the five subsystems of behavior management identified by Wolfgang (2005).

This classroom behavior management system has a balance of discipline and incentives which seem to help motivate students to behave appropriately. Through the use of the green card system, the teachers simultaneously combine the incentive and encouragement systems. First, they reward students for their positive behavior, encouraging them to continue to behave appropriately in order to receive incentives. Secondly, they provide the students with tangible rewards that can be traded in for a certain number of green cards. Finally, the teachers continuously attempt to find something positive to say about each student during the day.

When the students enter the classroom each morning, they place

their homework assignments in the appropriate subject bin, unpack their

book bags, sign up for lunch, and begin their morning seatwork. Roger is

usually the first person in the class in the morning and the last to unpack

and begin his work. The minute Roger enters the classroom; he talks to

his friends, attempts to finish the previous night's homework, and takes his

time completing the morning routine.

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On Friday, the students enter the classroom and begin the morning

routine. Mr. Chapman notices that Roger is one of the first students to

begin his seatwork and comments on the situation.

"I like how Roger has come into the classroom and began his

seatwork immediately. Nice job Roger" Mr. Chapman says to the class.

For the remainder of the day, Roger is in high spirits because his

behavior has been recognized. For the remainder of the school year,

Roger tries very hard to quickly complete the morning routine and begin

his seatwork on time.

An important element of the "Stop Light" behavior management system is the use of the classroom structure. The behavior management system allows the students to have a voice in the classroom through the use of classroom meetings. Twice a week, the entire group meets in a circle and discusses rising problems of the classroom. Those problems could consist of a classroom rule they find ineffective or unfair to problems with other students. During these class meetings, the students are given the opportunity to not only solve their own problems and conflicts, but also to provide advice to other students in the classroom.

The classroom structure consists of the elements found in the first portion of the *Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey*, which helps determine the discipline approach students prefer in the classroom. According to the overall results of the survey, a majority of the students preferred to have a voice in the classroom. The "Stop Light" behavior management system incorporates the students' needs by providing them with opportunities and responsibilities throughout the school day which gives them the

opportunity to have a voice in the classroom. For example, the students have the opportunity to choose where they want to sit during math instruction because the students break into groups according to grade level for math. Additional examples of student decisions consist of choosing the book they want to read during theme reading, peer editing with students, and deciding what game the students should play during free time.

Implications of the Study

Several themes emerged in this study: disruptive and uncooperative student behavior, failure to complete homework assignments, and student perception of responsibilities in the classroom. When each of these themes is analyzed alone, they each become a new question in themselves. How can teachers prevent students from disrupting instructional time? How can teachers prevent students from failing to complete assignments? How can teachers motivate students to complete assignments? What types of responsibilities are desirable to students? While this study was not able to answer all of these questions, it was able to provide insights into how one classroom interpreted these questions.

One of the most noticeable trends in the study was the identification and observation of students being disruptive in the classroom. One type of disruption that occurred in the classroom was excessive talking by the students during instructional time. Of the twenty seven students in the survey, Beth had the highest frequency rate of being disciplined for excessive talking during instructional time. A number of disciplinary approaches and techniques were used to modify Beth's misbehavior, but none were successful.

The second theme that appeared in the study was the failure of students to complete homework assignments and the lack of students who identified this type of behavior as inappropriate. While not every school system has the same policy regarding homework, it is important for students to complete the assignments given to them because it provides the teachers with information on how the students is progressing in class. Without assignments, the teacher would have no way to assess the students and to identify problem academic areas that need review. The teachers at Camelot Junior Elementary School did not have a discipline system regarding homework that was consistent, consequently students often took advantage of this situation.

The final theme of the study deals with the students' perception of decision making responsibilities in the classroom. Prior to the study, I had expected a large majority of the students to find it desirable to make important decisions in the classroom about discipline, rules, consequences, and reward systems. My expectations proved to be correct, with a large majority of the students choosing student responsibility for decisions over teacher responsibility for decisions. But, of the students who preferred teacher responsibility for decisions, a majority preferred that teachers have more responsibility for creating and modifying classroom rules and procedures than for disciplining students.

Suggestions for Further Research

As I conducted my study in the classroom, new questions constantly arose. These new questions made it difficult to answer my own question of study: How do students perceive classroom discipline? One of the major problems with my study is the lack of descriptive responses dealing with student perception of the behavior management

systems they were exposed to over the course of the schooling. If I were to conduct this survey a second time with my student population, I would make several suggestions.

First, I would have asked the students to explain the type of discipline used by the teachers when they were disciplined. It was very difficult to gain insight on how students perceived discipline when I wasn't sure what type of discipline was used. Additionally, I would instruct the students to elaborate further on why they felt the discipline was effective or ineffective. A majority of the narrative responses I received were one word answers with absolutely no description on why they gave that response.

The second thing I would have done differently is to discuss misbehavior with the students prior to the survey. Many of the students stated they had never been in trouble because they couldn't think of a situation in which they were disciplined by the teacher. The students might have brainstormed a list of misbehaviors as a class which would be displayed on the board. By doing so, the student's prior knowledge would have been activated, and many of the students would have found it easier to identify misbehaviors.

Two areas of interest developed from this student survey. First, it would be interesting to implement a discipline system directed towards students who were disruptive during class because of excessive talking. Secondly, understanding if students perceived failure to complete homework assignments as misbehavior would provide further insights into effective classroom management systems. If students don't feel they should be punished for failing to complete homework, what does that indicate to the teachers and school about homework policies? Should students be punished for failing to complete homework assignments?

Conclusion

The research and data collected at Camelot Junior Elementary School provided me with insight on how students in the fourth and fifth grade classroom perceived behavior management systems, but increased my curiosity in the subject matter. If this study was conducted in another classroom or school district, would I receive the same results as this study? Even though my study didn't completely answer my research question, my study will hopefully encourage others to pursue further work in exploring classroom management systems across all grade levels.

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Appendix A:
Students Beliefs of Discipline Inventory Survey

STUDENTS BELIEFS OF DISCIPLINE INVENTORY SURVEY[1]

STUDENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER_____

DATE_____

[1] Adapted from Wolfgang and Glickman's Beliefs on Discipline Inventory (1986)

PART A: OBJECTIVE

In each question, you are asked to choose between to competing value statements. For some questions, you will definitely agree with one statement and disagree with the second, making it easy for you to choose; for others, however, you will agree or disagree with both, and you must choose the one you most closely identify with. There is no "right" or "wrong" answer, merely indicators of your own personal view.

Instructions: Circle "A" or "B" to indicate the statement which you identity the most. You must choose between the two statements for each item. (Circle "A" or "B")

1) When I make a decision:

    A) I try to think on my own and do the right thing, but sometimes I don't make the best decisions.

    B) I want my ideas and feelings treated as worthy and valuable.

2) When selecting a seat:

    A) Generally, I believe that the teacher should assign seats in the class.

    B) Generally, I believe I should have some choice as to where I sit.

3) Teachers need to realize that:

    A) No matter what my home life and school situations are, I should be given the opportunity to choose and make my own decisions.

    B) No matter how much teachers help me in school, I am still influenced by my family, neighborhood, peers, and television.

4) When classrooms get noisy, I wish the teacher would:

    A) Talk with the class and agree upon a workable noise level during activity periods.

    B) Allow the activity to continue as long as the noise doesn't bother anyone.

5) If I break a classmates tape player that was brought to school, the teacher should:

    A) Scold me for not respecting another persons property and scold the person whose tape player got broken for bringing it to school.

    B) Not interfere in our problem and let us solve it by ourselves (or with our parents help).

6) If the whole class agrees that a classroom rule is not fair and should be removed, but the teacher disagrees, then:

A) The rule should probably be changed to a rule made by the class.

B) The class and the teacher should decide on a fair rule.

7) If I do not join in a group activity:

A) I would like the teacher to explain why I should join the group.

B) I would like the teacher to ask my reasons for not joining the group and give me other activities based upon my reasons.

8) During the first week of class I would like the teacher to:

A) Let me sit by my friends and help in making rules.

B) Make the classroom rules and tell me what will happen if I don't follow the rules.

9) I would like the teacher to:

A) Encourage me to be creative and express myself.

B) Let me do what I want, as long as I don't hurt or bother anyone else.

10) If I interrupt my teacher by talking to a neighbor:

A) I should be moved away form others so that I don't waste any more class time.

B) I would like the teacher to tell me when I become disruptive, and remind me of how if would make me feel if someone interrupted me.

11) A good teacher:

A) Is firm but fair at enforcing rules.

B) Discusses with me the different types of consequences that are appropriate to the rule I broke.

12) When one of the "better" students does not complete an assignment on time, the teacher should:

     A) Assume the student has a good reason for not turning it in and allow them extra time to complete it.

     B) Tell the "better" student the assignment is late, and together decide what consequences should follow.

PART B: OPEN ENDED

Instructions: For the following two questions, write a brief description for each question.

1) Describe a time in which you were disciplined by a teacher for inappropriate behavior.

2) Did you find the discipline used by the teacher effective or ineffective?