Running head: FALSE SENSE OF REALITY

"It's Just a False Sense of Reality":

Student Teachers' Latent Learning about Classroom Management

Margaret Schmidt

Arizona State University

School of Music

P.O. Box 870405

Tempe, AZ 85282 U.S.A.

marg.schmidt@asu.edu

(480) 965-8277

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Abstract

Six preservice music teachers claimed to learn from student teaching three important classroom management concepts: responding to differences in students' characteristics, behavior, and instructional needs; developing appropriate relationships with students and parents; and establishing themselves in the teacher's role. They did not, however, appear to remember learning about management in a Practicum course the previous year, although relationships to course concepts were evident. This qualitative study explored relationships between the student teachers' claims and the concepts the course instructors believed they presented. The participants' contextual understanding of their student teaching settings appeared more effective than peer teaching or other course-based learning in developing understandings of classroom management. Implications for fostering connections between course- and field-based learning are discussed.

"It's Just a False Sense of Reality":
Student Teachers' Latent Learning about Classroom Management

Preservice teachers are generally optimistic, upon entering a teacher education program, about their own ability to succeed in their future classrooms (Bergee, 1982; Weinstein, 1989). They tend to expect that the students they will teach will be similar to themselves as students (Hollingsworth, 1989; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991) and to expect that they will emulate the qualities of their own favorite teachers (Schmidt, 1998). Despite such initial fantasies, Madsen and Kaiser (1999) found that, just prior to beginning student teaching, preservice teachers' most common fear was that they would be unable to effectively maintain classroom discipline. Novice teachers similarly report feeling underprepared to deal with classroom management concerns (Goodlad, 1990). Given the complexities of contemporary classrooms, teachers' understandings of classroom management need to move beyond eliciting obedience to overseeing all classroom learning activities and social interactions (Jones, 1996).

Despite agreement that classroom management is a concern (Veenman, 1984), few teacher education programs offer specific courses in it (Jones, 1996). Preservice courses often focus on isolated elements of classroom management, such as "establishing classroom rules, consistent application of these rules, pacing, and eye contact" (Snyder, 1996) or teacher intensity (Price, 1992; Madsen, Standley, & Cassidy, 1989), and teachers may fail to develop more general principles to guide their application of these elements. To compound the problem, personal histories, school contexts, or cooperating teacher models may be more powerful influences on beginning teachers' management practices than the teacher education program (Krueger, 1985; Snyder, 1996). This study seeks to illuminate the variety of influences on six

instrumental music teachers' understandings of classroom management, as developed during their student teaching semester.

Research questions

This study is part of a larger study (Schmidt, 2005) that examined whether six student teachers in instrumental music incorporated learning from a year-long junior year Practicum course in their student teaching experience. The larger study found that, although these student teachers said they learned effective methods of lesson planning in Practicum, they did not mention learning about classroom management, but claimed instead to have only learned about management as student teachers. However, as one of two instructors for Practicum, I believed we had emphasized both. In addition, the concepts they claimed to have learned in student teaching closely paralleled those I thought we had taught. I became curious about their apparent forgetting of in-class learning, the concepts they "discovered" as student teachers, and their individual interpretations of similar concepts of classroom management. The purpose of this paper was to explore four specific questions about the data collected for the larger study:

- What did these six student teachers claim to have learned in student teaching about classroom management?
- How did what they claimed to have learned compare to what the Practicum instructors believed they taught?
- What factors may have influenced their learning about classroom management as student teachers?
- What factors may have influenced their apparent forgetting of learning about classroom management in Practicum?

Method

The Practicum class for this study was team-taught by my colleague, a wind ensemble specialist, and myself, a string specialist. The 20 students met twice a week for three hours each time, for two semesters. The course allowed the preservice teachers to review and apply prior

learning from conducting and secondary instrument courses as they focused on methods and materials for elementary through high school instrumental music. We emphasized proactive classroom management as inseparable from instructional methods, with procedures, routines, and well-paced teaching to keep students involved in learning. We taught instructional sequences grounded in Edwin Gordon's (1993) Learning Theory, which promotes aural and kinesthetic experience with musical concepts before encountering those concepts notated in printed music. As the preservice teachers taught their peers a minimum of eight times per semester, they progressed from leading rhythmic echo patterns to teaching a single line from a method book, to leading a middle school ensemble in sightreading a Grade 1 band or orchestra piece, to introducing a Grade 3 or 4 piece to a high school ensemble. They also practiced in class and then taught 10- to 15-minute lessons to ensembles of different ages, on campus or in local schools, five to six times during the year. They completed written self-assessments of most of their teaching, based on video recordings, and always received in-class verbal or written feedback on their teaching from their peers or the instructors. Each preservice teacher compiled a notebook each semester, intended to become a reference for their future teaching, including course notes, handouts, references, and completed course assignments. Some also included other materials, such as information from professional development workshops or journal articles. In addition to course work, each preservice teacher was assigned to a field placement in a local school, where they observed or assisted a music teacher, completing three university-mandated field experiences of 72 contact hours each, at elementary, middle and high school levels. Two of these placements were concurrent with the Practicum course. Class discussions sometimes focused on these field experiences; however, university-based supervision was not provided.

Participants in the study were the six student teachers in instrumental music during one semester at the university. Each had worked extensively as private teachers or with local school ensembles during college, both to gain teaching experience and to earn extra income. Steve and Harout were traditional-age students, Cayce and Nathan were a few years older, having taken extra time to earn their college degrees, and Arloa and Lucile were completing their education after more than 20 years away to raise their families. Each student taught full time for fifteen weeks, at elementary and secondary levels with two different mentor teachers,[1] except Arloa, who stayed the entire time with one mentor teacher who taught both levels. The two Practicum instructors, my colleague and myself, supervised their student teaching. In addition, as a group the student teachers attended four 90-minute seminars during the semester, coordinated by my colleague. I attended the seminars as a contributing member of the group, and recorded and transcribed those discussions. I examined the participants' Practicum notebooks to review their learning over the year, and to ascertain what course materials they considered worth keeping for future reference. I interviewed each of the six for at least one hour at the conclusion of their student teaching semester to learn how they believed course experiences influenced their work as student teachers, and recorded and transcribed those interviews verbatim. I also invited the participants to amend their interview transcripts and comment on this research report, to challenge my interpretations of their learning.

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[1] The inservice teachers who host preservice teachers for student teaching placements and early field experiences, often referred to in the literature as "cooperating teachers," are called "mentor teachers" at the university.

I analyzed the interview and seminar transcripts by reading for common categories. I then coded the transcripts using those categories, combining, dividing, or refining them in response to the data, until themes emerged around which I present and discuss the data in this paper. I attempted to report this study from the participants' perspective, based largely on their reflections upon graduation. Therefore, throughout I refer to them as "teachers" or "participants," even though much of the data were collected while they were still technically "preservice teachers." In addition, I report their own interpretations of what they learned, and did not attempt to compare their mentor teachers' or others' perceptions of what these teachers learned. I use the terms "junior high" and "middle school" interchangeably to refer to various schools' combinations of grades 6 through 9.

Data Presentation: What The Teachers Learned

These six teachers discussed what they learned about classroom management in three broad categories. The first was differences among students: their characteristics, their behavior, and their instructional needs in a large ensemble. The second category was what they learned about relationships with students and with parents. Third, based on their learning in these two areas, they developed understandings about themselves as teachers.

Differences Among Students

Each of these teachers had completed one field experience at each level, elementary, middle school, and high school; however, it was in student teaching that they began to formulate stronger generalizations about children at each level. They noticed differences in students' characteristics, their behavior, and their instructional needs.

Student characteristics. Harout and Steve had both worked during their college years as paid assistants with area high school marching bands. Harout initially expected middle school

students to respond in a similar way, but learned they were more like "elementary kids in big-kid bodies."

> It's just weird that they're really big kids, but really they're still small. It's just weird. Because they're bigger than I am. You expect them to act like high schoolers, but they're *not* in high school. So actually that was a pretty tough lesson to learn this semester.

All six teachers began to notice differences among individual classes' personalities. Steve explained the differences he observed in the three middle grades.

> The sixth graders' band was not too great, but they were a lot of fun. I would have to say I looked forward to going in and rehearsing with the sixth graders *more* than I did with the other classes. Seventh graders were nice, they were just really chatty. I think there were a couple kids in there who were not yet mature enough to be in that kind of setting. And then with the eighth grade, I looked forward to it because it would be better quality. But at the same time, I dreaded going there for a long time, because they're just animals.

Harout described one section of a "rough" sixth grade group that he and his mentor teacher called the "thug" class, contrasting it with other groups they taught.

> It was rough. Just behavior-wise. The woodwinds, not so much, because there was a lot of girls in the section. Not meaning to be sexist, but boys are hideous at that age. *[He laughed.]* In the sixth grade brass there wasn't a balance as there were in the fifth grade. The fifth grade was a little squirrelly, but the ratio of girls to boys was enough to calm it down. But these boys!

Arloa noticed that the children in the middle school where she student taught were a different socioeconomic level than her field experience schools, which qualified for Title I funds. She described the students as "very well-off children," as she observed that "some of the girls carried $100 purses." As a mother, she wanted to addressed their attitudes.

> Once I said [to the class], "You know what? I'm tired of being your maid. That's not what my job is here. You pick up your stuff around your chair. *Now*. Water bottles. You don't want your water bottles or your juice bottles? You throw them in the trash. Hello." See, the rich kids, they don't clean up after themselves. They have everything they want. So that was interesting [to learn].

In contrast, Nathan felt well prepared by his prior teaching experiences for students of different levels. This is supported by my observations of his work with children in Practicum,

where he demonstrated a natural ability to be aware of and react to student differences. He claimed to seldom be surprised by any students, except as he described a clarinet player who "had been suspended for a week because she was caught drinking during a pep assembly."

> I'm like, "You're in seventh grade!" And to look at her–if you had to pick some one out of the band who was going to fall in that trap, she wouldn't have been one of those people. So it's incidents like that where they just *really* surprised me. But other than that, individually, the junior high and the high school [students] were what I expected.

Student behavior. Like many student teachers, establishing and maintaining classroom order was a challenge for most of these participants (Madsen & Kaiser, 1999; Snyder, 1996). Arloa, Harout, Steve, and Lucile found junior high or middle school students' behavior to be the most "eye opening" (Harout). They found it difficult to determine which classroom events merited a response from them. Harout initially "was pretty tolerant" because he was "just trying to adjust" himself. Then he asked his mentor teacher how she decided when to give "an infraction," a type of demerit for inappropriate behavior.

> And she said, "When it's disruptive to you." Well, *everything's* disruptive, you know. "It's just going to be infraction city"–that's what I told her. Until I kind of got what she meant. Like if you *physically* have to turn around and *say* something. I think that's what she means. Because after awhile I was watching what she would give an infraction for. Like she'd be working with someone, and there'd be a little chit-chatting. But if someone was just *outright* talking out loud, just, boom! You got nailed down pretty hard. I'm like, OK, [I see]. *Finally,* after the second month. Up until then it was pretty hard.

Arloa was amazed at the means the children devised to get around classroom and school rules.

> They'd bring in iPods hidden in their pockets. And they'd have like the little ear phones so you can't see them *[she gestured, around her neck]*. Because these were the stinker kids who would do this. And then they would put it in their ear, on the side that you don't see them on, because they were sitting a certain way. And they would be listening to their music while you were conducting. But it was helpful to have an assistant, because if [my mentor teacher]'s conducting or if I was conducting, you could walk around and take things away. Take cell phones away. Yo-yos, that was our big thing.

These teachers drew on their own experiences as students or parents to try to understand students' behavior. I anticipated that Arloa and Lucile, having raised children of their own and

volunteered in their children's classrooms, would have less trouble understanding and responding to student behavior. However, their experiences with children, as parents, private teachers, and working with children at church, did not prepare them for all they would encounter in a classroom. They were as surprised as the younger students to discover students who seemed to lack respect for authority. Lucile complained one day about the "rude" responses of the "bad" children in one of the orchestra classes, and was truly surprised when I suggested that they perhaps were only addressing her in their family's usual communication style, which was perhaps very different than the interactions between her children and herself. Arloa explained,

> Having children of my own, I *do* know how to teach and how to have good behavior. But then when you have a child that doesn't *want* to do what you want them to do–at home, my kids obey, or there's a consequence. At school, there's a consequence, but sometimes the kids don't really care. And *that's* what was very hard for me.

All of these teachers except Nathan interpreted challenges to their perceived "authority" as disrespect. As Harout lamented the middle school students' challenging behavior, I asked what helped him as a child to learn appropriate rehearsal decorum.

> Well, now, I still did my job. I just talked a lot. I knew what I was doing, I was taking lessons and stuff. I knew the teacher *liked* me. I was just one of those pains in your side. It went both ways. But *I* thought, reflecting back, that I was a ruffian, just because I was "Baaa" *[he waved his hands in the air]*–one of the loud children. But I don't remember–my parents are super iron-fist-of-justice. It's not, "What did the teacher do?" It's, "What did you do to the teacher that made this happen?" So I didn't get too much sympathy. I got away with very little. *[He laughed.]* So I can't say what exactly made me fall into line. I just know it was because I *talked* incessantly.

Once Harout reflected on his own past, he had more patience with the children. Sometimes, however, reliance on their own student experiences made it more difficult to understand. Steve recalled his own pre-college music experiences, where he "was never pushed to be in three bands or choir or anything like that, but [he] *did* it, because [he] wanted to." He expected his students to respond to him as he had to his music teachers.

> I felt like I was *extremely* aware when I was that age of what was right, what was wrong, and I never crossed that line. And I used to roll my eyes at kids that did. . . . I always thought it was such a shame, such a shame that kids were so apathetic. I don't get that. I *still* don't get it. I don't know what the heck is wrong with them.

Consequently, lessons learned from their own experience proved to be useful in some situations, and misleading in others. An important turning point for these four teachers was to recognize characteristics of students' behavior that, while they might seem disrespectful or directed at them personally, were fairly normal. Steve struggled awhile with understanding that.

> [Then, my mentor teacher] and I talked about it. It's not because they're really bad kids. They just don't *know* what they're doing and how it's coming off. And that was kind of a big lesson. . . . I think it was more that it was just–they just couldn't sit down, they just couldn't shut up. They were not really focused on it. So that's where I got good at the management things. "Sit down. Spit out the gum." And being able to do that without interrupting the flow of rehearsal.

Despite our belief that we had emphasized in the course the importance of establishing consistent procedures, most of these participants were surprised to learn as student teachers that the students actually did appreciate their enforcement of rules. At the end of the semester, Arloa discovered that a recalcitrant student actually liked her.

> One student, who was very disruptive, was just so *sad* I was leaving. And I was like, "Why? I've been kind of giving you a lot of sternness, right? Not the motherly thing." So you could tell, if you didn't do your discipline, the kids really do *want* it. I mean, I guess they act that way for a reason too. And I don't know–it was just surprising to me. I was shocked, really, that she was so upset by [my leaving].

As much as Harout "loved to complain" about the middle school students, he developed a fondness for them, recognizing that "dealing with pubescent children, irate days come and go."

> Well, it's *expected* that they do that. Like on the first day of school, they get six hours of rules and regulations. It's understandable that they're like, "Whoa, I don't care." I *wish* that they were able to do this, but they can't, so I understand that they can't. It's just one of those things.

As these teachers gained a better understanding of middle school students and developed strategies for working with them, they learned to enjoy them. At the end of the semester, Lucile

felt she "still not know how to handle them really well," but she hoped to find a job teaching at the middle level.

> I *really* like the junior high age kids. They're just *so* intriguing. They're just coming into being adults, and they want to find the kind of person they want to be. But they're not there yet, and they're experimenting with all kinds of different things. And it's *so* fun to watch that all take place.

Students' instructional needs. Much of these teachers' previous teaching experience had been working with individuals, small groups, or instrument sectionals, and all of them were surprised by how much more challenging it was to instruct large ensembles. Arloa realized, from student teaching, that "40 kids [at once] is a really big job." She knew that to be successful "you get your rules" and understood that her mentor teacher "could do it," but she was uncertain that she could do it by herself. Lucile described what she learned from her mentor teacher.

> Really, I learned so much from [her]. Mostly, she showed me how, if you're organized and you plan ahead, you can accomplish a lot with a lot of students, all at once. You know, using the electronic equipment, and giving students assignments, having the seating chart posted, *so* many little things that take up a teacher's time. I could see how this is really doable, you know, without going crazy. So that was the biggest eye-opener to me.

We believed that in the Practicum class we had stressed what Lucile described, the relationship between good instruction and effective management procedures. Still, most of these teachers anticipated that ensemble rehearsal would primarily involve work toward musical goals, and were surprised to find, as Steve did, "that 90% of [their] efforts were not musical or teaching-based, [but were] just management-based." Harout found that the younger ensembles were "a tough crowd." He explained his feelings about the rehearsals he led early in the semester.

> A lot of classroom management problems come from looking down at your score. *[He demonstrated and laughed.]* I figured that out pretty quick. Just because I'd be looking down, and I'd look up, and all these kids are standing up, but they're still playing and being obnoxious. I mean, it wasn't like I didn't memorize the score, it's just because I'm checking constantly. You have to be on guard for notes and rhythms. So [once I really knew the score], that's when I could watch everyone. And that didn't happen till like the third month, after spring break. It was pretty tough to deal with. It was like they can't let

> you work, because they're always plotting, always plotting. . . . So, it inhibits you from doing your job. There's so much classroom management stuff, and you're trying to keep things moving.

Steve described his progress working with middle school students, an "age group [that was] a total mystery" to him, as he showed a video of himself to the student teaching seminar.

> This is me failing. So we're supposed to be stretching our arms. You'll note the high percentage of people not stretching their arms. *[Laughter from the seminar.]* . . . So let's fast forward [to later in the semester]. The talking and [participation] is a lot different. It's been a *huge* challenge, a lot of personal victory. It's not like every week is breakthrough time. . . . You'll note in this lesson, I took a cue from my supervisor–I wrote all my [behavior] expectations out on the board. And we went through it every day. We started doing that a couple weeks ago, and it's just been a big improvement.

Cayce and Nathan seldom mentioned being concerned with classroom management as student teachers. Nathan seemed to have intuitive skills for responding appropriately to different types of students, and was articulate about ways to channel student behavior.

> I don't say, "You should pay attention to this," because that's just another instruction that they may not take. But I always try to observe. And I make a reference to something that someone did, or something a section did, where they didn't think I was paying attention. Then I'll follow up with, "See, I always pay attention to everything that's going on in the room. You should try that sometime." And then I move on. So you can kind of make a reference to it, and after awhile–I noticed this a lot at [the high school], they started to say, when I would ask, "Why didn't saxophones sound x way?" The trombone player on the other side of the room could say, "Well, so and so didn't breathe exactly the same, and you could see their throat moving, so it looks like they're tonguing differently." I was like, "OK. You're on the other side of the room and you're engaged all the way over there. Good." So it's something I try to encourage without saying, "Do it."

In contrast, Cayce had struggled to develop management strategies in his prior teaching in field experiences and in the university's String Project. He quickly recognized that his mentor teachers, at a high school and its feeder junior high, established and enforced expectations for student behavior, followed their strategies, and learned from their examples. Cayce admired their ability to simultaneously focus on both teaching and behavior. He described a lesson he had observed where one mentor teacher taught a lesson that "was so seamless, and the kids never got

lost, and they never got out of hand, they didn't stop paying attention or anything." Cayce likened that lesson to "someone playing the equivalent of a Paganini Caprice."

> There's little things like, they have a really good eye–Sandy especially, she has *radar* for gum. It can be concert orchestra with 50, 60 kids and one person's chewing gum in the middle of the second [violins], and she can be going through her lesson, and without even stopping say, "Angelique, go spit out your gum." Without even stopping! It's not just that, it's posture, it's hearing intonation, being able to listen for a variety of things all at once, while still working through a lesson plan.

Cayce attributed his own inability to do that to the fact that he was "not as fluent with all [his] normal mechanics as [his mentor teachers], so that [he] couldn't just add something in without it throwing [him] off totally." Far from being discouraged, Cayce felt he had learned things that would "help him keep growing for years."

> It made me realize how much I *have* to work on. So when I go to my new school, I'm going to be able to say weekly to myself, have I really made any improvement in this area, or this? I can keep myself going, always striving to be a better teacher myself. Because I know what a good teacher looks like–I have two very good examples. And that will help me for a long time, I think.

By the end of the semester, all these teachers were able to articulate their understandings of the relationship between well-paced, engaging instruction and student behavior and learning. Like Harout, they learned to recognize that they would sometimes need to adjust their lesson plan when "the plan fails" or when the students were "not right for the plan." On such "Jamba-Juice-sugar-rush days," they learned that "you have to be flexible." Although most of them initially worried that the students would respond negatively to specific instructions, they discovered that following "rules and procedures, rules and procedures" really facilitated learning. Lucile described her amazement at the amount of material her mentor teacher covered with the middle school students.

> She gets through all five of those books. You know, I'm going to stand back five years from now and still wonder, "How did she do all that?" . . . The kids respond because it's structured. And they know exactly where they're supposed to be and what they're supposed to be doing, at all times.

Relationships with Students and Parents

For these teachers, beyond learning about student differences, a second major area of learning was establishing relationships with students and parents. They were not eager to deal with parents, but their mentor teachers gave them some experiences in that role. They learned that relationships with students and parents could contribute to effective classroom management.

Relationships with students. These teachers experimented to establish comfortable relationships with students. Steve discovered that relationships with individual students could be an important management tool.

> At least for a couple weeks, I just really kind of got down. I was perceiving these things as being purposely disrespectful. And then–I don't know what it was, I probably talked to somebody, because I was always looking for some advice. . . . So I started making much, much more effort, making sure that I talked to those kids that I perceived as problem kids, and just talking about the new Star Wars movie coming out. So we're making some kind of connection. All of a sudden I got *cool* because I liked Star Wars. I was the cool teacher. And discipline problems really started dropping off. This one kid, Bob Ellison–man, oh, I could still strangle him. *But*, I started talking to him every day and joking around with him or something like that. I could get him to simmer down *sooner*–with a reminder, I still had to remind him a lot–but then I'd have him take the attendance to the office or something like that, so that maybe he could burn off some energy and he felt like–it kind of softened the warnings and stuff like that.

One day, Steve "took a risk" with his eighth grade class, drawing on models of leadership used by other teachers he had observed.

> One day they just weren't paying attention. At the very beginning, we were playing scales–we hadn't even gotten to anything. And they weren't listening to instructions. "Everybody, instruments away and come back." It's the very beginning of class. And we had a talk. And, this was probably the biggest risk I've taken the entire semester, was to talk to them, not like teacher-student, but it was much more horizontal leadership *[a concept he learned from a high school marching band teacher he worked with]*, rather than vertical leadership, in that we talked about, "I don't come here to boss you around. It's not about you just sitting there and not talking and going through all these rituals. It's so that we might make music." I shook the score at them, tried to get their attention. . . . That was a *very, very* risky thing to do. But [it was] absolutely worth it. The next rehearsal we had, they were just like changed, totally awesome. And following that, I had gotten more connection with that two-thirds of the group.

Harout struggled to feel accepted by the students. He initially felt hampered by following a popular student teacher, claiming it was two months "until [the students] admitted, "OK. All right. We kind of like you. Kind of." He was surprised by any positive attitudes expressed by students.

> They're just so weird, that age. The professor always [joked] in that general music class like, "This kid may looks like he absolutely hates the class. But in reality he likes it a lot." And that's what it seems like. They wouldn't *ever* admit that they actually liked me. Heaven forbid that they even smile on a daily basis. *[He laughed.]* . . . There was a kid in the elementary school that just sat and glared at you like, "you are *stupid!"* And then at the end one day he just came up and said something nice to me–I don't even remember what it was. I'm like, "Did that kid just talk?"

In contrast, Cayce settled easily into the model provided by one of his mentor teachers, who advised Cayce that "you need to have the relationship that a good father would have with your students. Not like a big brother or an older friend, but a father. Someone who was really looking out for your best interests but isn't going to go play pinball with you afterwards." Cayce believed students would recognize and respond to the teacher's efforts.

> These kids work hard because they're *expected* to. . . . [One of my peers] said this, it's so cool–she said, "I don't care how much you know until I know how much you care." I think that really translates into being a good teacher. The students really don't care until you show them how hard you're going to work for them, and how much you care about them, and so I need to find a way that I can show that.

Relationships with parents. Another important part of classroom management was learning to communicate with the students' parents. Harout did not appreciate that part of the job.

> I don't like the idea of you just have to do it. It's hard for me, because it's not natural. With [my mentor teacher], it just comes out easy. Like with irate parents, she can neutralize them in 10 seconds or less. It can be done. But when I had to do something, it was like irate parent for 10 minutes yelling at me. I'm like, "Wait a minute. Let's go talk to that woman up there." . . . I just think some of that has to come with time.

I expected the younger teachers to feel unsure about having the authority to talk to parents but even Arloa, despite extensive experience with parents of her children's friends, was a

bit hesitant about asserting her authority as a teacher. She described the "good systems" she learned from her mentor teacher for keeping track of over 200 students, contrasting the work she had done at her church with the discipline procedures at her middle school.

> [At church] you can just take them by the hand–this is primary, ages 3 through 12–you just walk with them to their parents in the classroom, which is in the same building. And you just say, "Your child is not listening." And then they're gone from you. You don't have to deal with the issue day after day. It's just week by week. And that's a little different [at school]. You can't deal with it immediately, it's kind of a long process. There's three different types of discipline. So once you give them a warning, then they do the five-minute time out, then they can go to in-school suspension. It could be all in one day. Then call the parents. So it could be four steps to taking care of it. That was hard.

When she called parents, she recorded "the wording [she] used when [she] talked with the parent" about "why their [child's] behavior was disruptive," so she or the mentor teacher could refer back to it. She was pleased–and surprised–to receive positive responses from the parents.

> I had to do phone calls. But the parents were really good. I didn't have any parents who were upset with *me*. They all wanted to correct their child's behavior, and asked me how they should do it, and what would be the best plan. And so we'd try to come up with something. And then one day a student brought back to school from home an apology note. And so that was really nice, to see that it's affected them in some way and that they need to do better. That was hard–just being brave to call on the phone and be assertive, and go outside of the realm you're used to.

Cayce worked with a high school program that had a strong parent booster group with a long tradition of successful fundraising. He felt that his mentor teachers provided "two very good examples" of ways to involve parents to help with the program. He recognized that, while he could not actually do much directly with the parents' group while student teaching, "once [he had his] own group [he could] try and incorporate some of those same things." Steve felt that the eighth grade band's strong musical performance in the final concert not only excited the students, who treated him like "kind of a rock star for awhile," but also their parents. He reported that "a long line" of parents "all wanted to know where [he'd be] working," because they "loved [him] after that concert." He was anxious to be able to tell them that he had been hired to be their

ninth grade director the following fall, because he thought their previous experience together would "lend some credibility" with both the parents and students.

Self as Teacher: How Am I with Students?

The third major area of learning for these participants was growth in understanding themselves as teachers managing classrooms. Others have discussed ways that beginning teachers develop a sense of role identity (Knowles, 1992; L'Roy, 1983) or of self as teacher (Bullough, 1991; Kagan, 1992). Similarly, these participants, during their student teaching semester, learned a great deal about themselves in the role of teacher in relation to classroom management. Teaching experience, along with models from various mentors, provided these participants with opportunities to put their sometimes nebulous beliefs about good teaching into practice. Cayce aimed to be positive with students, and consequently was reluctant to be demanding. He learned from his mentors' model.

> They're not afraid to tell the kids when they're doing something that's not acceptable. And the kids don't get hurt by them saying it. And that's the relationship they've set up, is that they can tell them, "That's really not up to the level you should be playing at yet, so you need to go home and work on it," but at the end of the day, they're not going to be hated by that section that they singled out. . . . So I need to remember myself to say, "OK, *this* was great, you're doing really great, but you still need to work on the intonation here, your second finger's not high." I need to work on that myself. Even though I love being positive, and I think it's *important* to be positive, I need to make sure that when something needs attention, I don't let them get away with the feeling like it's OK.

Like Cayce, Arloa and Lucile struggled to find classroom management strategies that felt comfortable to them. Because Arloa considered herself a "soft-hearted person," she had difficulty "trying to say it in a strict manner, and not being the nice old lady, and being stern." She felt that "*her* hard part" was to "be tougher" without giving up her mothering instincts.

> [My mentor]'s a great teacher. But he's also a man. And there's a difference between a man and a woman, and how they handle things. It's just silly stuff too. If they got a cut, oh, I was all there for them. I was grabbing the bandaid, I'd even put it on for them. [He] just takes a bandaid, "Here you go."

Lucile "was very happy to see two opposite ends of the spectrum" in her two mentor teachers. One was "very nurturing" and "*so* loving with those kids, and [gave] them hands-on, individual attention *every* time they come to see her." The other "did not smile or joke around with the kids during class time, but the kids knew that she really liked them because of the little extra things she did for them outside of class." I asked Lucile which approach she thought fit her best.

> I've seen how it works both ways, with being really one-on-one with kids and being more diplomatic. The kids know that the teacher loves them in both instances. I don't know which one I will do. I'll have to experiment. Because I'm new, and I don't know what is going to fit well with me. . . . I've heard that you need to be really strict at the beginning of the year. And that's really hard for me. I'm going to have to really work on that. One of my weaknesses is classroom management. And it's because I don't use an authoritative voice, and I'm not–it's not being mean, but to me it seems like it's being mean. But it's not. It's just being a leader, and just telling them what you'd like them to do. And kids will respond, if they know what you want.

Although Lucile appreciated the opportunities to learn from her mentor teachers, she felt she would have to be teaching on her own before she could really develop her own sense of the balance she wanted. "I still don't know how to handle [the students] really well, you know, I'll have to learn all that. I'm sure it's a challenge for *seasoned* teachers."

As a junior high student, Nathan learned that "there's handful of teachers who you can learn a lot from, on top of the information you're actually receiving, if you actually sit and watch and pay attention."

> Even [one of my college music history professors], just the way that he approached the class on a *personal* level. I really liked that, and tried to incorporate that, just the personality, the presentation. It was just friendly, you know. I watched him hand people a test that had an F on it, and he would just smile and say, "Don't worry about it. This'll be fine." You know, it just made everyone *comfortable*, even though it was hard. He admitted and recognized it was hard, and allowed everyone to *feel* like it was difficult. But still, kind of laid it down there. It's like, "I don't hate you, I love you, but here it is *[he mimed handing back the test],* here's the reality."

At the end of his student teaching semester, Nathan received the "outstanding student teacher" award because his mentors and supervisor felt he had superior management and instructional

skills. Despite this endorsement of his skills, Nathan referred to "the awkwardness that is me in front of a junior high band," and set his own goals for his role as a teacher.

> I found out that I need to be a little more light-hearted, in a way that kids can relate to. Because I'd be running a rehearsal and [my mentor teacher] would be sitting in the back, and he would just really enjoy what I'm saying and my presence and all that stuff, but I'd get this blank stare from kids, because they're not relating. And so we had many conversations about that. [My mentor] thought it was fine the whole time, but I wanted to see more reaction from the kids. So I worked on my own presentation, and making sure that when I said a joke that I said it with a smile, because I'm a very sarcastic person. So I learned to be sarcastic with a smile. . . . I'm a very aggressive, or abrasive, person–people have told me. So I try to soften the edges, but still keep the foundation the same.

Harout found that, despite what sounded like complaining about his middle school students, he was "just complaining about something [he] likes to do." He wanted to find a job teaching middle level students, both because he really enjoyed the students and for his own growth.

> There's a lot of benefits to teaching junior high for growth processes. Like, if you don't know what you're doing, the kids get pretty out of hand. Like very quickly. So I guess I like to be abused. *[He laughed.]* And, I don't know, it kind of forces me to be good. Just because if I'm not good, my kids are going to walk over me *a lot*. . . . I *say* it, but it's a little hard for me to, like, live what I'm saying, because sometimes you just take it personal. You *shouldn't*, but–[teaching] is cool though. It's interesting. It keeps you from going insane, and going insane at the same time, you know. I mean, someone has to do it, and do it *well*. There's too many bad people.

Steve said that in working with marching bands early in his college years, he thought, "These are high schoolers and *I* know it all. So I'd tell them what to do and if they didn't get it, then I'd get mad. Very, very immature. Now I roll my eyes and *[he sighed]* I can't believe that I thought that would work in any way." From observing an experienced director, Steve noticed what he called "horizontal leadership."

> It's less "*you* do this," it's more "*we'll* do this." Much, much, much more connection with kids. And it's like, "Hey, I'm in this too. This is my team. We're all going to work together for that goal." And it's *infinitely* more successful that way. . . . Kids like you more, a lot less problems. It's much more happy atmosphere, more friendly. And the kids tend to emulate your behavior more because they like you. And so if you set out a really

> good character role model, then they start emulating more of those things as well, further eliminating more and more problems. Yeah, I'm really glad I've adopted that.

Steve described his vision of the teacher he felt he was becoming, much more than simply "the band director."

> You're an artist, teacher, and you get these kids, you see them for a long time. . . . You get to have a *doing* class rather than a talking class, all the time. And kids come–if you do it right–they come and they want to be there and be excited about. It's like, "Wow! That's so much better than anything else I could possibly be doing." . . . And it's just so much fun, and every performance, it's like, it's the exalted feeling of accomplishment. No one caught fire and everyone's safe–yes! *[We laughed.]* Or, just to motivate everyone towards a goal, just be that influential person. Yeah, I really, really enjoy that. I *love* it.

By the end of the semester, each of these teachers had developed a view of classroom management that integrated instructional skills into their initially more limited view of classroom management as responding to disruptive behavior. Cayce summarized what he had learned.

> I think what I've experienced so far at Washington High School tells me that classroom management is setting up procedures and routines, it's building it into your lesson plans, and it's how you deal with problems when they arise. But it's also all of those things at once, and so many more things too. It's also in the level of respect that you have for your students and they have for you. It's how you achieve that respect. It's the esteem of the school, like, "This is Washington orchestra. You've got to do better than that." The kids take that from learning their notes better to also sitting in the orchestra quietly and behaving. So I think it's so many things. And they kind of need to work together. But at the core of it, it's really making sure that they *want* to succeed for you and for the program. So I hope that I'm right *[he chuckled]*, because that's the aim that I'm going for.

Discussion

The larger study (Schmidt, 2005) found that all six of these teachers identified learning about lesson planning processes as the most important learning from the Practicum course; their responses were remarkably consistent, and matched in both content and language the instruction we thought we presented in the class. In contrast, the data revealed that they almost never mentioned any explicit memories of having learned about classroom management in the class; they seemed to remember that the course focused mostly on lesson planning. This finding

surprised me, because I believed my colleague and I had frequently discussed and demonstrated principles of and strategies for classroom management, stressing a balance of well-established procedures and well-paced, well-planned instruction. However, data analysis suggested that much of what they claimed to have learned about classroom management in student teaching matched in vocabulary and in principle what I believed we had taught about classroom management in Practicum. The data suggest at least three possible explanations for this seeming latent or delayed learning. First, peer teaching and early field experiences seemed to have little effect on these teachers' overt learning about classroom management. Second, notions of management these teachers learned from prior experiences may have influenced what they remembered from the Practicum course. Third, relationships with mentor teachers and knowledge of classroom contexts seemed important for learning to employ strategies and principles of classroom management. Finally, I conclude this section with a discussion of possible explanations for this apparent latent or delayed learning.

Peer Teaching: "A False Sense of Reality"

The larger study found that, for the most part, these six teachers considered peer teaching a valuable tool for learning how to plan and sequence lessons, but mentioned little of what we thought we taught through peer teaching about management principles. An obvious limitation of peer teaching in university methods courses is that it is nearly impossible for preservice teachers to simulate the behavioral responses of children. Having completed student teaching, Harout now wanted to warn future students that Practicum would not prepare them for what he experienced in student teaching. He described what he saw, with the benefit of hindsight, as the limitations of the Practicum course.

> Like, this is *not* real. It's hard to work on pedagogy with Practicum class just because everyone knows what they're doing. And everyone knows what *you're* trying to do

> because they're about to go do it themselves. So it's kind of cheating, to you, for your benefit. Because you're teaching to smart kids. And those smart kids are trying not to be bad. They're *trying* to play the secondary instruments, as opposed to some junior high kid who hates being there. It's just a false sense of reality.

Nathan was the only participant who cited the peer teaching experiences as invaluable, eagerly detailing the relationship between instructional skills and management skills we thought we presented in Practicum.

> The times where we would teach the same lesson twice, you know, where you would do it and then evaluate and refine it and do it again–those were the best. Because the second time is *so* much more comfortable. You go farther, even though you're doing the same stuff, because you get to clean up all the junk that you dropped along the way. And towards the end, where we did the series of lessons where they had to build from each other, we were preparing a final piece–that was great, because it tied everything together. You know, you were incorporating standards, you were incorporating sequence, you were incorporating all this stuff, and rehearsal techniques–everything from moving around the classroom to don't forget to conduct correctly, you don't just wave a stick. And you know, just the way it tied everything together, it's like, "OK, now I feel like I have a package. Let's go student teach."

Nathan's ability to understand from peer teaching the relationship between instructional strategies and classroom management perhaps contributed to the fact that he barely mentioned issues of classroom management in his interview with me or in student teaching seminar, in contrast to the others, for whom issues of management loomed large. Nathan also demonstrated a more innate sense of teacher presence or teacher intensity (Price, 1992; Madsen, Standley, & Cassidy, 1989); further study exploring his abilities in more depth would be needed to understand their source. It is possible that his ability to make connections came from the decision he made in middle school to observe teachers, a lifelong skill he had consciously honed as a tuba player: "In band, I could just sit there, or I could actually observe and pay attention and watch [and learn from the teacher]. And that's what I chose to do." Whatever the reason, the data clearly show that neither age nor prior teaching experience was completely responsible, because

the other non-traditional-age students (Lucile, Arloa, and Cayce) did not learn similar skills as Nathan from peer teaching.

Previous Experiences

Others have documented the difficulty of challenging the beliefs about teaching that preservice teachers bring into their preservice education programs (e.g., Bullough, 1991; Knowles, 1992; Richards, 1999; Robbins, 1999). It is likely that some of these teachers' management concerns stemmed from their memories of their own childhood responses to teachers' management styles. Schmidt and Knowles (1995) speculated that four women who were compliant, quiet students had exceptional difficulty as beginning teachers in understanding children who were the opposite, and thus felt uncomfortable with having to be as "mean" as they felt they were in establishing class discipline. Lucile, Arloa, Cayce, and Steve expressed this concern. However, in this study, even Harout, who was "one of the loud children," found the junior high students' behavior beyond his comprehension.

Perhaps these teachers had all been so motivated by music themselves that they had particular difficulty understanding "the kids [who] don't really care" (Steve). For their success as teachers, important things to learn appeared to be to "not take it personally" (Harout), and to develop an understanding of student characteristics in order to recognize that these "aren't really bad kids" (Steve). It helped some of these teachers to convince themselves that setting high standards for student behavior would it make the children "hate" them (Cayce), and that "the kids really *wanted*" them to enforce the rules (Arloa).

Interestingly, although Arloa expected other children to mirror her own children's behavior, she did not seem to expect their parents' behavior to match her own. She was genuinely surprised that parents appreciated her phone calls to them and were willing to support

her in addressing their child's misbehavior. Perhaps, if Arloa herself ever had received such a call, despite a desire to correct her child's behavior, she might have felt extremely embarrassed. Or perhaps in her work with children at church, she had encountered angry reactions from parents. Whatever the reason, I was surprised that Arloa's and Lucile's years of parenting did not automatically provide any particular advantage over the younger teachers in learning to manage a classroom.

Context and Relationships

To be meaningful, new learning must be connected to prior learning in ways that make sense to the learner (Bruner, 1960). In Practicum, we thought that we stressed the importance of well-planned and well-paced instruction as proactive classroom management. However, peer teaching is indeed a "false reality." These teachers' peers did what they asked, whether or not they included management strategies in their lesson plans and peer teaching. Although we often suggested management procedures that were missing, there was no authentic feedback or penalty for failing to include them. In contrast, when the teachers neglected a step in the instructional sequence, their peers, like children, got lost. This lack of "real world" feedback may have provided too little context for the management strategies we presented in Practicum to seem important or memorable.

These teachers also believed they had learned little about either instruction or management from the three semesters of university-mandated field experiences (Schmidt, 2006). A plausible explanation for these claims might be the limited opportunities for establishing contextual understanding and relationships with the mentor teacher or students. Because of busy class and work schedules, they often arrived at the school just as a class was beginning and left in the middle of or immediately after a subsequent class. Consequently, they had few

opportunities to discuss with the mentor teachers possible reasons for either student or teacher behaviors that they observed. In addition, because expert teachers appear to do things effortlessly (Berliner, 1995), they may have been unable to differentiate instructional strategies from management strategies as they observed their mentors. Perhaps they made few connections to Practicum because the mentor teachers' instructional strategies appeared different from what we rehearsed in the class.

In contrast, as student teachers, these teachers had greater opportunity for extended observation and interaction with their mentors. They learned the context of their classes, and this helped them understand how their mentor teachers made decisions about what to respond to, even when "*everything* [was] disruptive" (Harout). They observed that their mentor teachers did not command problem-free environments and listened as the mentors reasoned out strategies to address situations that arose. Teachers often embed their knowledge in stories (Carter, 1993; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Harout's mentor teacher had "story after story after story" that helped him understand that "with pubescent children, irate days come and go." Hearing stories about known teachers and known students in a familiar context helped these teachers develop both specific techniques and broader principles of classroom management.

> The whole faculty of the arts at that school–at lunch, we always ate together. It was fun, to laugh and hear their stories. And hear how one student was *terrible* but then another teacher would say they were such a doll. And to see *why*, you know? I mean, just their personalities carry over. Some teachers let you do what ever you want. Of course, they're going to walk all over you too. (Arloa)

Such contextualized understanding provided guidance and assurance for these teachers as they worked out their own classroom management strategies. For example, Arloa recounted in detail the management system her mentor teacher used. She said that she "really loved that system, and would implement it as soon as [she] was at a school," because "it seemed to work" and "was

easy for [her] to do it." Arloa described what she learned from observing her teacher, in combination with his explanations to her about the management system he used.

> Being a parent–I don't know, maybe being a parent was the harder part of it, because [I expected the students] should *listen*, and they *don't* listen. That was the hard part for me. . . . [But] because I *knew* I had that problem, [it was so helpful] to watch the teacher when *he* had that problem with his students. Because they weren't always perfect for him either. The words he used, and the way he presented the problem, and then took care of it *in* class, in talking to the student privately, was a good learning experience for me.

Findings in the larger study also suggest that, except for Nathan, these participants found it difficult to learn about classroom management from drop-in visits to schools, such as their field placements. They seemed to benefit more from the extended opportunities for both observation and discussion, as well as the deeper relationships with mentor teachers available in their student teaching settings. To support this assertion, I noticed that, while all of them complained in the interviews about how little "real" teaching and how much observing they did in their field placements, none claimed to have done too much observing in their student teaching settings, despite the fact that they all watched or assisted at least several hours per day while their mentors taught classes. It is likely that they considered such informed observation valuable, because it allowed them to understand both specific techniques and the principles for their appropriate use (Duke, 2005). Although we had discussed many of the same techniques and principles in Practicum, perhaps at the time the concepts were just words that had little meaning for them, and only came to life when observed or practiced in a specific familiar context.

Latent Learning

This study's data suggest that course experiences seemed inadequate for these teachers to consciously remember learning management skills as we thought we presented them. In retrospect, I suspect that we instructors provided far too few opportunities for these teachers make conscious connections between their in-class learning, early field placements, and other

teaching experiences. We also provided too few opportunities to examine their prior experiences with classroom management as students, teachers, and parents (Knowles, 1992; Robbins, 1993). Lacking those opportunities, it is likely that the "false reality" of peer teaching and decontextualized field experiences made the management strategies we introduced and rehearsed in the Practicum class seem disconnected, unnecessary, or forgettable.

In contrast, as student teachers, these teachers quickly discovered that "it was all just management-based" (Steve). They experienced first-hand the importance of the proactive management routines we had discussed in Practicum, particularly our emphasis on promoting positive student behavior through consistent "rules and procedures, rules and procedures, every day, every day, just constantly" (Harout). Contextualized observation of their mentor teachers helped them to "get the standard of your behavior expectations, like saying what you're willing to put up with" (Harout). It is important to note that, with the exception of one of Lucile's two mentor teachers and Steve's seven weeks working under a substitute teacher in one of his placements, all these participants were placed with teachers who provided strong models of the management principles we intended to stress in the course. Despite our best efforts to arrange placements with such mentor teachers, this is not always the case at our university.

Another possible explanation for these teachers' latent learning could be that they simply forgot some of what we covered in class (Duke, 2005). Steve's mentor teacher took a seven-week maternity leave and the substitute music teacher seemed reluctant to give him any suggestions about his teaching. Steve reported that, with little feedback, he "fell into some old habits." A few weeks later, his supervisor reminded him of some management strategies from Practicum. Steve then "fixed a lot of those things," but was disappointed with himself for forgetting things he "should have" known. This apparent forgetting of new ideas, and

remembering upon being reminded, seems to be a normal part of the development of teaching expertise (Berliner, 1995). In course-based learning situations, there are too few opportunities for each preservice teacher to practice putting all the pieces together to be able to make them automatic. In the Practicum class, although the setting may have given them a "false sense of reality," these teachers had many opportunities to practice proactive management skills such as sequencing instructions, giving brief directions and specific feedback, and appropriate rehearsal pacing. Perhaps because of what we viewed as our consistent emphasis on principles of classroom management, the words lodged somewhere in their minds. After "forgetting" some of those skills and then being reminded by their mentor teachers or university supervisors (the Practicum instructors), perhaps they were able to apply and refine them in their student teaching situations with fewer reminders than had they never been exposed to them.

This study's data suggest that, by the end of student teaching, all six teachers appeared to have practiced and internalized the interrelated principles of both classroom management and instruction that we hoped they would learn from the course, although each applied them in ways adapted to their situations and their views of the teacher's role. I would like to believe that, as these beginning teachers observed their mentor teachers apply principles we had discussed in Practicum, their memories of discussions and peer teaching practice in Practicum were awakened. I hope that, without their experiences in the course, they would not have been as quick to learn management strategies from their student teaching situations. This study's data, however, do not provide enough evidence to either support or disconfirm these theories. However, the data do provide evidence to support other researchers who shed light on the complex interactions among individuals, their experiences, and their learning contexts that may

interfere with our students learning what we believed we taught them (e.g., Hollingsworth, 1989; Krueger, 1985; Richards, 1999; Weinstein, 1989).

Summary and Implications

This study's findings identify some of the challenges we face in trying to help our students learn what we think they should know. Although as instructors, we thought we had placed considerable emphasis on classroom management in Practicum, these participants appeared to forget strategies we thought they had rehearsed in the class; they claimed instead to have learned those skills in student teaching. The data suggest that the "false reality" of peer teaching and the influence of beliefs learned from their prior experiences may have influenced their course-based learning. Experience, both teaching and observing, under the guidance of a mentor in a setting where they had considerable contextual understanding, seemed to facilitate development of classroom management strategies, as well as an understanding of broader principles of management. These teachers did eventually appear to "learn" the management principles we thought we taught, although this study's data do not support a conclusive explanation of the processes by which they learned those principles.

Future research could explore in more detail the ways that teachers develop principles of teaching. What is the relationship between "real world" experience and course-based learning in helping teachers develop understandings of and strategies for classroom management? What forms of course-based learning, if any, promote the development of classroom management? What is the relationship between practicing specific strategies and developing broader principles and understandings of classroom management? Researchers could also explore ways to facilitate transfer of principles developed in a specific context to application of those principles in a different context. Studies comparing teaching in other disciplines, such as art or physical

education, where there are large classes of children with equipment in their hands, might shed light on whether there are both discipline-specific and general classroom management strategies that might be helpful to beginning teachers. Further research is warranted to explore the effects of the mentor teacher's model, particularly the congruence of that model with university courses.

This study supports others that find that concerns about classroom management are common among beginning teachers (Madsen & Kaiser, 1999; Snyder, 1996; Veenman, 1984). These teachers claimed their most effective learning about classroom management occurred in student teaching, and I suggest that the contextual understandings they gain in this immersion experience played an important role in that learning. Consequently, Jones' (1996) proposal for a specific course in classroom management, as well as other course-based learning, could potentially be one of the least effective ways to address beginning teachers' management concerns, although efforts to make conscious connections between course-based and familiar contextualized classroom situations may help. A number of teacher educators and researchers have encouraged preservice teachers to articulate and explore such connections through journals (e.g., Robbins, 1993), autobiographical writing or personal histories (e.g., Knowles, 1992), and structured discussion (e.g., Zeichner, 1981-1982). Such exercises recognize that learners actively shape their own learning, and may help beginning teachers integrate new learning with their experiences in a consistent way that promotes further learning (Dewey, 1938/1963). Further studies might explore factors that help create a better correspondence between what teacher educators teach and what preservice teachers learn.

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