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Expanding the Definition of Classroom Management: Recurring Themes and New Conceptualizations

Nancy K. Martin
The University of Texas at San Antonio

Nancy Jo Schafer
Georgia State University

Sandee McClowry
New York University

Edmund T. Emmer
The University of Texas at Austin

Mieke Brekelmans
Tim Mainhard
Theo Wubbels
Utrecht University, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Classroom management has clear and important implications for practice, yet a thorough understanding of the construct has been lacking primarily due to its complexity. Teachers employ a multitude of actions to establish and maintain classroom management. Some of these actions are more effective than others. This essay explores five interrelated, evidence-based approaches to classroom management that can inform teacher action: teacher self-regulation, relationships, temperament, belief systems, and community knowledge. Implications for teacher preparation and future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

A meta-analysis of 50 years of research concludes that classroom management is a powerful component of the overall classroom climate that affects student behavior, engagement, and, by extension, the quality of student learning (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1994). Classroom management concerns have also been found to significantly impact teachers' stress, burnout, job satisfaction, and intent to leave the profession (Chang, 2009; Martin et al., 2011). Although classroom management has clear and important implications for practice, a thorough understanding of the construct has been difficult because of its complexity.

Established as a sub-field of educational research in the 1950s, classroom management is a relatively young area of study (Brophy, 2006). Initial research in the field was

drawn from either behavioral theory (focusing on reinforcements and punishments) or an ecological perspective (analyzing classrooms as environmental settings). Current conceptualizations emphasize the latter approach with four general themes found in the literature (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). First, positive teacher-student relationships form the foundation of classroom management. Second, classroom management provides a salient context from which students extrapolate moral and social values. Third, quality classroom management is characterized by proactive approaches that give rise to student self-regulation and school connectedness rather than external rewards and punishment. And finally, teachers who are effective in classroom management alter their strategies based on their students' characteristics (e.g., developmental level, cultural norms, etc.).

Integrating research from a variety of sources, Evertson and Weinstein (2006) defined classroom management as "the actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning" (p. 4). However, teacher actions are predicated on a variety of factors that must be examined and understood if the construct is to realize its potential for providing a more thorough definition to the field. Research often focuses on a particular aspect of classroom management while public perceptions are generally more concerned with discipline. Because antecedent factors are further removed from the immediate concerns of establishing order and getting academic work accomplished, they have not received as much consideration from researchers or inclusion in comprehensive conceptualizations of the construct. The purpose of this article is to build on Evertson and Weinstein's definition by exploring precursors of teacher action (see Table 1.) Specifically, the frameworks of five evidence-based classroom management perspectives are presented.

The five perspectives on precursors to teacher actions considered here are undergirded by the assumption that effective classroom management is more than the "bag of tricks" currently offered in many marketed models, e.g., those presented in brief professional development opportunities. Rather, it is a highly complex construct that encompasses nebulous, often invisible aspects of classroom interaction and reaches beyond any simple formulaic approach.

We do not presume this paper to be comprehensive as there are other legitimate perspectives in the professional literature that add to the understanding of classroom management. For example, chapters in the second edition of the Handbook of Classroom Management (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015) explore different facets including specific content areas and contexts such as urban settings and special education. Instead we selectively present five aspects of classroom management that highlight the complexities

Table 1

Classroom Management Aspects, Precursors to Action, and Key Considerations

Inter-related Aspect of Classroom Management	Precursor to Teacher Action	Key Consideration
Teacher Emotions and Classroom Management: Managing the Self (Emmer)	Self-regulation/control; management of emotion	Creating and maintaining an image while attending to "faces" constructed by students
A Relational Perspective of Classroom Management (Wubbels, et al.)	Constructing an image of caring and authority	Demonstrating rather high degree of teacher authority and high degree of care
Temperament-Based Classroom Management (McClowry)	Knowledge of student temperament	Recognizing, reframing, responding, scaffolding and stretching
Developmental, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (Martin)	Belief system regarding child development and cultural responsiveness	Managing behavior and instruction in a culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate manner
Classroom Management as Defined from a Participation-Centered Perspective (Schafer)	Understanding the importance of classroom community	Ritualizing routines and practices that define classroom community; helping children achieve membership

of the construct. Although these points of view have different foci, at their core each one underscores precursors to teacher action.

First, Emmer considers the emotional dimension of teacher self-management. Specifically, he explains how facework and emotion management guide teacher behaviors.

Teacher Emotions and Classroom Management: Managing the Self (Emmer)

As discussed in the introduction, definitions of classroom management and the focus of much related research include the teacher's actions and strategies that organize or modify the classroom environment. Additionally, the domain of classroom management typically includes the actions of the teacher to maintain the flow of events and to respond to problems that may interfere with it. Although frequently cited definitions give the central role for management to the teacher, there has not been much conceptual or empirical analysis of the ways in which teachers actively manage themselves.

It is obvious that teachers are part of the classroom environment and further, that they must engage in self-presentation during their interactions with students. Examples of self-presentation include teacher statements, body language, and facial expressions that are intended to convey an impression to students. For example, teachers may want students to believe that they are caring, strict, in-charge, competent, and/or helpful. The idea that teachers engage in self-presentation acknowledges that, like people in most social situations, they are conscious to varying degrees that they are making an impression. Self-presentation is simply an aspect of self-management, and it may be practiced by teachers with different amounts of success.

It is also the case that classroom management books and articles frequently recommend that teachers utilize various behavioral styles, demeanors, or personas, such as authoritative, assertive, warm, business-like, caring, supportive, or enthusiastic. Thus a natural extension of the traditional view of classroom management is to incorporate the teacher's self-management as part of the process of managing the classroom environment.

Two facets of self-management have particular relevance for teaching: facework and managing emotions. Facework, a concept borrowed from the field of sociology (Goffman, 1973), describes how individuals create and maintain their own self-image while they also attend to the "faces" (i.e., constructed images) presented by others. Goffman argued that mutual acceptance of face can be accomplished by following rules of self-respect and considerateness, by showing deference and politeness, and by avoiding situations, topics or contexts that threaten face. Facework by teachers is illustrated in a study by Fenwick (1998), who identified three themes in junior high school teachers' narratives and classroom practices: managing the self, managing space and objects, and managing student energy. Teachers adapted to the complexity of the classroom environment by projecting concrete, traditional values like hard work, self-control, and respecting others. Some of the teachers were aware they constructed the image they projected to students, by posing as strict or as non-threatening, and non-judgmental. Other teachers mentioned concerns about maintaining a balance between images of caring versus maintaining authority.

In addition to facework, teachers' self-management requires affective competence and regulation. Affect, including mood and emotion, lies at the center of the ability to communicate effectively. Management of emotion is a key aspect of socially skilled performance, requiring not only self-awareness and self-control, but also sensitivity to others' emotional and affective states (Hargie, 2006). Research by Hargreaves (2000) and Day and Leitch (2001) highlight the significance of emotion in the daily lives of teachers as well as how they deal with the emotional needs of their students. Teacher management of emotion is not simply limiting or channeling the expression of negative emotions; it requires the expression of emotion as a strategy that serves the teacher's

broader professional and personal goals of working effectively for students. O'Connor (2008) describes this aspect of a teacher's emotional life as choosing to care for and care about students.

Next, we consider Wubbels et al.'s (2006) reconceptualizion of classroom management that emphasizes how the affective perspectives of classroom teaching complement cognitive viewpoints. This perspective both expands and confines Evertson and Weinstein's definition by focusing on the socioemotional aspects of teacher actions, including cognitions and attitudes.

A Relational Perspective of Classroom Management (Wubbels, et al.)

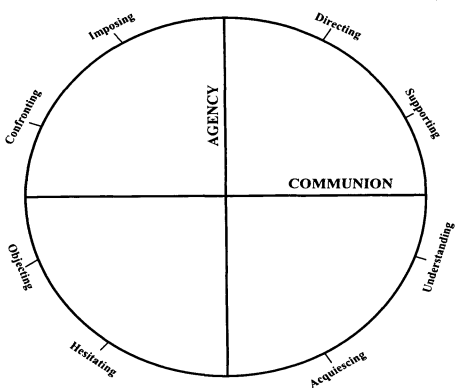
The relational approach to classroom management offers a useful theoretical base for research in the field. From this perspective, the construct is defined as all teacher actions and associated cognitions and attitudes involved in creating the social emotional aspect of the learning environment. This approach emphasizes the socioemotional aspects of teacher actions rather than the academic aspects. Woolfolk Hoy and Weinstein (2006) employed a similar conceptualization when they highlighted authority and care as important dimensions of classroom teaching.

Here, the relational approach hones in on a particular aspect of Evertson and Weinstein's definition – those teacher actions that are relevant to classroom management from a socioemotional perspective. The approach, however, expands the emphasis of earlier approaches to classroom management in which the focus is primarily on how to handle student misbehavior with external rewards and punishment (see e.g., Brophy, 2006). It includes the aim to create self-regulation, respect, and care.

To fully understand how teachers create a positive socioemotional environment, actions that both support and impede the evolution of such environments should be studied. Thus from this perspective teacher actions that foster the development of a positive classroom environment are as relevant as those that hinder it. Cognitions and attitudes also play an important role in teacher behavior (e.g., Olsen, 2010; Pajares, 1992). Therefore, similar to Wubbels' approach, the relational approach proposes to include not only teachers' *actions* but their *cognitions* and *attitudes* as well.

At least two existing theoretical frameworks can be helpful in further conceptualizing and operationalizing the relational perspective: (1) Pianta's (2006) model of child-teacher relationships based on attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978) and (2) Wubbels et al.'s work (e.g., 2006), based on interpersonal theory (Horowitz & Strack, 2011). Both approaches are anchored in psychological theories and draw heavily on evidence from empirical research. As an example we illustrate the use of interpersonal theory.

Figure 1. Interpersonal Circle



Interpersonal theory offers a theoretical and methodological framework for studying the interplay between the two basic dimensions in interpersonal relations: Agency and Communion (Horowitz & Strack, 2011). Wubbels et al. extended the general interpersonal model to the classroom context, as depicted in the Teacher Interpersonal Circle (see Figure 1). Research on the Teacher Interpersonal Circle (e.g., Brekelmans, Mainhard, den Brok, & Wubbels, 2011) not only focuses on the origin and escalation of discipline problems, but also on the qualities of positive

classroom interaction and how this is maintained. This framework can be applied to both the individual student level and the class level, to the moment-to-moment micro level of interaction between student and teacher and to the macro level of teacher-student relationships, to actions as well as cognitions and attitudes. Further, the central concept of interpersonal complementarity provides a prediction framework for the relatedness of teacher and student actions. For example, warm teacher actions most likely evoke and intensify students' respect and care of each other while a teacher's reprimanding or dissatisfied response to disruptive student behavior may set off a spiral of negative interaction that provokes even more aggressive student behavior and so on.

Research based on this approach has shown that teacher-student relationships that are characterized by a combination of a rather high degree of teacher authority and care promote student academic and socioemotional learning (e.g., Goh & Fraser, 2000; den Brok, Brekelmans & Wubbels, 2004; Wubbels et al., 2006). Another approach to teacher-student relationships is based on a temperament theory.

Temperament-Based Classroom Management: Definitions, Conclusions, and Applications (McClowry)

Teacher actions can be informed by understanding how temperament or personality influences the behavior of students. Rather than applying the same behavioral management strategies to all students, temperament-based classroom management assists teachers in tailoring their actions to match a student's temperament. As conceptualized in the *INSIGHTS into Children's Temperament* intervention, temperament-based classroom management involves establishing and maintaining a classroom that fosters the emotional and academic development of individual students within the classroom community (McClowry, 2014). Using temperament theory as its foundation, *INSIGHTS* asserts that children have a consistent reaction style that they demonstrate across a variety of settings and situations, particularly those that involve stress or change. Temperament is also a social processing system through which children view and interact with the world, thus altering the responses of others and contributing toward their own development (Rothbart & Bates, 2006).

The central premise of *INSIGHTS* is that every child has the potential to blossom if provided with an environment responsive to his or her temperament. Because temperament is biologically-based and thus resistant to change, *INSIGHTS* aims to enhance the fit between a child and his or her environment. Three programs work synergistically to enhance the social emotional and academic development of each student: a professional development offering for teachers, a parenting program providing similar content, and a class-wide program engaging the students directly.

The curriculum for the teacher professional development consists of the 3 Rs: Recognize, Reframe, Respond; 2 Ss: Scaffold and Stretch; and 2 Cs: Gaining Compliance and Fostering Competencies. First, teachers learn how to recognize the temperaments of students. Then, reframing can occur by understanding that each temperament has strengths and aspects that cause concern. Teachers also learn how to respond to student behavior using adequate or optimal statements rather than counterproductive ones that make the situation worse. By explicitly relaying expectations for positive behavior, teachers apply strategies that enhance student compliance and foster social competencies. Teachers also learn to support their students when they encounter circumstances that are temperamentally challenging. Most students can handle such situations if the teacher applies strategies that gently stretch the student's emotional, attentional, or behavioral repertoire.

When tested in three prevention trials, *INSIGHTS* enhanced teacher efficacy in classroom management, reduced child disruptive behavior at school and at home, and enhanced the children's academic skills. For a more detailed description of *INSIGHTS*

and its outcomes (see McClowry, 2014; McClowry et al., 2005; McClowry et al., 2010; McCormick et al., 2015; O'Connor et al., 2014a; 2014b).

Next, Martin posits that teacher perceptions regarding the nature of students, their developmental levels, and cultural backgrounds precede instruction and behavior management actions. Quality classroom environments are created when teachers modify their behavior based on student characteristics.

Developmental, Culturally Responsive Classroom Management: Balancing Instruction and Behavior Management (Martin)

Teacher actions are preceded by their belief systems regarding both child development and cultural responsiveness. These two intertwined perspectives translate into teacher expectations for both "academic and social-emotional learning" (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Whether they are consciously aware of it or not, these beliefs are quite powerful as they frame teachers' interactions with students. What are developmentally appropriate learning and behavioral expectations for a child of (fill-in-the-blank) age? To what extent should teachers address – or even consider – students' individual characteristics (e.g., cultural backgrounds, SES, or exceptionalities) when designing instruction or responding to behavior? Instructional and behavioral strategies suitable for one particular ethnic group or age level may be inappropriate or even humiliating for another.

These two sets of beliefs frame the nature of teachers' actions and underlie two components of classroom management: behavior management (BM) and instructional management (IM) (Martin & Sass, 2010). BM is similar to, but different from, discipline in that it includes planned efforts to prevent misbehavior as well as the teacher's response to it. Specifically, this facet includes establishing rules, forming a reward structure, and providing opportunities for student input. Establishing an effective reward structure and/or encouraging student input can be useful in preventing misbehavior and maintaining order in the classroom.

IM speaks to teachers' educational aims and methodologies. This component includes monitoring seatwork and structuring daily routines as well as the teacher's use of lecture and student practice or interactive, participatory approaches to instruction. The manner in which teachers approach an instructional task contributes both to the general classroom atmosphere and to their classroom management style (Kounin, 1970; Reeve & Jang, 2006). Nowhere is this better documented than in Kounin's (1970) concepts of smoothness and momentum — both characteristics of well-planned lessons that prevent off-task behaviors. More recently, Reeve and Jang (2006) found various instructional behaviors negatively correlated with student independence, e.g., monopolizing instructional resources and using controlling questions that lead students' learning. Conversely, providing students the time for self-regulated work and opportunity for discussion as well as recognizing their points of view and backgrounds were positively related to teacher support for student autonomy.

The importance of IM and BM is supported by research evidence. For example, research has consistently shown an inverse relationship between both IM and BM and various aspects of teacher efficacy, e.g., instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement. Thus, teachers with lower self-efficacy beliefs tend to be more controlling in their approaches to both instructional approaches and behavior management. Significant relationships have also been discerned between IM, student behavior stressors, and components of teacher burnout (see Martin & Sass, 2010, and Martin, Sass, & Schmitt, 2012 for specific research findings related to these variables).

It makes sense that teachers' approaches to IM and BM would be related. One would expect direct instruction to be accompanied by a focus on rules – repetition of academic

skills coupled with expectations of obedience. On the other hand, less controlling instruction such as discussion and active inquiry present different behavior management challenges. In practice, however, the connection may be inconsistent. Teachers focusing on constructivist instruction may simultaneously emphasize strict adherence to rules.

Unfortunately, the study of, and evolving ideas related to, instructional strategies and subject matter expertise have outpaced classroom management study. This is evidenced by a small corpus of study suggesting that teachers' instruction is increasingly interactive and student-centered, while classroom management approaches are likely to match "traditional transmission classrooms" that are teacher-centered in nature (Garrett, 2008, p. 34). As McCaslin and Good explain, we have "created an oxymoron: a curriculum that urges problem solving and critical thinking and a management system that requires compliance and narrow obedience" (1992, p. 12).

Because BM and IM interact to create the overall classroom climate, their relationship is especially important. When both behavior and instruction are managed in developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive ways, establishing and maintaining an atmosphere favorable to learning and developing positive relationships with students from all backgrounds is more likely (Gay, 2006).

Finally, Schafer proposes that quality classroom environments start with teacher actions that are centered on ritualizing social participation. Thus, she posits that efforts to create and nurture classroom community should serve as the springboard for teacher action.

Classroom management as defined from a participation-centered perspective (Schafer)

Teacher approaches to classroom management have generally fallen into two categories: those that are teacher-centered (behavioral approaches) and those that are student-centered (cognitive and humanistic approaches). Rogoff, Matusov and White (1996) write about these models as "adult-run" and "children-run" instruction, which are "often cast as opposite extremes of a pendulum swing between unilateral control and freedom" (p. 389). A sociocultural perspective of knowing and learning is primarily participation-centered and treats collective participation of social groups in ritualized activities as the primary phenomenon of human activity (Hickey & Schafer, 2006; Rogoff, Matusov & White, 1996).

A sociocultural perspective comes out of the work of Soviet theorist Lev Vygotsky. From this perspective, learning is constructed and refined through social participation. Specifically, learning is participation in the further transformation (construction and refinement) of socially defined knowledge rather than something that is received or assimilated by an individual (Hickey & Schafer, 2006; Rogoff, Matusov & White, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). Learning occurs as individuals move along trajectories from a *legitimate peripheral participant to a full participant* of a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, Matusov & White, 1996; Vygotsky, 1978). In this community-of-learners model, both students and teachers are active participants, and learning is situated in a specific social context (Lave &Wenger, 1991).

The goal of classroom management from a sociocultural perspective would be the development of an effective learning community where students (and teachers) learn to be full participants in the community of learners. Classroom management's main focus should be on the collective success of students and teachers ritualizing effective routines and practices that define the classroom community (Hickey & Schafer, 2006) – all with an emphasis on proactive approaches to classroom management rather than reactive ones. Thus, the teacher's ability to be responsive to students' cultural histories is particularly important to classroom management success (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004).

From this perspective, the primary cultural tool for the development of community is language (Hickey & Schafer, 2006; Johnston, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). Johnston explains the subtle ways in which teachers guide the development of "emotionally and relationally healthy learning communities through language" (p. 2). It is through language that collective and individual identities are developed. For example, a student cannot have the identity of a "trouble maker" or a "popular kid" without agreement from members of the community. Helping students build productive identities associated with full participation in the community of learners is an essential role for the teacher in regard to classroom management and is an essential precursor to teacher action.

Although research studies have used a sociocultural framework to understand classroom management research (Davis, 2006; Stoughton, 2007), relatively few research studies have analyzed classroom management approaches based on sociocultural perspective (Martin, 2004). Martin attributes this to a lack of a "nuanced understandings of how teachers successfully establish and manage classroom environments that support both engaged learning and positive social interactions for 25–30 active children" (p. 406). In addition to studying effective learning environments, a participant-centered consideration should involve the assessment of how classroom management methods (e.g., classroom arrangement, behavior consequence, teacher-student relationships, etc.) might move students along trajectories toward or away from being full members of the community. Controversial issues such as rewards or punishments are not judged as inherently good or bad practices, but whether they have positive or negative affect in a given context. When using rewards, consequences, or any other technique, the teacher should consider the impact it has on the community.

Classroom management is a complex construct that is socially defined and context specific. A sociocultural, participation-centered perspective may provide a lens for both theoretical understanding, as well as serve as a precursor to teachers' practical application of classroom management.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, many of the presently advertised models for classroom management offer "easy recipes" without any theoretical foundation or empirical support. Although a comprehensive view of classroom management may seem daunting, false promises of a simple strategy-driven approach leave teachers feeling ineffective when their promise is not realized.

This expanded view of classroom management, outlined in Table 1, calls attention to the importance of the teacher's cognitive and emotional states in the decisions he or she makes and the actions in which he or she engages. The classroom setting requiring teachers to provide instruction to large groups of students still defines the parameters within which classroom management is enacted. Yet, in this view, the aspects that teachers regard as salient to classroom management take on more importance. An integrated conceptualization of classroom management suggests that, as teachers strive to create classroom community (Schafer), they should consider differences among students' temperaments (McClowry) and balance instructional approaches with behavior management by attending to students' developmental levels and cultural backgrounds (Martin). At the same time, teachers need to self-monitor (Emmer) and manage relations with students so as to balance concerns about both care and authority (Wubbels et al.).

When taken in the aggregate, it is important to note that these perspectives are not a narrow consideration of external punishment and rewards reminiscent of behaviorism. Instead, a richer, more complex perspective emerges with implications for preparing pre-service teachers, mentoring in-service educators, and conducting future research.

For example, elementary and secondary level pre-service teachers will benefit from a well-developed knowledge base scaffolded by in-school experiences and ample opportunities for guided reflection. In-service educators are also in need of on-going mentorship rather than brief professional development opportunities.

These five perspectives also speak to the importance of theoretically based classroom management models supported by research. Future directions for research will benefit from both qualitative and quantitative contributions. To stay grounded in reality and move the field forward, we encourage investigator-practitioner collaborations. Such interactions will facilitate theory development and lead to empirically tested classroom management models and interventions. ■

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Correspondance regarding this article should be directed to Nancy K. Martin from the University of Texas at San Antonio. Email may be sent to nancy.martin@utsa.edu