Pre-service teachers' episodic memories of classroom management

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ABSTRACT

This study focused on past excellent teachers' classroom management strategies from the perspective of 148 pre-service teachers. The purpose of the study was to examine how pre-service teachers' memories reflect classroom management models that are typically taught in teacher education coursework prior to their study of those models, as well as to explore memories that did not fit a particular model. Results indicated that pre-service teachers related episodes that clustered on establishing rules, but were less likely to relate experiences based on other strategies such as withitness, smooth transitions, or formal classroom meetings. Implications for teacher education are explored.

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Teacher educators have long recognized that pre-service teachers' beliefs about teaching stem, in part, from the memories they collect as they progress through 12 or more years of observing and interacting with their own elementary, middle, and high school teachers (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Lortie, 1975, 2002; Mead, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Wilson, 1990). Indeed, Levin and He (2008) found that the single most important source for pre-service teachers' beliefs about how to teach comes from what Lortie (2002) coined the "apprenticeship of observation" (p. 61).

While appearing useful for developing beliefs about teaching and an understanding about how to teach, the apprenticeship of observation presents a challenge for teacher educators. Charged with disseminating accepted theories and methods of effective teaching, teacher educators carry out their work in the face of students who, guided by years of teacher memories, tend to filter teacher education coursework according to their established beliefs about how to teach (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Goodman, 1988). Consequently, it is useful for teacher educators to both recognize and explore students' memories to understand their beliefs about teaching and to determine potential gaps in pre-service teachers' prior knowledge. Careful attention to such prior knowledge can inform teacher education coursework and open avenues for dialog with future teachers.

To that end, this qualitative phenomenological study examined 148 pre-service teachers' handwritten episodic memories about a past teacher (kindergarten through college) who, from the

students' perspective, demonstrated excellence in the classroom. As a teacher educator this collection of memories offered a collection of diverse student experiences for me to explore pre-service teachers' beliefs and prior knowledge.

For example, students recalled practices and strategies that excellent teachers used to build positive classroom relationships, such as cultivating respect and voicing encouragement. Additionally, students recalled strategies that excellent teachers used to build vibrant and productive learning communities, such as organizing cooperative learning activities and communicating high expectations. Exploring pre-service teachers' written memories allowed me to report emerging themes along with rich narrative descriptions to support the themes.

1. Purpose

The current study centered on one of the emerging themes – that of past teachers' classroom management strategies. The purpose of this study was to analyze how pre-service teachers' memories reflect classroom management strategies and models that are typically taught in teacher education coursework, as well as to examine memories that may not fit a particular model but have, nonetheless, informed pre-service teachers' beliefs.

I sought to explore the following questions: (1) How do pre-service teachers describe their past excellent teachers' classroom management strategies? (2) To what extent do pre-service teachers' episodic memories implicitly reflect strategies from three selected classroom management models (i.e., Assertive Discipline, Withitness and Group Management, and Choice Theory) prior to study of these models in teacher education coursework? (3) How

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can pre-service teachers' memories and prior knowledge be useful in teacher education coursework?

The rationale for engaging in this inquiry was to offer a window into pre-service teachers' memories and beliefs about classroom management. If pre-service teachers tend to filter teacher education coursework according to their established beliefs, stemming from their memories, then understanding those beliefs is useful as teacher educators help pre-service teachers unwrap and probe their prior beliefs to inform their future practice.

2. Literature review

The literature review defines classroom management noting its universal nature and describes classroom management models that have served as a research-based framework for teacher education to inform pre-service teachers' thinking. The related literature further examines how pre-service teachers' memories of past teacher practices help shape their understanding about how to teach. Finally, the literature suggests that teacher educators who purposefully uncover pre-service teachers' prior experiences have a context for meaningfully integrating those experiences with teacher education coursework.

2.1. Classroom management

Educators have defined classroom management as the specific ways in which teachers organize and maintain a classroom environment conducive to effective teaching and learning (Brophy, 1996; Doyle, 1986; Duke, 1979). Marzano (2003) suggested that classroom management consists of integrating four areas including establishing rules and procedures, enforcing disciplinary actions, building classroom relationships, and creating a management mind-set.

Students who are preparing to teach indicate that classroom management is a pressing concern as they envision life as a teacher (Balli, 2009). Concern with classroom management tends to be universal despite variations in practice stemming from societal norms in human relationships that influence student and teacher interactions (Shin & Koh, 2008). Indeed, the international similarity of classroom management concerns was highlighted in a study of student teachers in international settings. Comparing current field experiences in one country with previous field experiences in another, student teachers noted that two features of teaching were universal, classroom management and administrative procedures (Roberts, 2006).

2.2. Classroom management models

Over the years, educators, psychologists, and researchers have developed a range of classroom management models to help teachers establish effective classroom rules and procedures (Canter & Canter, 1976, 1992; Dreikurs, Grunwald, & Pepper, 1982; Ginott, 1995; Glasser, 1986, 1990; Kounin, 1970; Skinner, 1974). Although variations on classroom management models along with additional strategies regularly appear in teacher education textbooks, a review of four recently published teacher education methods textbooks (Emmer & Evertson, 2009; Henley, 2006; Marzano, 2009; Wilen, Hutchinson, & Ishler, 2007) revealed a common set of three classroom management models: the Assertive Discipline Model, the Withitness and Group Management Model, and the Choice Theory Model.

The common inclusion of these three models indicated acceptance of these models for dissemination and study in teacher education coursework. Based on common textbook inclusion, the Assertive Discipline Model, the Withitness and Group Management Model, and the Choice Theory Model were selected as a lens through which to explore pre-service teachers' episodic memories of classroom management. Using these classroom management models offers theoretical and philosophical underpinnings for why teachers would choose to implement certain classroom management strategies. Thus, they provide a framework for situating dialog with pre-service teachers about their prior knowledge and beliefs as they study new concepts and formal models. An overview of the three selected models follows.

2.2.1. Assertive Discipline

The Assertive Discipline Model (Canter & Canter, 1976, 1992) is premised on a teacher's right to teach and a student's right to learn. It proposes that the teacher must take charge of the classroom with a predetermined classroom discipline plan composed of rules and procedures intended for optimal classroom functioning. In this model, teachers clearly and firmly assert their expectations for appropriate behavior as well as consequences for misbehavior. Teachers take time at the beginning of the school year to teach students the rules and procedures for how to behave in all classroom situations. Subsequently, teachers implement the rules and procedures by consistently reinforcing appropriate behavior and applying consequences for misbehavior.

The early version of the Assertive Discipline Model (Canter & Canter, 1976) was criticized by some as a traditional behavior modification approach that relied on elements of teacher control and failed to foster student self control (Kohn, 1993). In light of the critique, the updated version of the model (Canter & Canter, 1992) better defined the differences between rules and procedures and placed more emphasis on establishing a positive classroom climate. The updated model includes implementing positive consequences for appropriate student behavior and avoiding knee-jerk harsh consequences for misbehavior. With this clearer conception of its intent, the updated version of the Assertive Discipline Model remains one of several classroom management models that pre-service teachers examine within teacher education coursework.

2.2.2. Withitness and Group Management

A second model commonly found in teacher education textbooks is the Withitness and Group Management Model (Kounin, 1970). This model proposes that teachers must be *with it* to remain aware of what is happening everywhere in the classroom at all times. The crux of this model suggests that even when teachers are concentrating on lesson delivery or helping a small group of students, they need to regularly scan the entire classroom and rapidly assess the extent to which students are attending to the teacher or the task at hand. Teacher adherents to this model develop the ability to multitask in order to quickly address off task behavior while seamlessly continuing with the lesson. Indeed, the model proposes that teachers cannot afford to focus exclusively on one student for much more than a minute if they expect to keep abreast of an entire classroom of diverse students. The model emphasizes smooth transitions, variety in classroom activities, and frequent timely feedback to awaken interest and encourage on-task behavior.

2.2.3. Choice Theory

The Choice Theory Model (Glasser, 1986, 1990) is the third selected model commonly included in teacher education textbooks. This model views the teacher as a lead manager, who seeks student input for a democratic classroom, rather than as a boss manager who seeks to control student behavior. The philosophy underpinning this model is based on the premise that students are rational beings capable of controlling their own behavior and making good behavioral choices when their universal human needs for

belonging, power, freedom, and fun are regularly considered. The model emphasizes class meetings to involve students in evaluating their own behavior and developing action plans for effective classroom functioning.

2.3. Pre-service teachers' beliefs

The opportunity to interact with teachers for more than 12 years carves a deep and broad swathe in pre-service teachers' beliefs about classroom life by the time they make the decision to enrol in a teacher education program (Nespor, 1987; Wilson, 1990). Among their beliefs about classroom life, pre-service teachers likely harbour images and beliefs about classroom management because maintaining an orderly environment is an integral part of the daily rhythm of every classroom.

One way that teacher educators can draw on pre-service teachers' beliefs is through their written narratives. According to Van Manen (1989) and Weber (1991), written narrative offers a medium for reflection and for rich, descriptive language that might not otherwise be elicited in an interview alone. In the preface to the second edition of his book *Schoolteacher*, Lortie (2002) described the growing and useful trend toward written narrative as a tool for reflection in teacher education. In advocating reflection, Lortie suggested that pre-service teachers make their beliefs explicit by writing about former teachers, reflecting on meanings, and integrating their reflections with concepts and models studied in teacher education coursework.

Accordingly, I chose written narrative as a tool for investigating pre-service teachers' memories and beliefs. The qualitative, phenomenological approach used in this study is an approach that explores a phenomenon and how the phenomenon was experienced by the study participants.

3. Method

3.1. Qualitative research

Creswell (2007) defines qualitative research as an inquiry process of understanding based on a methodological tradition that explores a social or human problem. Qualitative researchers elicit the perspectives of research participants about a phenomenon without reducing their perspectives to numbers. Rather, the qualitative researcher engages in a process of reflection, complex interpretation, and a description that extends previous research or that signals a call for action.

Phenomenology is one of five approaches to qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenology involves gathering descriptions of participants' experiences in lived contexts. The thoughts and feelings of the participants are kept intact and recognized as crucial to the phenomenon under study. The phenomenological approach allows each participant's experience to be considered independently and with equal value toward understanding the phenomenon.

3.2. Participants

Data for the study were collected from 148 undergraduate pre-service teacher education students enrolled in two sections of an introductory teacher education course at a research university in the midwestern United States. Because the students were enrolled in an introductory teacher education course that served as the foundation for other courses, it was assumed for this study that the students had little, if any, exposure to theories and models of classroom management normally introduced later in teaching methods courses.

The 148 pre-service teachers included 117 female students (78%) and 31 male students (22%) which approximated the distribution of female and male teachers nationwide, 75% and 25% respectively (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Of the female pre-service teachers, 68 were elementary education majors, 48 were secondary education majors representing various content areas, and 1 identified herself only as female. Of the male pre-service teachers, 7 were elementary education majors and 24 were secondary education majors representing various content areas. The pre-service teachers volunteered to participate in a class activity intended to inform research about excellent teachers and their practices. Those who did not wish to participate were free to leave the classroom.

3.3. Data sources

During the first week of the introductory course, the pre-service teacher volunteers were asked to reflect on all their past teachers and to select one excellent teacher from their kindergarten through early college experience as students. Students were not given a definition of teacher excellence, but were reminded to focus on excellence from their perspective, not popularity, and were asked to recall a specific episode that would concretely demonstrate the reasons for their choice. The students did not confer with one another about their teacher selections.

The students were each given a form requesting their demographic information (i.e., elementary or secondary program, subject area if secondary, and gender) and demographics of the chosen teacher (i.e., grade level, middle or secondary subject area, and gender). The students used the rest of the blank form to handwrite an episodic memory about the chosen excellent teacher. The narratives ranged in length from two paragraphs to two pages.

3.4. Data analysis procedures

The 148 pre-service teachers were each assigned a different pseudonym to separately identify their narratives. As the primary researcher, I engaged in three levels of content analysis, referred to as a spiral analysis rather than a linear approach (Creswell, 2007). A spiral suggests a circular analysis that involves reading transcripts, reflecting, writing memos, interpreting, reading again, coding, representing, and so forth.

First, I read the handwritten narratives several times for a general sense of content and tone, immersing myself in the details, making notes, and reading for a sense of the whole before breaking the episodes into separate parts. Subsequently, I arranged for the narratives to be transcribed and I entered the transcribed narratives into NVivo7, a qualitative software package that supports content analysis of text-based data through text unit coding (QSR International Pty Ltd., 2006).

Second, I read the transcribed narratives in NVivo, making memo notes within the computer program on possible issues and themes to explore (e.g., assessment, classroom management, learning activities, relationships). For the current study, I chose to explore classroom management. Memos on the classroom management theme included short phrases from the episodes that triggered vivid depictions of classroom life as well as links to particular classroom management models taught in teaching methods coursework.

Third, I selected text units for coding based on rich description and a clear, powerful, and/or a succinct reference to a teacher or some aspect of classroom life. I organized the patterns that emerged from each coded text unit into themes. I did not establish pre-existing or a priori codes or themes as I preferred to open the data to reflect pre-service teachers' lived experience and not limit the analysis.

Concurrently, my research assistant independently read the 153 pages of transcribed narratives and manually developed a list of themes, examples of transcript evidence for the themes, and reflective notes. My research assistant and I compared electronic and manual analyses for differing themes and understandings. We discussed and resolved minor discrepancies and I added a theme based on his understanding of the data. Other than the additional theme, the discrepancies involved how the themes were labeled rather than how their substance was depicted. Both of us agreed on the classroom management theme and examples of evidence depicted in the current study.

4. Results

After coding the text units, I categorized meaning statements about classroom management into strategy clusters and explored the extent to which the strategies reflected one or more elements of a classroom management model. Although meaning statements may have included elements of a particular model, none of the episodic memory statements referred to a classroom management model by name or by theorist. Lack of reference to a specific model supported my assumption that the undergraduate pre-service teacher participants, enrolled in the introductory teacher education course, had not been exposed to a wide extent, if at all, to particular classroom management models. I further explored classroom management memories, strategies, and referents that fell outside a particular model, in essence blurring boundaries among the selected model strategies and other classroom management strategies.

What follows are excerpts from the pre-service teachers' episodic narratives. The pre-service teacher pseudonym is listed in brackets after each excerpt. Some excerpts are interpreted based on elements of a particular classroom management model and others, independent of a specific model, provide additional nuanced insights into pre-service teachers' prior beliefs about classroom management. Along with the selected excerpts, I include interpretive comments and questions for dialoging with pre-service teachers.

4.1. Rules and procedures

The Assertive Discipline Model (Canter, 1976, 1992) establishes the teacher's responsibility for teaching students the teacher-established set of rules and procedures for classroom functioning early in the school year, typically on the first day of class. In the following excerpt, Kathy describes her first day of class and introduction to her teacher's rules:

~ Mrs. M had quite a reputation of being, as the older students called her, "mean." I remember how on the first day of class we were scared speechless. As the day continued, we learned that Mrs. M had a lot of rules, but if we followed them we would get along great. [Kathy, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 16]

Kathy's episode focuses on a presentation of rules, an implicit link to the Assertive Discipline Model. The updated version of the model emphasizes creating a positive classroom climate while simultaneously introducing the classroom management plan. Kathy's reference to the "mean" teacher and having a "scared speechless" feeling in this classroom suggests a disparity between teacher intent and student perception. Her second point, however, indicates that following the rules led the class to "get along great" suggesting a softening of the "mean" teacher reputation once habits of conduct were established.

Teacher educators could use such excerpts to explore how such relationship transitions occur. How are habits of conduct

established? When do teachers and students become comfortable enough to relax within habitual behavior? Teacher educators might engage pre-service teachers in discussing how teachers can establish congruency between presenting behavioral expectations and building student–teacher relationships on the first day of a school year.

Like the previous episode, Paige refers to a "day one" roll-out of procedures for class attendance and Paige's initial disregard for this teacher raises questions about how teachers establish a positive learning environment.

~ I had Mr. K my freshman year for social studies. After day one, I hated him and tried to get transferred out. He expected silence and total respect. He called role every day and we had to say "present sir" or we were counted absent. Somewhere along the way, he became my favorite teacher. He wanted to teach us respect, he earned it. [Paige, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 99]

Because the two aforementioned episodes were written about pre-service teachers' self-selected teachers who demonstrated excellence, teacher educators might explore the "somewhere along the way" transition from a disliked to an admired "my favorite" teacher. What happened on day one that instilled negative impressions for both Kathy and Paige? Was it the teacher's demeanor, greetings, words and tone regarding the rules, or something else? Do initial negative impressions matter in the grand scheme of creating positive teacher/student relationships while establishing rules?

Again, in the following episode, Matthew highlights his teacher as a stern disciplinarian in contrast to the intent of the Assertive Discipline Model.

~ Ms. R wrote the book on rules. She was stern, disciplined and rarely smiled; yet, every child came back years later and thanked her. Sure, she quickly whipped me into shape, but I was not her favorite. I could never be as tough as her, but it worked for her. She was the eye in the hurricane of elementary children. [Matthew, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 14]

One might wonder how this stern teacher became Matthew's selection for excellence in teaching. Perhaps Matthew's reference to "she quickly whipped me into shape" suggests that Matthew retrospectively recognized his need for structure and acknowledged the teacher's efforts in meeting those needs. Nevertheless, he suggests an understanding of variability in how "tough" teachers can be and concedes that what works for one teacher may not work for another, including himself. Teacher educators might engage pre-service teachers in evaluating their capacity to be "tough" and explore how temperament relates to orchestrating classroom management strategies.

The following two excerpts reflect the positive intent of the Assertive Discipline Model to a greater extent than do the previous excerpts. They offer beliefs about caring teachers with friendly personal qualities who simultaneously firmly establish the structure for appropriate classroom functioning.

~ My fifth grade teacher was extremely personable and friendly, and at the same time he commanded the respect of his students. He gained respect in subtle ways by presenting clear objectives and always following through on punishments and rewards. [Stephanie, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 26]

Stephanie's excerpt includes the words "punishments" and "rewards" in contrast to the more acceptable word "consequences" as espoused in the updated version of the Assertive Discipline Model, suggesting that the teacher may have used words like "punishment" and "reward" when meting out consequences, or suggesting the common use of these terms in society and at home.

The pre-service teachers' use of these terms offers an opening for dialog about concepts, definitions, and appropriate terminology in classroom management philosophy.

~ He was an excellent high school teacher. It is difficult to explain why. I think it was because he cared so much for his students in a fatherly sort of way. He never had management problems for two reasons 1) he was kind but firm, and 2) his class was very interesting. Even though he was firm, it was obvious he cared about us. He knew exactly when to be lenient and when not to be. I hope to find that balance, and the ability to read students that he had. [Lily, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 115]

Lily highlights what could be seen as a dichotomy between a firm demeanor and an obviously caring one. Teacher educators and pre-service teachers might examine how "firm and caring" is manifested in a classroom. Caring is typically not a byproduct of being firm, and, if important to classroom management and relationships, teachers must figure out a way to deliberately finesse these behaviors.

In the following episode, Sarah focuses on what, in her mind, it must be like for new teachers on the first day of school.

~ The year that I was in her class was her first year of teaching. She had to be scared out of her mind the first day of class in a new school, but you would never have known it to see her walk into the classroom on that day. She stood boldly in front of the class calling role and we all knew right away who was in charge. Nobody was going to get away with anything as long as she was around. Now that I think back on those days, I can see just how much we needed that kind of structure. [Sarah, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 1]

Perhaps because she plans to be a teacher, Sarah's episode foreshadows the feelings that she anticipates when stepping into her own classroom for the first time. Sarah clearly recognizes the nature and value of structure in a classroom, and like Sarah, other pre-service teachers may struggle with the feeling "scared" while needing to "boldly" project the image of an "in charge" teacher who can build an essential structure that won't collapse.

One might wonder if other teachers who are likewise "scared" might overcompensate with a harsh demeanor early in the school year. Although Sarah did not make that observation, the earlier excerpts by Kathy and Paige offer insight into a teacher demeanor that may reflect overcompensation as a way to disguise fear. These insights open useful areas for conversations with pre-service teachers about teacher feelings, demeanor, and orchestrating classroom climate when presenting rules and procedures.

Elements of the Assertive Discipline Model (Canter, 1976, 1992), such as establishing rules, represented the most prevalent of classroom management strategies depicted in pre-service teachers' memories. Assertive Discipline is perhaps the most widely used model (Marzano, 2009), and thus students likely have consistent experience with these strategies in their school years even though they do not yet fully understand its theoretical underpinnings. Some excerpts related to Assertive Discipline suggested a discrepancy between establishing rules and the demeanor with which teachers first introduce those rules. While pre-service teachers acknowledged the importance of structure in the classroom, teacher educators might engage pre-service teachers in exploring how classroom structure and teacher–student relationships can both be effectively orchestrated as a school year begins.

4.2. Withitness

The Withitness and Group Management Model (Kounin, 1970) proposes that a teacher must regularly scan the classroom and be aware of student behavior and engagement at all times while simultaneously conducting a lesson. This is an acquired skill honed through experience, a skill that pre-service teachers may not readily recognize. Indeed, only one excerpt suggested the notion of withitness.

~ Mrs. U always came to school looking like she should work in the finest law firm ever. She also had the composure of steel. In accounting, we always had the guys who sat in the back and talked about everything but accounting, and regardless of how many times she told them to be quiet she never, ever raised her voice. Mrs. U always had a way of sort of smiling and saying that is enough. [Claire, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 125]

Claire acknowledged that Mrs. U was aware of the "guys in the back of the room," but the notion of a teacher being simultaneously aware of the entire classroom as well as the lesson content was incomplete in the breadth of its scope as a classroom management tool. While Claire observed her teacher's awareness of students in the back of the classroom, she also pointed out that her teacher had the "composure of steel" a critical element of managing a classroom from the Assertive Discipline Model which suggests that teachers deal calmly and quickly with misbehavior. Based on this excerpt, avenues for discussion in teacher education coursework include the challenges of remaining composed while provoked to frustration from misbehaving students.

4.3. Engaged and interested

In the following two excerpts, Kate and Mackenzie drew on their recollections of excellent teachers to suggest that discipline can be maintained and trouble reversed when students are kept busy and interested in learning activities.

~ One of the teachers I remember most growing up was my kindergarten teacher. Probably because it was my first experience with school and second because she was a patient and soft spoken teacher. She knew how to keep our interest. That's an important quality because it helped eliminate the need for discipline. [Kate, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 3]
~ I was what teachers might say – a very badly behaved student. I was on the honor roll every semester but I also was usually in some trouble. Then I came to be a student under Mrs. C. She saw that I really wasn't a bad kid, I was just bored. So, she started letting me help tutor other students, grade papers, and just keep busy. [Mackenzie, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 49]

These excerpts demonstrated that prior experience with elements of the Withitness and Group Management Model (Kounin, 1970) was incomplete. While Kate and Mackenzie recognized the strategy of maintaining interest to avoid discipline problems, their excerpts open the way for exploring a broader understanding of avoiding discipline problems. Teacher educators can build on this novice understanding by helping pre-service teachers recognize how developing student interest with variety in class activities can prevent discipline problems. Likewise, the Kounin model notion of keeping students interested and busy by transitioning smoothly from one activity to another was missing from pre-service teacher memories.

4.4. Building relationships

Glasser's Choice Theory Model (Glasser, 1986, 1990) purports to increase the chances that students will choose appropriate behavior when teachers meet students' needs for belonging, power, freedom, and fun. It emphasizes building relationships as the basis for effective classroom functioning. The following four excerpts provide openings to the concept of meeting student needs to prevent misbehavior.

~ She told us from day one that she always gets the best students in her classes. Throughout the year she reminded us of how smart we were and that we were capable of so much. This led many students (myself included) to do our best in her class because we knew she expected our best. I feel that she expressed this for a reason: so we would believe we were a good class and act accordingly – a self-fulfilling prophecy. [Natalie, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 60]

Natalie addresses the second tenet of Choice Theory by reflecting on how her teacher met the students' need for power in reminding the students that they were smart and capable.

~ High school is a hard time for students because there are so many self-esteem issues that come into play. When I was a sophomore, I had been suspended for the first four days of school. I was mortified. Mrs. R acknowledged my absence without scorn or judgment. She conferenced with me at various times and only displayed faith in my abilities. She often challenged me, and rewarded my efforts with praise and my failures with support and advice. [Kim, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 56]

In this excerpt, Kim recalls how her teacher met her need for belonging and power by avoiding scorn and judgment.

~ My high school English teacher recognized the rights of students to be respected, not treated as inferior or less important. He was very good at promoting discussion and exchange of ideas. He maintained control and discipline, but he also promoted an atmosphere that was conducive to expressing yourself. [Mariah, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 71]

By respecting students need for freedom of expression, Mariah recognized that effective classroom relationships helped the teacher maintain control and discipline.

~ Mrs. C was confident, yet never proud or boastful. A boy in my class who was just waiting to be 16 so he could drop out of school decided to finish out the last almost two years and graduate because of Mrs. C. She never took credit for that. She gave that credit to him because even though she helped him see that he could be successful, he was the one who made the decision. [Jade, Teacher Memories, 2007, p. 116]

While this teacher helped Jade's classmate, a potential drop-out, recognize that he could be successful, the teacher ultimately stepped back allowing the student freedom to make his own decision. Through these memories, related to the Choice Theory premise of meeting students' needs, pre-service teachers demonstrated an understanding that good teachers build mentoring relationships with students, avoid jumping to judgmental conclusions, and allow students opportunities for self-expression.

Pre-service teachers' memories did not reflect other strategies that comprise the broader Choice Theory Model (Glasser, 1986, 1990) such as formal class meetings to democratically establish classroom rules and procedures, the notion of a teacher as a lead manager rather than a boss manager, or the responsibility of students in choosing to control their own behavior. However, memories of teacher–student relationships based on meeting students needs allow a lead-in to discussions of how good relationships can be a foundation for teacher leadership and classroom democracy.

5. Implications

Written episodic memories offered a means for exploring pre-service teachers' understandings about excellent teachers. The current study specifically explored pre-service teachers' memories about classroom management. Such memories of specific past teachers have helped shape pre-service teachers' understanding about how to teach even before they enrol in teacher education (Levin & He, 2008; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006; Lortie, 1975, 2002). Because pre-service teachers' prior beliefs act as filters through which teacher education coursework is sifted (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Goodman, 1988), it is essential for teacher educators to facilitate a dialog with pre-service teachers that examines their memories and beliefs alongside accepted theories and methods of teaching.

In facilitating a dialog, teacher educators need to acknowledge pre-service teachers' memories and, in doing so, teacher educators will uncover beliefs that need to be systematically examined and discussed. Without such a dialog, it is possible for pre-service teachers to filter and sift information found in their teaching methods textbooks and to develop their future classroom management plan based more on their memories of past teachers' practices, both good and not so good, rather than on research-based strategies, concepts, and models disseminated in teacher education coursework.

According to Pajares (1992), unexplored beliefs may be responsible for the perpetuation of ineffective practices. On the other hand, Goodman (1988) found that most pre-service teachers are willing to consider alternative beliefs when their own beliefs are brought to light for exploration and analysis. More specific to classroom management, He and Levin (2008) found that pre-service teachers who participated in field experiences indicated that their evolving beliefs about classroom management were influenced by teacher preparation coursework. In other words, beliefs about teaching and classroom management can evolve and be impacted by teacher education coursework.

Teacher education coursework can be strengthened and teacher educators can avoid making unwarranted assumptions if they have an understanding of pre-service teachers' prior knowledge about classroom management. For example, the results of this study indicated that pre-service teachers understood the importance of establishing rules. Although pre-service teachers used the term *rules* in their narratives, there was no mention of the term *procedures* suggesting a gap in pre-service teachers' understanding about the distinction between these two concepts.

Further, there appeared to be inconsistent understandings about teacher demeanor in pre-service teachers' memories of how their teachers introduced the classroom rules and procedures. For example, several pre-service teachers described "mean" teachers, reminding me of the advice I received in my own teacher credentialing program 40 years ago, "don't smile until Christmas." If teacher educators no longer adhere to that advice, there needs to be clarity in what Assertive Discipline is intended to accomplish. The importance of establishing structure through rules and procedures must be discussed in the same context as building a positive classroom environment and extending friendly regard. Helping pre-service teachers learn how to accomplish these seemingly dichotomous goals in the classroom is a challenging but essential task in teacher education coursework. It cannot be easily side-stepped through textbook readings alone.

While pre-service teachers described their experiences with strategies included in the Assertive Discipline Model, particularly in terms of establishing rules, they revealed less experience and prior knowledge for understanding all the strategies included in the Withitness and Group Management Model or the Choice Theory Model. Perhaps this is because certain elements of the latter two models (e.g., smooth transitions; formal class meetings) are not as explicitly connected to the notion of classroom management as are elements of the Assertive Discipline Model (e.g., rules and structure), and thus may be less visible as part of a teacher's overall classroom management strategy. This highlights the need to determine gaps in pre-service teachers' prior knowledge in order

for teacher educators to fully explore with students all strategies and models that can inform their future practice.

How can teacher educators make effective use of pre-service teachers' episodic memory narratives? Episodic narratives provide a cognitive link between the past and the present. Based on past experience, pre-service teachers have a schema for classroom management that needs to be elicited and analyzed in the present. Eliciting pre-service teachers' beliefs through the use of episodic narratives offers a starting point for introducing concepts in teacher education coursework that is relevant to what pre-service teachers have experienced.

To help pre-service teachers internalize the less familiar classroom management strategies and models, as found in the current study, field experiences should require pre-service teachers to practice and then reflect on such classroom management strategies as withitness, effecting smooth transitions, formalizing classroom meetings, developing effective relationships, and offering regular choices in the classroom as ways to prevent discipline problems.

5.1. Future research

The current study did not specify topics for pre-service teachers to consider when writing their episodic memories, only that they select an excellent teacher about whom to write. To build on the current research, teacher educators might specifically prompt pre-service teachers to write episodic memories about the classroom management strategies of their past teachers. By focusing students on specific topics, such as classroom management, students will likely offer a broader range of prior knowledge for researchers to explore.

As teacher educators instruct pre-service teachers in accepted classroom management models, teacher educators carry out their work in the face of students who, guided by years of memories, filter coursework according to their experiences (Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Goodman, 1988). Understanding those experiences can provide teacher educators with the needed context for scaffolding and guiding pre-service teachers in acquiring the collective theories, specific strategies, and nuanced skills they need to successfully manage their own future classrooms.

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