

# Northwest Journal of Teacher Education

---

Volume 10  
Issue 1 *Northwest Passage: Journal of  
Educational Practices*

---

Article 6

January 2012

## “Community Building Makes it Nice for Everybody”?: Elementary Teachers’ Understandings and Practices of Classroom Management

Hillary Merk  
*University of Portland*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/nwjte>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

**Let us know how access to this document benefits you.**

---

### Recommended Citation

Merk, Hillary (2012) ““Community Building Makes it Nice for Everybody”?: Elementary Teachers’ Understandings and Practices of Classroom Management,” *Northwest Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 1 , Article 6.  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15760/nwjte.2012.10.1.6>

This open access Article is distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License \(CC BY-NC-SA 4.0\)](#). All documents in PDXScholar should meet [accessibility standards](#). If we can make this document more accessible to you, [contact our team](#).

---

## **“Community Building Makes it Nice for Everybody”?: Elementary Teachers’ Understandings and Practices of Classroom Management**

### **Abstract**

This qualitative research study explored elementary teachers’ understandings and practices of classroom management, particularly in regard to their own and students’ power, race, gender, and social class. In the first theme, the community building framework “makes it nice for everybody”, I work to understand how these white, middleclass teachers embrace this approach due to their race, gender, and class, which engender their desire for pleasantry. The second theme, “hard kids are hard kids”: a common sense ideology of difference, emerged from these teachers’ understandings of how race, gender, social class, and power influence student behavior and their classroom management practices.

### **Creative Commons License**



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

## **"Community Building Makes it Nice for Everybody"?: Elementary Teachers' Understandings and Practices of Classroom Management**

Hillary Merk  
University of Portland

### **Abstract**

*This qualitative research study explored elementary teachers' understandings and practices of classroom management, particularly in regard to their own and students' power, race, gender, and social class. In the first theme, the community building framework "makes it nice for everybody", I work to understand how these white, middle-class teachers embrace this approach due to their race, gender, and class, which engender their desire for pleasantry. The second theme, "hard kids are hard kids": a common sense ideology of difference, emerged from these teachers' understandings of how race, gender, social class, and power influence student behavior and their classroom management practices.*

### **Introduction**

Classroom management is a vital concern in schools for teachers, administrators, parents, and children (Duhaney, 2000; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Noguera, 1995; Townsend, 2000; Traynor, 2003; Ward, 1995). Teachers are concerned that without a solid classroom management foundation, instructional time will be spent on behavioral problems rather than academics (Hammond, Dupoux, & Ingalls, 2004), and student discipline problems are one reason teachers leave the profession (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; NCATE, 2005). Since academic accountability is at the forefront of educational reform, administrators view classroom management as a primary factor contributing to increased test scores, thereby meeting state and federal expectations (Noguera, 1995). Finally, parents and children have anxiety about teachers' classroom management skills because of safety concerns, due to incidents of school shootings and focus on bullying (Duhaney, 2000; Ward, 1995).

Classroom teachers believe that good classroom management is one of the most important prerequisites for their success as a teacher (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). For many practicing teachers, administrators, and teacher educators, classroom management is often understood as merely "techniques" that one learns over time, specific reactions to student behavior that have "worked" in the classroom to gain student compliance, and therefore, can simply be passed down from one teacher to the next. In other words, classroom management is simply a bag of tricks that allow teachers to have their own needs, demands, and goals met through control and compliance. Thus, because of the dominant assumption that classroom management is simply learned by doing rather than a "research-based set of principles, practices, and skills" (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 4), classroom management as a field of inquiry has been neglected by educational researchers (Brophy, 1988). For example, out of 3,000 presenters at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), only "two or three sessions are explicitly devoted to classroom management, and tend to be poorly attended"

(Evertson & Weinstein, 2006, p. 3). Further, a meager thirty-seven percent of education professors consider it absolutely essential to train teachers how to establish and keep discipline and order in the classroom.

Consequently, teachers' pedagogical knowledge of classroom management is given little attention in research (Borko & Putnam, 1996). Moreover, Garrahy, Cothran, and Kulinna (2005) found that even rarer in research are *teachers' voices* about the attainment of classroom management knowledge. Additionally, while statistics illustrate that disproportionate discipline rates do exist for African American males and low socioeconomic students (Gordon, 1998; Mrozowski, 2002), little research has been conducted that explores the role that teachers may play in these statistics. Although there has been a recent attempt to situate classroom management within the changing demographics of schools (Weinstein, Clarke, & Curran, 2003), there has been little research that has explicitly explored how teachers make sense of these changing demographics, specifically in regard to their understandings and practices of classroom management.

## Background to the Problem

In spite of the increased attrition rate of teachers due to classroom management problems (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; NCATE, 2005), the rapidly changing demographics of schools (Ladson-Billings, 2003), the disproportionate discipline rates of African American males (Gordon, 1998; Mrozowski, 2002), and general public concern for management in the classrooms, little research has been conducted to understand how teachers make sense of the role that race, gender, social class, and power play in their classroom management practices. Instead, dominant classroom management discourse generally describes teachers who demonstrate effective classroom management skills as those who “arrange the environment for learning, and maintain and develop student-appropriate behavior and engagement in the content” (Rink, 2002, p. 136). Strategies such as rewards and punishments are implemented in the same manner with all students in all contexts in order to develop and maintain “student-appropriate behavior” (Rink, 2002, p. 136). Surprisingly, even in light of the recent community building discursive shift in the field of classroom management, these dominant classroom management strategies remain teacher-centered. Further, dominant classroom management discourse lacks an understanding of how *teachers' identities* influence their classroom management philosophies and practices.

Finally, the majority of classroom management literature is not situated within a critical framework and offers readers more of a “how-to” discussion of classroom management and student behavior rather than an exploration of *why* and *how* teachers implement particular philosophies and practices in light of their own and their students' race, gender, and social class. Additionally, researchers have not given specific attention to exploring how power and dominant ideology operate in teachers' understandings and practices of classroom management. I focus specifically on elementary teachers due to my own elementary teaching experiences, and because the literature on “elementary classroom management is not a mature field situated within a disciplinary community that might give rise to a rigorous and substantial body of tightly reasoned scholarly texts and refereed research reports” (Carter & Doyle, 2006, p. 373).

Therefore, the problem this study explicitly addressed is the missing critical exploration of practicing elementary teachers' understandings and practices of classroom management, particularly in regard to their own and students' power, race, gender, and social class. This

research project generated qualitative interview and observational data to address these questions:

1. What are elementary teachers' understandings and practices of classroom management?
2. How do elementary teachers make sense of the role that race, gender, social class, and power play in these classroom management understandings and practices?

### **Theoretical Framework: Critical**

A critical theoretical framework guides this study as it addresses the ways in which reality is shaped for the participants by their economic, cultural, social, political, ethnic, historical, and gender values as well as institutional policies and practices (Dimitriadis & Carlson, 2003; Freire, 1988; Giroux, 1988; Gramsci, 1971; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003; Lewis, 2005; McLaren & Farahmandpur, 2003; Weiler, 1988). In addition, critical theory allowed to explore the ways that "privileged groups (i.e. white middle-class people, including myself) have an interest in supporting the status quo to protect our advantages" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003, p. 437). Therefore, dominant classroom management ideology is a "manifestation of the discourses and power relations of the social and historical contexts that produce" it (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003, p. 235). Teachers' understandings and practices of classroom management are socially constructed; context, power, and ideologies are all factors that must be taken into account when trying to describe and explain teachers' understandings and practices of classroom management in light of their own and students' race, gender, social class, and power.

To do this, I draw from both Critical Race Theory (CRT). Critical Race Theory assisted me in the exploration of the relationship between race, racism, and power (Brantlinger & Danforth, 2006; Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001; Delpit, 1995; Fine, 1991). I utilized CRT to explore the role that race and racism played in teachers' classroom management understandings and classroom management interactions. Critical Race Theory prepared me to critique the liberal progressive ideology of "race is something good people simply do not notice" (Guinier & Torres, 2002, p. 51), which was prominent at this school and articulated by my teacher participants. This liberal ideological framework adheres to the notion that "race talk" increases racial inequalities, and Critical Race Theory guided me in my critique of this notion of colorblindness and assisted me as I explored if colorblindness plays a role in the participants' understandings and practices of classroom management (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Delgado, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Nebeker, 1998).

Rather than understanding racism from a psychological view, described as simply a misperception or prejudice, I viewed racism "as a structural arrangement among racial groups" (Sleeter, 2005, p. 244). Thus, understanding the distribution of privilege and power gained from being white was explored in this study. For example, when asking teachers about disproportionate discipline rates in schools today, most defensively replied or directly avoided addressing this issue; thus, "when our social status is threatened, we tend to become even more conservative in order to protect our material gains" (Gordon, 1985, p. 37).

**Power.** Power must be understood as an "active process, one that is produced as part of a continually shifting balance of resources and practices in the struggle for privileging specific ways of naming, organizing, and experiencing social reality" (Giroux, 1988, p. 101). For example, the current federal emphasis on evidence based practices aligns with Giroux's (1994) argument that teacher education, and education as a whole, is about the use of techniques. Instrumental or technical rationality is one feature of contemporary society that critical theorists

believe causes continued oppression (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003). The notion of rationality is situated within how-to discourse to determine “techniques, procedures, and correct methods” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003, p. 438); methods and efficiency are valued over purpose. Dominant classroom management discourse is situated within this instrumental rationality and ignores the role that teachers’ and students’ identities play in the classroom. Dominant classroom management approaches, therefore, are based on characteristics (i.e. white middle-class) that are assumed to represent all students, ignoring gender, ethnic, and social class differences (Hammond, Dupoux, & Ingalls, 2004). For example, teachers often believe that strategies such as positive and negative reinforcement can provide rewards or punishments that are consistent with the needs of all students in order to gain compliance with classroom rules (Hammond, Dupoux, & Ingalls, 2004).

Although dominant classroom management literature claims to be preparing teachers to develop classroom communities where students are self-regulating and working together to promote classroom unity, the methods teachers are implementing remain controlling in nature partially due to “that accountability thing” as described by one first grade teacher. In light of the federally mandated high-stakes tests, it becomes apparent that current educational practices are more interested in methods and efficiency than in purpose (Giroux, 1994; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2003). Thus, the “recipe knowledge” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 42), which dominates classroom management literature, is a mechanism of power used to “control,” “reward,” or “punish” student behavior and to shape teachers’ understandings of appropriate classroom management. Moreover, it is assumed that the practice of reinforcement naturally facilitates behavior change; however, the teacher has the ultimate power to control, arrange, and monitor the environment to promote the behavior change (Alberto & Troutman, 2003).

Therefore, the critical project I work towards is suggested by Hytten (1999) who argues for practitioners to “interrogate the power dynamics behind the valuation of only certain forms of cultural capital and show how social institutions, the media, and schools often help reproduce, rather than challenge, inequitable social relations” (p. 530). Thus, this critical inquiry into teachers’ understandings and practices of classroom management assisted me in the exploration and understanding of hegemonic classroom management discourses.

### **Research Design and Methods**

A case study of teachers’ classroom management philosophies and practices in one multiracial elementary school was conducted to explore teachers’ understandings and practices of classroom management, particularly in regard to race, gender, social class, and power (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1994). A case study was employed to examine how elementary teachers make sense of classroom management in one social context and the complexity and interrelatedness of multiple factors rooted in this context (Glesne & Peshkin, 1991; LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Stake, 1994). Case study methodology was used to invite the readers into the everyday lives of the teachers as they make sense of and reason through classroom management pedagogy. Specifically, this research approach would help readers understand how elementary teachers within one school make sense of the role that race, gender, social class, and power play in their classroom management in order to initiate a more critical discourse within the field of classroom management.

I observed students and staff three to five days a week over a four month period. Field work included observations of teachers implementing classroom management pedagogy as well

as informal interviews with teachers on the playground, in the cafeteria, hallways, and teachers' lounge. Close to 450 hours were spent at Benton Elementary, and roughly 125 single-spaced, typed observational field notes were collected. A myriad number of hours were spent in the field to observe how my teacher participants practiced their classroom management understandings and explore how and when these teachers talked informally about race, gender, and social class, either with other staff members or me. In addition to informal interviews with and observations of teachers, I employed in-depth formal interviews with teachers and staff and collected school documents such as discipline records, academic materials, and school-wide management programs. The first round of interviews was guided by an interview protocol as well as field notes from informal conversations and classroom observations. In addition, a second round of interviews was conducted with the participants. This was designed to clarify any questions from the first interview, explain particular moments from observations, and allow the participant to correct any misinformation from the first round transcripts. For example, the following questions were used to help guide the second round of interviews: What new questions do I have for the teacher? Do the participants have questions? What have I miss? All participants in this study were female (7 Caucasian, 2 African American). Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis refers generally to anything the researcher does with the collection, management, and reporting of data (Wolcott, 1994). More specifically, analysis is the "systematic procedures followed in order to identify essential features and relationships" with the data (Wolcott, 1994, p. 24). After the first interview, observation, document collected, and/or personal anecdote was documented, the analysis began (Maxwell, 1996; Merriam, 1998). Daily, I read and reread each data source and reviewed my research questions and the purpose of my study in order to make personal notes about the data. I wrote reflective memos to document initial reactions to the data, emerging themes, and guidelines for the following observations and interviews (Merriam, 1998). Observational field notes, interview transcripts, and documents collected were compared to each other throughout the data collection process. I searched through the data for commonalities and patterns as well as topics my data covered and designated words or phrases to label each pattern or topic (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I continued to compare incidents from observations or comments from teachers with each other in order to explore similarities and differences among the data (Merriam, 1998). I used constant comparison in order to chunk the data into meaning units.

The constant comparison method allowed for me to look for patterns across the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). The chunks were coded according to overarching commonalities illustrated in the data. As I coded the data, I looked for connections and disjunctures between teachers' practices and understandings, in order to attempt to understand how classroom management is multidimensional. Also, a matrix was made to sort out and place findings into meaning units, or categories. This display of data offered me a clearer picture of the teachers' understandings of classroom management, because I was able to make note of the frequency of events, commonalities, and differences among data (Merriam, 1998). As I continued to collect data, code, and write, I collapsed categories together to form large themes that later served as a tool for writing up the analysis.

### **Community Building Approach Makes it Nice for Everybody?**

In theme one, I explore how these community building practices appeared to "make it nice" for the *teacher* and not necessarily all students. Although, these Benton Elementary

teachers aim to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their highest academic achievement by starting the school year with firm classroom rules and expectations for behavior, I observed how this community building approach to classroom management remains teacher-centered, with a traditional style of solving classroom management incidents. Thus, I ascertained that these teachers embraced the relationship building approach for their own purposes; “building peer relationships” was code for an attempt to gain classroom control by “knowing who works well together.”

**Community building makes it nice for the teacher.** To explore how the supposedly student-centered, community discourse is simply a means for developing controlling, teacher-centered classroom management practices, I draw from observational notes along with interview excerpts and weave in theory to demonstrate that the community building approach to effective classroom management is simply behaviorism re-titled with a progressive-sounding name. Although teachers believe they are developing collaborative learning communities, and they trust that their practices are fostering such environments, their use of progressive language such as democratic and community, does not match their classroom management practices. Consequently, these participants’ practices in the classroom setting did not directly align with their understandings of what constitutes a student-regulated, community approach to successful classroom management. Although a few teachers said they were trying not to be “overly dominant,” they were constantly seeking control of their students during instruction by using clapping patterns, counting down, and raising their hand in the air in effort to gain student attention, all of which are re-titled behavioristic techniques. Thus, it appears that the community building framework remains teacher-centered and does not take into account individual student’s needs and the possible role that student’s background plays in behavior or a teacher’s responses to behavior.

Throughout the year, the following examples were recorded as various ways these Benton Elementary teachers reinforced students to display socially appropriate behavior by offering “a lot of upfront teaching.”

(Teacher singing) “Ch, Ch-Ch, Ch, Ch-Ch,” is the signal for the students to gather on the carpet. Class sings and moves around stretching and warming up for the day (First grade, field notes).

Snap two times and students are to put their finger in the air to “sky write it.”

5 clap repeat is used to get eyes on teacher (First, second, sixth grade, field notes).

Further, Barbara implements numerous verbal and non-verbal “tricks” to teach students how to move about the classroom and follow her directions, and the following field note illustrates the success of her strategies.

The students are able to move in and about the classroom pretty freely. They are to use a sign language signal for the bathroom when they need to go. Works pretty effectively. Seems like less “control” and more freedom. After about 10 minutes of work time at the centers, she shakes a rattle thing and the kids are silent and still. She is going over the task and the room is quiet momentarily (First grade, field notes).

Although these well-intentioned teachers attempted to create a classroom environment that embraced group processes and active learning, the underlying political and epistemological implications of this community building approach to classroom management were ignored. For example, a focus on individualism permeates the community building framework, in that each student is responsible for their own success or failure (academic and behavioral), and the



function of schooling is not examined. For example, in the Benton Elementary School Management plan, teachers are to:

Acknowledge that *self-discipline* is the culmination of a process that takes years to accomplish. The major goal at Benton is to help children assume increasing responsibility for their behavior and to accept the consequences which follow *their* actions (Benton school documents).

According to the American Dream, *choosing* to get a quality education facilitates social mobility toward middle-class status. Competition is often a "trick" used within these teachers' classrooms to help students make better behavior choices; however, when students are uninterested in the "prize" granted after the competition, do not see the benefits of competing, or see that their failure is inevitable, then this strategy often results in some students "tuning out." Therefore, meritocratic schooling inevitably separates students along race/ethnicity and social class lines (West, 1997). For example, this teacher states, "In fact I tell the kids this, 'you know if you want to tune out that's your business'" (C. Holt, personal communication); thus, it is the *students'* fault that they fall behind academically.

The focus on individualism, self-regulation, and meritocracy writ large shaped this classroom management discursive shift (Pruitt, 2004). Promoting self-regulation perpetuates the ideological hold of educational meritocracy; after all, most white middle-class people "believe that meritocracy must be real because it has always rewarded their hard work" (Pruitt, 2004, p. 236). A critical approach is used to explore how and why these well-intentioned teachers' community building classroom management practices appeared to be contradictory to their understandings and the progressive-sounding goals this framework claims. Central to the contradictory understandings and practices of these teachers was a *common sense ideology of difference*.

### **"Hard Kids are Hard Kids": A Common Sense Ideology of Difference**

The second portion of my analysis, a common sense ideology of race, gender, social class, and power, emerged from the data as the foundation for these teachers' community building framework. I hope to demonstrate how this common sense ideology of difference is non-threatening and comfortable, particularly for white middle-class female teachers to use and embrace, and thus, it makes it nice for them. For example, they often replaced the term "race" with "culture" or ignored both and believed that "family background" was the most influential factor to their classroom management understandings.

I think the only thing that might be different is how I talk to their parents about the problem. Because different parents react differently. But I think that a lot more has to do with the parents (Field notes).

The focus on "family background," however, "displaces a discussion of the increasingly gender- and race-shaped class hierarchy, shifting the focus from economic well-being to family structure" (Bettie, 2003, p. 6). This class and race hierarchy was illustrated in the demographics of those "written up" for behavior disturbances at Benton. These teachers believe that "because the students do not have the structure at home," *they* are at fault for misbehavior, not the structures of schooling. In both explanations, she situates the problem according to students' ascribed characteristics; these "natural" characteristics often require Benton teachers to do "a lot of up front teaching" in order for students to display "positive school behaviors."

Sometimes I think it has a lot of the discipline rates have to do with the achievement gap.

You know boys do not achieve quite as well in schools, anyway so then you add on the African American discrepancy too and they get even more frustrated and use more attention getting behavior to get out of work or whatever (M. Burke, personal communication).

She attributes the disproportionate discipline rates to low achieving boys, and to the racial stereotype of African American boys assumed to embody more “attention getting behaviors” so they may “get out of work.” The Benton teachers believe that they have to “kind of culturalize them for schools, or schoolize them or something like that of the expectations because a lot of them don’t have those at home” (M. Burke, personal communication). However, only certain groups, of what Meredith referred to as the “cliente,” needed “culturalized or schoolized.” What is problematic about this “code” language such as, “cliente” that do “not have the structure at home,” often means for white teachers, students of color and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Um...I think that hard kids are hard kids... and, um I definitely don’t think that I am harder...um, on you know, one group than the other (C. Holt, personal communication). However, throughout my time in their classrooms, it was evident that when they responded and how they responded varied from student to student. At one end of the continuum was an immediate response such as an exit from the group or classroom, and at the opposite end was a complete overlook of the misbehavior since some students “generally don’t misbehave” (S. Albert, personal communication).

Students are to find a “silent” spot to work on their writers’ workshop.

(African American boy) “You said we could choose where we want to sit.”

“I choose because I want you to sit here. You are not working well with him today. You need to stop arguing with me” (Second grade, field notes).

Although these Benton teachers generally avoided talking specifically about how race influenced their classroom management practices, and referred to socioeconomic background instead, they were able to discuss their understandings of the influence of gender, and their practices were reflective of these understandings: “I think that, when you have a high percentage of boys in your classroom it is very very noticeable (ha ha)” (Field notes).

The boys sometimes have troubles with that (self-control), they are very impulsive... You know, they think it...do it. They are just more action oriented (M. Burke, personal communication).

Boys were seen as “rambunctious” and “impulsive,” and consequently, these teachers believed they needed to quickly intervene in any potential misbehavior situation. Girls’ behaviors, however, were often those that fell under the “rudeness” or “calling people names” category, or relational in nature. For example, girls were understood to “fall in line better,” and thus, they were often given compliments for “doing the right thing,” were given more opportunities to correct their own behavior, and received less behavior interventions.

“I am looking for people ready to listen” (4 girls are pointed out as listening).

“Everyone at the yellow table is working quietly” (all girls are sitting at this table).

“I love the way you three girls are on-task.”

The orange table is thanked for “not talking” (all girls).

(Second grade, field notes).

Thorne (1993) critiques this “different cultures” approach by stating, “it collapses ‘a play of differences that is always on the move’ (in Edward Snow’s phrase) into static and exaggerated dualisms” (p. 126). For example, within the community building framework, teachers are

prepared to ignore minor misbehaviors, those they typically labeled as behaviors girls exhibited, and intervene immediately when a "student is taking away from others' learning," which was understood as a time when a student is being "rambunctious and loud," or behaviors boys often illustrate. The preconceived notions of students' behavior that these teachers held, "with girls it's that, snippy, sneaky, girl thing" and the boys "just kind of get mad and it's over," questions the possibility of a true "sex-equitable" classroom.

## Conclusion

I learned that Benton teachers' classroom management discourse rests on a common sense ideology of difference that is comfortable for teachers (particularly white middle-class females), because it provides teachers with space to avoid race (by hiding under the language of "culture or socioeconomic status"), but also provides them space to locate gender dynamics in classroom management as natural and permanent differences among the students. Within this community building framework, teachers adopt technical classroom management strategies that are deeply embedded in *common sense* ideologies of difference that focus on "efficiency and control" rather than critique (Giroux, 1988, p. 4). A "treating all students the same" approach does not appear to be working in light of this school's disproportionate discipline rates as well as those throughout the country.

As the demographics of schools are rapidly changing (Ladson-Billings, 2003), and the disproportionate discipline rates of African American males are not only present at this school, but also appear across the United States (Gordon, 1998; Mrozowski, 2002), it becomes clear that the interrogation of race, gender, social class, and power is needed within dominant classroom management ideology in general, and this community building framework specifically. In this study, it appears that because of the discursive shift from "classroom discipline" to "classroom management" to "classroom community," there should also an ideological and pedagogical shift. However, teacher-centered practices geared toward specific "clientele" appear to be implemented at Benton; as opposed to the community framework that claims to work *with students* to solve classroom incidents.

This research works to extend the culturally responsive discourse (Gay, 2002; Weinstein, Clarke, & Curran, 2004) by infusing a critical theoretical perspective of race, gender, social class, and power into the classroom management discourse. Therefore, in order to identify and critique how hegemonic dominant ideology, social stratification, and power influence teachers' classroom management understandings and practices, and students' academic and behavioral outcomes, this study initiates a more critical discussion of classroom management in an effort to eliminate the disproportionate rates of African American males. Thus, the hope is that a continued discussion takes place that addresses: for what and whose purpose does dominant classroom management ideology serve? And, who benefits and how?

## Limitations

Classroom management has multiple layers. It is not simply about having control of the environment to ensure the safety of the students. It entails knowing yourself as a teacher, understanding who your students are, and having effective, meaningful, and engaging pedagogy. That is why it is essential to explore each layer of classroom management in order to help pre-service and practicing teachers gain an understanding of how to determine what constitutes

effective classroom management in their classroom; this type of endeavor was beyond the scope of this study. I did not specially attend to the academic facets (culturally responsive teaching, Benton's curriculum, and teachers' pedagogy in general) of classroom management; these are necessary to better understand how academic pedagogy and race, gender, social class, and power impact classroom management discourse and practices. I believe that another limitation to this study is that I was often *negatively* "critical" of these teachers' understandings and practices. I questioned many of the practices they were implementing; however, I implemented many as a teacher myself. I often overlooked the accountability of teaching in this reform age, and that academically productive, controlled classrooms often equates to job security; being critical of their own practices that "work" is often not a financial option for them. Thus, social, economic, and political institutions policies and practices shaped how these teachers understood and practiced classroom management pedagogy.

### References

- Alberto, A. P., & Troutman, C. A. (2003). *Applied behavior analysis for teachers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Bettie, J. (2003). *Women without class: Girls, race, and identity*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) New York, NY: Pearson Education Group, Inc.
- Borko, H., & Putnam, R. T. (1996). Learning to teach. In D.C. Berliner & R.C. Calfee (Eds.), *Handbook of educational psychology* (pp. 673-708). New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Brantlinger E., & Danforth, S. (2006). Critical theory perspective on social class, race, gender, and classroom management. In C. M. Everston & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 157-179). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Brophy, J. (1988). Educating teachers about managing classrooms and students. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 4, 1-18.
- Carter, K., & Doyle, W. (2006). Classroom management in early childhood and elementary classrooms. In C. M. Everston & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 373-406). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Crenshaw, K., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (1995). *Critical race theory: The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: The New York Press.
- DeCuir, J. T., & Dixon, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher*, 26-30.
- Delgado, R., & Stefaniec, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York: New York University Press.
- Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children*. New York, NY: New York Press.
- Dimitriadis, G., & Carlson, D. (2003). *Promises to keep: Cultural studies, democratic education, and public life*. New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

- Duhaney, L. M. G. (2000). Culturally sensitive strategies for violence prevention. *Multicultural Education*, 7, 10-17.
- Evertson, C. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (2006). Classroom management as a field of inquiry. In C. M. Everston & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 3-15). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Fine, M. (1991). *Framing dropouts: Notes on the politics of urban public high school*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.
- Freire, P. (1988). In H. A. Giroux: *In Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. New York, NY: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc.
- Garrahy, D. A., Cothran, D. J., & Kulinna, P. H. (2005). Voice from the trenches: An exploration of teachers' management knowledge. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99, 59-65.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53, 106-123.
- Giroux, H. A. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. New York: Bergin & Garvey Publishers, Inc.
- Giroux, H. A. (1994). *Between borders: Pedagogy and politics of cultural studies*. New York: Routledge.
- Gordon, B. M. (1985). Teaching teachers: "Nation at risk" and the issue of knowledge in teacher education. *The Urban Review*, 17, 33-46.
- Gordon, R. (1998). *Education and race: A journalist's handbook*. New York, NY: Applied Research Center.
- Glesne, C., & Peshkin, A. (1991). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction*. White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Gramsci (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. In Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith (Eds.). New York, NY: International Publishers.
- Guinier L., & Torres, G. (2002). *The miner's canary: Enlisting race, resisting power, transforming democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hammond, H., Dupoux, E., & Ingalls, L. (2004). Culturally relevant classroom management for American Indian students. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 23, 3-9.
- Hyttén, K. (1999). The promise of cultural studies of education. *Educational Theory*, 49, 527-543.
- Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2003). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: theories and issues*. (pp. 433-488). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2003). *Critical race theory perspective on Social studies: The profession, policies, and curriculum*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97, 47-69.
- LeCompte, M. D., & Preissle, J. (1993). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic.
- Lewis, A. (2005). *Race in the schoolyard: Negotiating the color line in classrooms and communities*. Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

- Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- McLaren, P., & Farahmandpur, R. (2003). The globalization of capitalism and the new imperialism: Notes toward a revolutionary critical pedagogy. In G. Dimitriadis & D. Carlson (Eds.), *Promises to Keep: Cultural studies, democratic education, and public life* (pp. 39-76). New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mrozowski, J. (2002). *Suspension rate higher for black pupils here: Out of proportion to population*. The Cincinnati Enquirer, March 2002.
- National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2005). Quantity over quality: Teacher turnover is the issue. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncate.org/public/QuantityQuality.asp?ch=48>
- Nebeker, K. C. (1998). Critical race theory: A white graduate student's struggle with this growing area of scholarship. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2, 25-41.
- Noguera, P.D. (1995). Preventing and producing violence: A critical analysis of responses to school violence. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65, 189-212.
- Pruitt, L. P. (2004). The achievement (K)not: Whiteness and "black underachievement". In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. P. Pruitt, & A. Burns (Eds.), *Off white: Readings on power, privilege, and resistance* (pp. 236-244). New York: Routledge.
- Rink, J. E. (2002). *Teaching physical education for learning*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Sleeter, C. E. (2005). How white teachers construct race. In C. McCarthy, W. Crichlow, G. Dimitriadis, & N. Dolby (Eds.), *Race, identity, and representations in education* (pp. 243-256). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Stake, R. E. (1994). *Case studies*. In N. K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 236-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.
- Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Townsend, B. (2000). The disproportionate discipline of African American learners: Reducing school suspensions and expulsions. *Exceptional Children*, 66, 381-391.
- Traynor, P. L. (2003). Factors contributing to teacher choice of classroom order strategies. *Education*, 123, 586-602.
- Ward, J. V. (1995). Cultivating a morality of care in African American adolescents: A culture-based model of violence prevention. *Harvard Educational Review*, 65, 175-188.
- Weiler, K. (1988). *Women teaching for change: Gender, class and power*. Bergin & Garvey Publishers.
- Weinstein, C. S., Curran, M., & Tomlinson-Clarke, S. (2003). Culturally responsive classroom management: Awareness into action. *Theory into Practice*, 41, 269-276.
- Weinstein, C. S., Tomlinson-Clarke, S., & Curran, M. (2004). Toward a conception of culturally responsive classroom management. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55, 25-38.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data: Description, analysis, and interpretation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication.