

Classroom Management Culminating Signature Assignment:

Management Theorist Review

Sarah Fullerton

Arizona State University

Introduction

In completing five Antecedent-Behavior-Consequence (ABC) Observations in high school classrooms ranging from tenth to twelfth grade, the overwhelming majority of noted behaviors were behaviors that functioned to gain attention. The most common secondary hypothesis for the function of the behavior was boredom. Due to the high normalization of observed behaviors among three different class samplings with two separate teachers, it seems likely that the underlying reason behind these attention-seeking and boredom-avoiding behaviors are the similarities between the settings themselves. In all five observations the students remained at their desks for the entirety of the class period. Both teachers used lecture-style teaching where they stood in front of the class, doling out information. Though both teachers used class discussion at some point, the discussions either failed or were highly unstructured and resulted in the highest amount of incidences of misbehavior in the classroom. There were five theorists that stood out as being the most applicable to the specific behaviors and classroom settings noted in the ABC Observations: Jacob Kounin, Spencer Kagan, William Glasser, Harry and Rosemary Wong, and Marvin Marshall. Though some of the theorists' approaches overlap, they generally complement each other by looking at specific aspects of classroom management to achieve the over-arching goal of an effective learning environment.

Jacob Kounin

Perhaps the most useful theorist for general behavior management in high school is Jacob Kounin. An educational psychologist, he set out to study and establish the common qualities of outstanding teachers (Charles, 2011, p. 66). He found three determining factors in teachers that effectively manage student behavior: engaging lessons, student involvement and accountability, and classroom "withitness" (Charles, 2011, p. 67). The most glaring deficiency in many high

school classrooms is the lack of these engaging lessons. An alarmingly large amount of high school classrooms rely solely on lecture-style teaching. Although fun and interesting projects are peppered in and some classrooms allow students to provide feedback in a more relaxed atmosphere than a formal lecture hall, the teacher still stands at the front of the room imparting knowledge upon their students. The teacher does all the work and holds all the authority, giving little credence to students' prior knowledge and insights and therefore limiting their active involvement and accountability. Students are relegated to listening and taking notes, or more likely finding something else more entertaining (such as their phones, their neighbors, etc.). This was a large problem in "Roman's" classroom: though the song analysis assignment they were completing was interesting, the music selections were all outdated and the teacher provided no connections to the students' lives. When the students moved on to a literature discussion, hardly any students participated and so the teacher "gave up" on the discussion. Instead of providing structure for the discussion so all students were participating and held accountable for their contributions, the teacher went and sat behind her desk, leaving the students to their own devices. Jacob Kounin would advocate for classroom reform in this situation: though having a zero hour class full of seniors during second semester is implicitly difficult, the teacher needs to be more aware of her classroom and her students' needs, demonstrating "withitness" by monitoring lesson momentum, smoothness, and student "satiations" levels (Charles, 2011, p. 67). Kounin would say that when one approach does not work, it is time to try another! Making the classroom less teacher-centric and more student-centered (especially since her students are Seniors in high school) would immediately improve student behaviors like Roman's, namely inattention, side conversations, and lack of participation.

Spencer Kagan

One way to make a classroom more engaging and student-centered is to use cooperative structures for learning. Spencer Kagan—a pioneer in observing and manipulating the “interaction patterns” of children—has developed over two hundred “Kagan Structures” that provide specific roles and procedures for students’ group work, such as Think-Pair-Share, Mix-Pair-Share, RoundRobin, and Team Interview (Kagan Publishing, 2012, par. 8). In this way, each student holds accountability for his/her participation because it specifically built into the structure of the activity. When used repeatedly in a classroom, students internalize the procedures and expectations for cooperative learning and “know” how to participate in class. At this point students become more self-directed and the teacher will have the ability to move around the classroom and observe students to better gauge their understanding and needs (increased teacher “withitness”). Roman would no longer be able to “fly under the radar” in the back of the classroom during every period. And perhaps—with the use of a more engaging style of instruction—he will no longer want to. Like Kagan claims, when these structures are implemented in instruction the resulting “active student engagement gets straight to the root of the problem in many classrooms” (Kagan Publishing, 2012, par. 5). If students are involved in and enjoying their classwork, they will not be bored and seek out alternative means of entertainment.

William Glasser

One of the major differences between behavior management at the middle school level and at the high school level is a large shift in perspective about misbehavior. Middle school relies heavily on management strategies and engaging instruction because it is implied that students have short attention spans and poor impulse control. If you give them the time and

opportunity to act out, it is assumed that they will. At the high school level, this is very different. High schools appear to align with William Glasser, a proponent of behavior as choice: “the only person whose behavior we can control is our own,” he states (Glasser Institute, 2010, par. 7). So, instead of assuming that instruction or management is to blame, high school teachers seem to believe that students explicitly decide to misbehave for various ends. For example, “Monaco” acts out in class by dancing around, being rowdy at her desk, etc. in order to gain attention from her classmates, and this behavior is “typical” for her. This also aligns with Glasser’s theories, specifically that “[people] are driven by our genes to satisfy five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom and fun” (Glasser Institute, 2010, par. 1). However, the teacher’s response in ignoring Monaco’s behaviors is not part of Glasser’s “Choice Theory” and “Seven Caring Habits.” Instead, Glasser would recommend finding some way to give Monaco the attention that she needs from her peers, such as incorporating group work (like cooperative learning) and movement often, or developing a more personal, supportive relationship with her in order to meet her basic needs for love and belonging and fun.

Harry and Rosemary Wong

Although their strategies at times may seem somewhat elementary, Harry and Rosemary Wong specifically define three characteristics of an effective teacher in their book *The First Days of School* (2005) and being an effective teacher is quintessential regardless of student age. The second characteristic of the three is classroom management, and Harry Wong (2005) iterates numerous times that “students must know from the very beginning how they are expected to behave and work in a classroom work environment” (p. 170). Harry and Rosemary Wong favor teacher preparation and preventative measures (versus reactionary discipline), and establishing classroom expectations is crucial. In order to achieve this, a teacher needs to be “introducing,

teaching, modeling, and rehearsing” classroom procedures from day one (Wong & Wong, 2005, p. 175). An important procedure to establish for the first period honors sophomore class that includes Cambria and Trebuchet would be how to run class discussions. Dominating the discussion and rude or inappropriate outbursts would not be tolerated. In order to make this type of discussion the norm, the teacher should follow Harry Wong’s (2005) three steps for teaching procedures: explaining, rehearsing, and reinforcing (p. 174). After explaining the parameters of class discussion and practicing class discussions in which respectful behavior is reinforced, eventually an orderly class discussion will be habit.

Marvin Marshall

One genuine plus in the high school classroom observations was the relationship between teachers and students. The teachers generally had positive attitudes about their students and classes (with the exception of Mrs. Remus’s zero hour class) and liked to interact with them outside of instruction. Most teachers were also willing to instruct tangentially to some degree, allowing students to take the lead in where activities, such as class discussions, would go. Marvin Marshall, an experienced teacher and management theorist, would agree with this approach because of the positive relationship it fosters between teacher and students. He compares teachers to salesmen, saying, “[T]eachers market information. Note that people don’t ‘buy’ from someone they don’t like—and this includes students. Even the slowest salesperson knows enough not to alienate the prospective customer (Marshall, 2013, par. 7). By building a relationship with students through the use of non-punitive discipline based on expectations and responsibilities—not rules—Marshall asserts that students will learn to exercise self-direction, self-control, and personal responsibility. The paradigm shift away from classroom rules follows Marshall’s (2013) beliefs that “positivity is more effective than negativity,” teachers should

“empower rather than overpower” their students,” and they should “promote responsibility” (par. 10). Teachers should always try to stimulate students’ own internal motivation to act and behave in positive ways instead of coercing them to do so. Mrs. Winters’s classrooms mirrored Marshall’s thinking in a few ways, in that she did not have rules for the students and instead had expectations and responsibilities. However, she also did not have set procedures in her classroom for common activities such as discussions. Marshall (2013) describes teaching procedures as “the essence of good classroom management,” since a teacher cannot assume that students already know what teachers want them to do (par. 13). Referring back to Harry and Rosemary Wong, Mrs. Winters should create and teach procedures for her class discussions to prevent outbursts from students like Monaco and Cambria or discussion domination from students like Trebuchet.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the common threads among these five management theorists are establishing procedures and teaching expectations, utilizing engaging instruction methods, and developing a positive relationship with students through compassion and understanding. All of these things lend themselves to proactive classroom management, instead of reactive (or ignoring behaviors). The definitive goal—particularly at the high school level in which the students are young adults about to graduate and enter college or the work force—is not to force conformity with rules but to have students act appropriately of their own accord.

References

Charles, C.M. (2011). *Building classroom discipline*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

Kagan Publishing and Professional Development (2012). About us. Retrieved from

http://www.kaganonline.com/about_us.php

Marshall, M. (2013). Rules vs. procedures. Retrieved from <http://www.marvinmarshall.com/>

[rules-vs-procedures/](http://www.marvinmarshall.com/rules-vs-procedures/)

The William Glasser Institute (2010). The Glasser approach. Retrieved from <http://wglasser.com/>

[the-glasser-approach](http://wglasser.com/the-glasser-approach)

Wong, H.K., & Wong, R.T. (2005). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher*.

Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications, Inc.