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Honors 401 Thesis

“My Way or the Highway: The Development and Use of Behavior Management and School Discipline”

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### **Abstract**

Behavior management is a crucial topic in education. The management of student behavior in a classroom can affect the entire learning experience. As the needs of students and teachers change, the methods of behavior management adapt to accommodate new needs. This thesis identifies behavior management starting in the 1960's and research determining its effectiveness. The causes of change in classroom and school-wide discipline systems are addressed, including political climates, court involvement, and tragic events within schools. The behavior management methods used in the current day are discussed. Through a review of literature and online sources, the information provided was gathered and analyzed. Little empirical research existed backing any of the topics discussed. Individual classroom and school-wide behavior plans were not often supported with data. Rather, personal opinions of teachers and administrators made up the majority of information regarding success or failure of these systems. An increase in empirical data gathered in research settings is needed to fully determine the effectiveness of behavior management methods used in classrooms and school-wide. Teacher training in research backed systems is also imperative. Teachers lacking this training struggle to provide students with a positive and effective education.

Keywords: Behavior Management, School Discipline, Behavior Development

### **Introduction**

The term "behavior management" is commonly heard in education. Similar in meaning to behavior modification, it has been developed to represent an idea of managing classroom behavior. One set procedure for perfect behavior management does not exist, but several educators and authors have volunteered their thoughts on the idea and what successful behavior management entails. Though a concrete definition may be missing, S. A. Raver explained the purpose of behavior management quite fluently saying it "...is to assist young children in

displaying behaviors that are conducive to learning and to teach social behaviors that are appropriate for home and school settings” (“Principles of Behavior Management”). The words “behavior management” describe the process of guiding students to exhibit desired behaviors and be rid of unwanted or disruptive behaviors in order to maintain a working order in the classroom. It is most commonly referred to in these terms when discussing education, but can be applied in any field where behavior expectations exist. Places of business hold strict expectations for the behavior of their employees.

A classroom is similar to a small business. Every student comes from a different home and upbringing with different values and experiences. They each have their own set of opinions and views of what is right and wrong. Often they each have their own jobs within the greater structure as well. Just as a business has rules and policies to keep order, a classroom must as well. The teacher acts as the CEO of the business, ensuring the students well-being while spreading knowledge and enforcing the rules. The students are the employees who work under the guidance of the CEO to show growth and development in their personal skills and for the company, or classroom, as a whole. Without the rules and policies, the expectations for behavior are nonexistent. Negative behaviors, such as late arrivals, interrupting the instructor, and poor treatment of others, would bear no consequence. Under those circumstances, a company could not function, let alone thrive. Behavior management is put into place to allow classrooms to function with a safe and nurturing environment and mutual respect among teachers and students, as well as students and their peers.

Behavior management today has grown and developed over many decades, and encompassed numerous methods and systems. Psychology and human studies played a great part in the formation of behavior management and continue to affect its evolution. The work of B.F.

Skinner and Carl Rogers exposed methods of manipulating behavior to become socially acceptable. Although punishment was the main method of managing behavior for over a century, that is not the main aspect of the current movement. The concept has grown to incorporate any actions taken to achieve desired behaviors and remove those behaviors that are undesired. That includes reinforcements for positive behaviors. Reinforcements, or rewards for sought after behaviors, encourage students to repeat those behaviors. Negative or unwanted behaviors should decrease, as desired behaviors increase, due to rewards given. Previously, the only way to control students and keep them focused was through assigning negative consequences for disliked behaviors. Originating with corporal punishment, the use, or abuse, of discipline has changed greatly over the years as well. Punishment has taken a backburner in most classrooms today, as teachers attempt to prevent situations where it would be necessary from occurring. Behavior management is most often a preventative concept, which strives to remove all negative or explosive behavior in the classroom, therefore, removing the need for punishment as a part of discipline.

Interwoven with the ways managing behavior was altered, are the reasons why it changed. Court cases, lawsuits, and legislation are powerful movements that leave lasting effects on the community around them and, occasionally, the world. *Brown vs. Board of Education* was one such case. It ruled that the separation of students by race did not allow them an equal education or safety in schools. In addition, it was the main cause for the abolishment of segregation by race in constitutional sanctions (“History”). Similar lawsuits may have occurred that altered behavior management in schools. In addition, changing philosophies about education and how to teach differ from classroom to classroom. Political agendas or affiliations may have caused shifts in the behavior management seen in schools today as well. Scientific discoveries,

and psychological studies bring the workings of the body and mind to light and add to the knowledge base available. In turn, new systems and theories to manage behavior are brought about. The catalysts of revision in education are vast and diverse, but have collectively molded behavior management into the practice it is today.

As a student working to become a licensed Elementary teacher, I have seen numerous methods and systems of behavior management put to use in several different classrooms. Each classroom had a different instructor, different students, different age groups, and showed different results with each system. Such diversity in the practice of behavior management and the outcomes made me curious. First, the vast number of different behavior management techniques I saw piqued my interest. In three elementary classrooms, combinations of more than seven different methods were used to manage behavior. One classroom alone used at least four. What really fascinated me was that several classes in different schools used the same or similar techniques. This led me to wonder what the most common types of behavior management were on a larger scale and what leads to the success of behavior management in the individual classroom.

While witnessing multiple teachers use so many different methods of behavior management, another thought struck me. Multiple teachers in one school are using the same technique to manage behavior in their classroom. That must mean it works. I began to ponder what techniques proved to be the most effective for managing behavior in a classroom and brought out the desired behaviors best. Following that thought, more questions kept flowing. The question that intrigued me the most came in this stream as well. "Is there any correlation between the effectiveness of a behavior management technique and how commonly it is used?" Are teachers taking advantage of methods that really work?

Diving head first into the sea of knowledge available, I consulted books, webpages, scholarly journals, research articles and more hoping to find answers to my multitude of questions. Case studies and court cases proved more appropriate when discussing the cause of change in behavior management over the years. Some examples relate to violence and discipline in schools, and changing school structure. Web sources provided information clarifying the political movements that coincided with times of change in education. Text explaining behavior management's uses and implementation, in the elementary and secondary levels, were consulted to compare the design of different methods and their effectiveness when possible. Written by teachers, professors, principals, and psychologists, these texts represented several angles and philosophies about behavior management and the common aspects held by those in different, but related, fields. In addition, they identified the behaviors that foster learning and are expected to be shown in a classroom. Web sources, such as blog postings written by current educators, gave a real time view into what techniques they have tried and what has worked to build positive and cooperative learning environments in their classrooms.

With the help of educators, psychologists, philosophers, legislators, administrators, and historians, the history and development of behavior management in the classroom will be explained. The ties linking shifts in the style and structure of education to the reasons behind those shifts will be uncovered. The acceptable behaviors to encourage learning will be revealed and the expectations regarding how they are to be achieved will be exposed. Commonly used behavior management techniques will be described and effective techniques will be presented. The part I most look forward to is the possible discovery of a correlation between commonly used and effective behavior management techniques in the classroom today.

## **Behavior Management Models**

When explaining behavior management Martella et al. logically began by defining behavior as “a clearly defined and observable act” (3). Behavior management is the task of managing those “defined and observable acts” that disrupt learning or distract students (3). Managing behavior is essential when building an environment that encourages learning and prevents violence or disruption. As a teacher in training, I have seen poor behavior management send a classroom into chaos in the blink of an eye. Several methods, theories, and models describe how a classroom should be run in order to maintain a productive environment. In light of the many options available, teachers and administrators must educate themselves on these models and determine which works best to meet the needs of their students.

Martella et al. offer eight models most commonly used for behavior management: assertive discipline, logical consequences, reality therapy, love and logic, Ginott, Kounin, Jones, and character education (6-9). Because of the vast field that is behavior management, only four models will be discussed. Assertive Discipline, Logical Consequences, Reality Therapy, and Ginott’s model all share a common theme of behavior as a choice and epitomize the prevailing ideas of effective management at the time of their conception. Each of these models was developed by different people and based on varying values and statements of belief. In addition, the models have been altered, expanded, and adjusted over time. They hold different principles as to how student behavior should be managed in schools. These models offer individual successes and flaws when put to the test of managing behavior in the classroom. They are described below in no particular order.

Assertive Discipline was formed by Lee and Marlene Canter during the mid- 1970’s (Allessie, B., Lisa, B., Fureman, D., and Knudsen, G.). Created in response to a student with

what seemed to be uncontrollable behavior, the originally authoritative model has, over time, become “more democratic to fit into today’s classroom environments” (Allessie, B., Lisa, B., Fureman, D., and Knudsen, G. 7). According to Martella et al., in its early years, the model was based on nine principles or “key aspects” outlining the rights of the teacher, expectations for the students, and brief guidelines for the creation of a discipline plan for the classroom (6). In short, the Canter’s model says teachers have the right to build a classroom environment that encourages learning and create a discipline plan that uses consequences, both positive and negative, to ensure that student behavior allows that.

In *Building Classroom Discipline*, Charles describes three types of teachers the Canters recognize in their work: hostile, nonassertive and assertive. The assertive teacher clearly defines and explains expectations in the classroom. Appropriate behavior is modeled for students to see and discipline is consistent and keeps with the discipline plan for the class. Assertive teachers work to build respectful relationships with students. Originally, the husband and wife duo wanted teachers to be firm heads of the classroom and “keep students in line during class,” as a hostile teacher may (Martella et al. 9). Canter modified the model to cast the teacher in an assertive light, attributing more time to discussion with students about their needs and appropriate behavior in the classroom, while emphasizing positive consequences.

McCormack describes Assertive Discipline as a preventative measure to stop misbehavior from occurring (4). An important part of the model is encouraging desired behaviors through immediate, positive recognition (McCormack 4). However, when inappropriate behavior occurs, teachers must select a safe consequence that the student will not enjoy (5). According to “Assertive Discipline: A Critical Review and Analysis” over 500,000 teachers had been trained in Assertive Discipline techniques by 1989 (Render, Padilla, and Krank 607).

When assessing the effectiveness of Assertive Discipline, Rende, Padilla, and Krank's review and analysis of Assertive Discipline literature, displays a confusing and unsubstantial mess of studies. The only conclusive studies stated the effects of Assertive Discipline on reducing off-task behavior "were moderate, at best" ("Assertive Discipline: A Critical Review and Analysis" 611) and presented data that supported the effectiveness of Assertive Discipline in reducing disciplinary situations related to certain social skills and their development. The majority of studies conducted relied solely on teacher or administrators' perceptions of behavior change, without providing any solid data to support their statements. No statistical evidence exists to back the claims of proven effectiveness made by Canter and Associates and Barrett.

A model used in parenting and classrooms, Logical Consequences was brought about by Rudolf Dreikurs (Hardin 83). Born in Austria, Dreikurs specialized in counseling for children and families and contributed to the Alfred Adler Institute in Chicago as the director (96). The model is based around the principle that applying consequences to children's behavior teaches them to abide by the rules of social order (Edwards 114). Interaction with the environment is the basis of learning (Martella et al. 11) and the consequences of those interactions build knowledge on how to self-regulate behavior (Edwards 115). Action upon the environment can cause one of three types of consequences: natural, logical, and arbitrary (Martella et al. 11).

Natural consequences are those that do not require teacher interference: the consequences that naturally result from behavior (Martella et al. 11). In a classroom, the natural consequence of a student neglecting to study for a test would be receiving a low score on the test. Natural Consequences are not appropriate or humane in all situations; the natural consequence of an action can be harmful and dangerous. Logical consequences are an alternative when using natural consequences is inappropriate (Natrajan and Myers-Walls 1). Unlike their natural

counterpart, logical consequences occur when a teacher interferes and provides a consequence for a student's misbehavior. These should relate to the misbehavior in size and action (Natrajan and Myers-Walls 2). For example, if applying a logical consequence for a student tipping his or her chair, one would not have a student stay in from recess. The consequence presented was arbitrary, or not logically connected to the misbehavior, and rather extreme for the circumstances. A more appropriate and logical consequence would be that the student must stand beside his or her desk until he or she is ready to sit without tipping the chair again. The consequence must be discussed with and agreed upon by the student before implementation to ensure they understand that it is not a punishment, but a result of their behavior (Hardin 90). The power of choice is a strong principle of logical consequences (96). Students must be offered a choice between behaving as expected and receiving the consequence. If they continue to misbehave, the consequence will be enforced.

Though Logical Consequences can be used in a classroom setting, research conducted on its effectiveness is almost exclusively parenting studies conducted by doctoral or graduate students. Croake states in his article "Adlerian Parent Education" "Dreikurs... was more concerned with 'spreading the word' than evaluating the effectiveness of the method" (69). Six studies reported parents experiencing "more democratic" attitudes after being educated in Adlerian parenting (69), but never define "democratic attitudes". Using the Self-Esteem Inventory created by Coopersmith in 1967, the second collection of studies tracked changes in self-esteem reported by the children experiencing Adlerian parenting. Hinkle, Arnold, Croake, and Keller (1980) report children sharing positive changes in their self-esteem after participating in Adlerian parenting.

Based on his earlier work Choice Theory, Reality Therapy was refined by Dr. William Glasser and made known in 1962 (Bradley 7). The individuals seeking counseling through Dr.

Glasser's method aim to change their own behavior as a means to solve problems or complications in their lives (Gurucharan 2007). In order to fully grasp Reality Therapy, one must first understand the foundations of Choice Theory. Choice Theory grew out of Control Theory, originally introduced by William Powers. Choice theory states that all behavior is a choice and people control their own actions and feelings (Wubbolding 1434). These choices are driven by a person's five basic needs, determined by Glasser as survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun (Bradley 7). Every person's quality world differs as well. The quality world is a pool of thoughts, dreams, and memories that represent or bring happiness. It is full of wants developed to satisfy each basic need (Wubbolding 1435).

Choice theory dictates that behavior is comprised of four components, acting thinking feeling, and physiology, which together are labeled as total behavior (Bradley 7, Wubbolding 1435). They are further intertwined in that one's acting and thinking determines their feelings and physiology. According to Bradley, the goal of Reality Therapy is teaching people to make responsible behavior decisions and choose actions that allow one to achieve satisfaction in life (6). Because Glasser believed that most dissatisfaction was a result of incomplete relationships, improving those relationships is a large focus of the therapy as well (Bradley 7). After a safe and therapeutic environment has been constructed the WDEP process begins. In the first stage children must identify what they want from their environment and the people around them. Direction and Doing is the second stage (Bradley 8) in which teachers and counselors assist students in explaining their behavior (Wubbolding 1436). The third stage is Evaluation (Bradley 8). Emotions are like symptoms of behavior. Positive actions lead to positive emotions like happiness, joy, and gratitude. Negative actions result in negative emotions, such as disgust, pain, and shame. When a negative symptom appears, it is a signal that behavior must be changed.

Evaluating these symptoms to discover how behavior can be altered to produce better results is a key to successful Reality Therapy. The last step is to create a Plan of Action (Wubbolding 1436). What steps can be taken to change the negative behavior? According to Wubbolding, the formula for an effective plan is “SAMIC<sup>2</sup>” (1436). The plan should be Simple, Achievable, Measurable, Immediate, and the planner must be in Control and Committed.

In her writing “Choice Theory and Reality Therapy: An Overview” Bradley discusses the lack of research conducted on Reality Therapy (9). She states the first and foremost source of publications on Reality Therapy and choice theory is the *Journal of Reality Therapy*. According to Bradley, less than 9% of the articles published in that periodical were research related (10).

One study evaluated and discussed the effects of Reality Therapy on the amount of disciplinary referrals, attendance, retention, and student achievement based on the changes in relationship between students and teachers. Published in 2011, the study conducted by Dawn Hinton, Bridget Warnke, and Robert E. Wubbolding followed two groups of high school freshman. The control group was labeled “Blue team,” while “White team” teachers were trained in Reality Therapy and Choice Theory (91-92). After the school year came to a close, the data from two hundred and fifty-seven students were collected. Overall, the study shows that students of the trained instructors showed higher success in attendance, grade point average, classes passed, avoiding retention, and dodging disciplinary referrals than those instructed by untrained teachers (Hinton, Warke, and Wubbolding 94).

A second study assessed the achievement of second graders instructed by teachers trained in choice theory and Reality Therapy in comparison to students instructed by untrained teachers (Hale and Maola 109). Standardized test scores in mathematics and reading were compared to determine which group scored higher (Hale and Maola 111), while also comparing the scores of

male and female students to observe any variation in the groups' scores as a result of exposure to choice theory and Reality Therapy. This retrospective study collected data from TerraNova standardized tests taken by second graders in April of 2008 (Hale and Moala 112). Of the five teachers participating, two had been trained in control theory and Reality Therapy, while the remaining three had not. The trained instructors worked with thirty students and the untrained teachers worked with fifty-three. There was no significant difference in the reading or mathematics scores of students instructed by trained teachers and those instructed by untrained teachers (Hale and Moala 115-116). Both groups scored on average 75 on reading and the average mathematics scores of the groups only differed by 1.3. Gender provided no significant findings in reading or mathematics scores among trained and untrained students. Overall, the differences in scores between students of teachers trained in Reality Therapy and those not trained were not statistically significant (Hale and Moala 117). In addition, there was no statistical significance between the scores of male and female students who worked with trained and untrained instructors.

Contradictory conclusions from these two studies are acceptable considering they tested the effect of Reality Therapy on different behaviors. Hinton, Warke, & Wubbolding researched the effects Reality Therapy posed on classroom behavior and disciplinary actions. Hale and Moala tested the effects of Reality Therapy on student academic achievement on mathematics and reading standardized tests. These studies show that Reality Therapy effects the success of classroom behavior management, but not necessarily students' academic achievement.

Dr. Haim G. Ginott developed his method of behavior management using his knowledge of psychology and child therapy (Ginott 15). Published in 1972, Ginott's *Teacher & Child* identifies teachers as the deciding factor regarding the climate of the classroom (39).

Specifically, teacher's reactions and responses to misbehavior determine whether the behavior will escalate, or end. Ginott preaches that positive and situation-centered communication are the most effective methods to teach appropriate behavior, while building positive relationships between teachers and students (81-83). Situation-centered communication focuses on the student's situation rather than commenting on the character of the child. If a child knocks a book off his or her desk, calling them irresponsible or disruptive does no good in changing the situation. Most likely, it will make the child hesitant to cooperate with the teacher in the future. Explaining corrections that need to be made to the situation encourages cooperation and increases students' self-worth and confidence. Confronting the situation rather than commenting on the student's character Ginott's cardinal principle (82). Responses showing love and acceptance create trust and encourage improvement in student behavior and belief in their own abilities (Ginott 12). Logically, sarcasm is never acceptable when regarding students (Ginott 109). When instructing students, Ginott encourages choice and warns teachers against making demands (90).

### **Changes in School Discipline**

Compared to the year of 1969, the world we live in today is a vastly different place. People wear different clothes, eat different food, use different technology, hold different jobs, and have different needs. As people and ideas have grown and developed, so has the environment that surrounded them. Discipline in public schools has changed and developed immensely since 1969. Courts of all levels played an important role in changes made to discipline in public schools, often without meaning to (Arum 2003). When it came to discipline before 1969, parents sided with teachers and administrators over their children almost exclusively. They accepted the school's word as fact and students were to accept the punishment

given for any offenses committed. Parents certainly did not file court cases in an attempt to overturn a punishment given to their child at school.

That all changed drastically between the years of 1969 and 1975. There were approximately 76 cases per year fighting school sanctioned punishments (Arum 52). Students and parents began contesting disciplines such as suspensions and expulsions in local courts. One case in particular affected school discipline forever. In 1971, over 70 students attending Central High in Columbus, Ohio were suspended (Arum 39). The claimed cause for discipline was the creation of disruptions and “disturbances” in the academic environment (Arum 39). Students were suspended for a maximum of ten days and the infraction was listed on their permanent records. Those suspended were not informed of the exact charges held against them. Nor were they given a hearing or opportunity to defend themselves to the school. A small group of students, with the support of their parents, sought legal counsel to fight the suspensions, claiming that they were present at the time of the “disturbances,” but refused involvement (Arum 39). The case was labeled *Lopez vs. Williams*.

Though the students’ goal was to overturn their suspensions and clean their permanent records, their legal counsel dreamed bigger (Arum 40). They sought to alter the discipline systems in schools for years to come by granting students more rights concerning discipline. Legally, a principle in the state of Ohio had the right to suspend students and few statewide guidelines existed explaining specific required procedures. Challenging the constitutionality of this law took the case past state courts and to the United States District Court located in Ohio. The court sided with the students and ruled that their records be cleared of suspensions and that all students have the constitutional right to due process in public schools (Arum 41). Unhappy with the decision of the court, the school filed an appeal to the *William vs. Goss* ruling (Arum

42). This appeal, labeled *Goss vs. Lopez* reached the U.S. Supreme Court. According to the school, the students had no basis in their argument because education was not a protected right under the constitution. According to Arum,

The Court rejected this argument and found that state laws directing local official to provide free education to all and making school attendance compulsory for children of a certain age created circumstances where the students had reasonable claims to public education (42).

Three of the nine justices voted against the ruling. They felt the ruling would start a trend of court interference in American public schools. They were right.

One main factor contributed to the spike in suits between 1969 and 1975. The Vietnam War brought about a culture of protests and lack of respect for authority (“Vietnam War Protests). Beginning in 1965, the Students for Democratic Society staged protests, boasting their opposition to the Vietnam War, on college campuses. The movement continued to grow and reached its peak in 1968. The political climate at the time had a major effect on school discipline. At the movement’s beginning, three students joined the protest donning black armbands demonstrating their opposition to the violence in Vietnam (Arum 60). When the student’s fathers appealed to the school to prevent discipline, their case became the first school discipline case to reach the Supreme Court. They ruled that students could exercise their freedom of speech in public schools on the condition that their behavior did not upset the school discipline system (Arum 61).

The ruling trends of courts affected the students’ perception of school discipline and the enforcement of discipline by administrators and teachers. Surveys completed by teachers and reviewed by Arum report that areas where courts favored students over schools were less likely to enforce and create school rules (30). Teachers in these areas felt a lack of support from principals when enforcing discipline. Students completed similar questionnaires surveying their

perceptions of the discipline at the public schools they attended. In student favored areas, students perceived their school discipline to be unfair and enforcement of discipline lax (Arum 31). Teachers surveyed in districts where courts supported schools over students, teachers felt more confident in their enforcement of behavior management and schools were likely to have more rules. Students perceived school discipline in these districts as more rigid, but fair.

The methods of discipline in public schools adapted to changing times as well. Corporal punishment was reported by almost every state as a form of discipline in public schools in 1976 (Arum 28). The following ten years showed a great reduction in corporal punishment use in schools. Over half the United States has banned corporal punishment as a form of school discipline (Arum 136). The practice is still permitted in eleven states. The districts themselves are required to determine if corporal punishment should be used in schools in thirteen of the fifty states. At least ten states have basically removed corporal punishment from schools by dramatically decreasing the amount of incidents to be almost nonexistent. Similar to the effect of court climate on student's perception of behavior management and enforcement of discipline by administrators and teachers, the use of corporal punishment affected the student's perceptions of behavior management and their academic achievement (Arum). Arum mentions the effects of corporal punishment stating "empirical research has suggested that use of strict disciplinary practices, such as corporal punishment, could lead to lower educational achievement and higher rates of delinquency" (33).

The shooting at Columbine High School exemplifies displays of violence that influence changes in policy (Sciba and Peterson 337). In public schools, zero tolerance policies are implemented in attempts to prevent similar acts in the future. Zero tolerance means that any possession of a banned item or display of behavior breaking the student conduct code results in

immediate suspension or expulsion. The Gun Free Schools Act requires all students found in possession of a firearm on school grounds to be expelled for one year. Sciba and Peterson discuss a continued growth in zero tolerance policies implemented in schools. However, empirical evidence of increased safety or effectiveness is little to nonexistent. In fact, Sciba and Peterson state “schools that rely heavily on zero tolerance policies continue to be less safe than schools that implement fewer components of zero tolerance” (337).

### **Behavior Management Methods Today**

Although the Assertive Discipline, Logical Consequences, Reality Therapy, and Ginott’s models are fully developed and clearly described, little to no research has been conducted to test the effectiveness of the models since the 1990’s. Education and school environments have developed since then and new methods have been created and adopted to meet the changing needs of classrooms and schools. Methods used for behavior management today are different than Martella et al.’s four models, but often incorporate ideas or theories of the original models. The methods of today most often divide into two categories: those that use negative consequences or punishment and those that reward or positively reinforce behavior. Consequences, positive and negative, are a part of life. Rudolf Dreikurs believed that consequences directly relating to negative behavior altered behavior effectively. Numerous teachers still hold that belief and use negative consequences to modify the behavior of their students. Negative consequence-centered methods include behavior charts, Popsicle stick pockets, and time-outs. Behavior charts, such as clip charts, are often used to monitor student behavior in elementary classrooms, ranging from Kindergarten to fifth grade. They are most often posters with a number of levels shown in different colors. All students have a clothespin with their name written on it, which starts clipped on the middle level, labeled “Ready to go.”

When students show a desired behavior, the teacher will inform them and reward them by asking to clip up. The student would then move their clothespin to the next higher level. There are only two levels above “Ready to go.” Some teachers do special things for those who reach the top level, but continue to show desirable behavior. The two levels below the middle are often orange, then red. When a student shows undesirable behavior, the teacher informs them that they have not behaved appropriately and must clip down. The student retrieves his or her clip and moves it to the next lower level. Typically, if a student moved their clip to the lowest level, the teacher called home and inform the parents or guardians of what happened and why the student was told to clip down.

Clip charts are currently a hot topic in education. The internet is awash with blog posts, articles, and research summaries rejecting the use of behavior charts, such as the clip chart, in classrooms. Gwen Dewar, Ph.D. discussed the shortcomings of behavior charts in her article “What’s wrong with classroom behavior charts?” This method of behavior management displays one student’s mistakes or mess-ups to the whole class. Intended to be a reminder to behave appropriately, more commonly clip charts cause powerful feelings of shame and self-doubt in students. Kids begin to doubt themselves to their core and hate that they cannot be “good enough” or “quiet enough” to clip up. Dewar brings up the effects of shame and embarrassment on the body to show how poisonous these charts are. When a person feels shame, even a little kindergartener, the body pumps the stress hormone cortisol into his or her system. As the feelings of shame or rejection grow stronger, the level of cortisol released grows as well. The heart rate increases; blood pressure rises. If feelings of shame occur regularly over a long period of time, one study found that the production of t-cells decreases. Lower t-cell levels leave children more susceptible to infection and illness due to a weakened immune system. These

reactions deter social interaction, and often put children in a defensive mode, therefore defeating the purpose of the behavioral charts, while potentially causing long-term damage to the health of the students.

Popsicle sticks are another common tool in behavior management. They can be used in several ways, to achieve various goals. A sort of behavior chart can be created by giving each student a pocket boasting their name, instead of a clothespin. Every pocket was filled with a certain number of Popsicle sticks. If a student was misbehaving or showing undesirable behavior, they must “pull a stick”. To “pull a stick” students go to their pocket, and remove one Popsicle stick. Removal of a stick required a consequence. These vary based on the behaviors desired by the classroom teacher. Often, consequences involve a loss of recess or visit to the office. The teacher also decides if students can earn back their lost sticks. Commonly, a reward is given to students who do not pull any sticks during a one week period.

Michaele Sommerville describes the damage she has seen done to students as victims of Popsicle sticks in her blog “Kindergarten’s 3 R’s: Respect, Resources, and Rants.” Similar to clip charts, Sommerville explains the humiliation experienced when pulling sticks in front of a whole class. She goes so far as to label this method of using peer pressure and public humiliation to gain a desired behavior as bullying. Her level of disdain for the management tactic is clear when she explains that Popsicle sticks weren’t made to “crush a child’s spirit into compliance” (Sommerville). Instead, they are tools for inquiry based learning, displaying creativity, and devouring class snacks. Contrary to Sommerville’s stance, support for the Popsicle stick discipline in the classroom floods blogs and online message boards. Numerous teachers, including teacher and blogger Kelly Booth, who substitutes colored cards for Popsicle sticks, rave about their success using this behavior management method. Booth favors this method for

several reasons. Students are responsible for their own behavior, so they must take responsibility and move the card when they are behaving inappropriately. Moving the card themselves physically “removes them from the unwanted behavior” (Booth). This displacement gives the student time to think about what they have done and adjust their behavior moving forward. Timeouts are used in some elementary classrooms as a consequence for disruptive or undesirable behavior. The purpose is to remove students from a positive or “rewarding experience” (“Guidelines for Using Time Out with Children and Preteens”). Commonly, timeouts isolate students from the rest of the class, whether at their desk, or in a designated spot in the classroom. Some teachers have a timeout chair; others send students to another classroom. Students assigned to timeout remain in the designated spot for a time given by the teacher. The Child Development Institute recommends brief periods of timeouts, especially for young children (“Guidelines for Using Time Out with Children and Preteens”). Isolation can quickly become a fun experience when the imagination is put to use. A good rule is five minutes for students ages six to eight, and ten minute timeouts for students ranging from eight to ten years old. Understanding why he or she is in timeout is crucial for a child. The inappropriate behavior must be explained so the child knows what he or she did wrong and can correct his or her. Timeout as a negative consequence removes students from an enjoyable activity so they miss the experience or experience remorse for their behavior.

Timeouts can also be used as a positive, preventative measure. Many teachers provide a timeout time for students who need some time alone to calm down, regroup, or think about their actions (“What is a Responsive Classroom Time-Out?”). This is often called “Take a Break” time. Responsive Classrooms use “Take a Break” time to avoid behavior blow-ups and train students to self-regulate their behavior. These cool-down areas are recommended to be placed in

areas where students can have private time, but are not totally disconnected from the class. Relaxation tools, such as stress balls and think cards, are placed next to a comfortable seat, beanbag, or pillow. Depending on the teacher, students may be told to take a break, or be given the choice to decide if they need one. Similarly, the teacher can decide when a student is done, or allow the child to judge their own emotional state and decide if they are ready to rejoin the class.

Assistant Professor of Education, Norm Bishop, warns against the misuse of timeouts stating they are not “an effective means of punishment” (“The Problem with Time Out at School: Why It’s Banned and How to Use it Correctly”). Timeouts should never include physical force or require a child to sit unsupervised. Bishop shares his observations of timeout when he started teaching recalling “I have seen broken windows, holes punched in walls and other items destroyed during what someone was thinking was time out.” That was no example of timeout and was not effective in the slightest. Effective timeouts refine or target one behavior to be changed. Students should not be in reach of items to play with or distract themselves from the reflection time given. Little research has been conducted on the effectiveness of timeouts in classrooms. Most information available is teachers’ personal experiences with timeouts, whether successes or failures.

A category of behavior management methods that is currently growing in popularity and support is positive reinforcement methods. Positive reinforcements are rewards given to students for displaying appropriate behavior, or behaving exceptionally. Class bucks or classroom economy systems, rewards, and point systems all fit into this category. Class bucks are typically a form of currency given to reward students for appropriate, desired, or exceptional behavior. Teachers specify amounts given for different actions. A student may receive five class bucks for holding the door for other classmates, or walking appropriately in the hallway. Teachers also

place a value on certain items or experiences that students can “buy” after a given time period. Items available for purchase are often treats like candy, homework passes, or a small toy. Students can save up and “buy” larger items or experiences. Lunch with the teacher or moving seats for a day might be up for grabs to students who save enough class bucks. The Vanguard Group, Inc. created a guide to classroom economy systems explaining the preparation, how to introduce the system, and ideas to incorporate the system into curriculum (“Establishing Your Economic System”). Classroom economies teach several lessons. Students must behave appropriately and complete a job to earn money. They pay fines, fees, and write checks, in addition to purchasing goods. Organization is key to prevent loss of money over time. Some teachers charge students “rent” for their desks each month. They learn how to be responsible with their money in order to keep their desk. Math skills come into play when paying for purchases. Financial literacy becomes a built in lesson reinforced throughout the school year.

Rewards is a very broad category of behavior management. Rewards are given to a student when they show appropriate behavior, act in a way the teacher approves, goes above and beyond, or completes all necessary work. Rewards include tickets for answering a question or contributing to class discussion. A homework pass, or hall pass could be used as a reward. A small edible treat, like a brain ball (skittle) or goldfish cracker are rewards. Anything that is given to positively reinforce a behavior is a reward. Opinions on reward systems in classrooms are split. Little research has been conducted specifically testing the effectiveness of reward systems in classrooms. Michael Linsin explains his opposition to reward systems in the article “Why You Shouldn’t Reward Students for Good Behavior.” Linsin first describes rewards as incentives given for good behavior, such as a treat for paying attention while the teacher reads a book aloud. Rewarding students for every display of good behavior is external motivation

(Linsin). By giving those rewards, teachers are preventing students from developing intrinsic motivation. In addition, students begin to expect rewards after displaying good behavior. If they are not rewarded, they are unlikely to repeat the good behavior. Students believe they are entitled to the reward. He recommends a more effective alternative saying “good behavior is its own reward because it offers students self-respect, confidence, and the wonderful feeling of belonging to a classroom that needs and appreciates them” (Linsin).

Points can also serve as a reward. Many teachers use a point system to reinforce positive behavior. According to the teacher's preference, students can earn points for displaying certain behaviors. As stated by The University of Kansas, when reward systems are used “Students learn appropriate behavior through clearly defined behavioral expectations and rewards, privileges, and consequences linked to those expectations” (“Point and Level Systems”). Points can be given for turning in homework, answering questions correctly, entering the room quietly, and helping out a classmate. Students collect points and specific rewards are given for different amounts of points. For example, when the class earns fifty points, they would receive five extra minutes of recess. Often teachers will compete against their students for points. When the students display desired behavior, they earn points. When they behave in an undesirable or inappropriate way, the teacher earns points. At the end of the day, points that the teacher has earned cancel out points that the student has earned. For example, if the teacher earns four points and the students earn seven, the teacher's points would cancel out four of the students' points. The students would earn three points for that day. “Point and Level Systems” shares that most teachers find point systems to be effective behavioral management tools. However, evidence that the behavior will continue after the system is removed is lacking. Point systems may be most effective as a short-term change.

### **Personal Experience**

Throughout my three years of education observations, field experiences, and practicums, I witnessed numerous behavior management systems at work. Each teacher I met had a different style of management and a variety of techniques to achieve his or her desired behavior. The methods I have witnessed did not fit into one distinct model, but displayed aspects of one or several. I myself combine a number of methods to create a behavior management system befitting the needs of my students and my expectations for behavior. Rewards and reinforcements have been most successful to prevent undesirable behavior and maintain a positive relationship between students and teacher. Clearly describing my expectations for behavior and explaining the consequences of misbehavior showed the most success for long-term behavior change. Clip charts, Popsicle sticks, and points are only some of the methods I have seen and used to achieve desired behavior.

In my experience, most behavior charts boasted five levels. One of my peers worked in a second grade classroom that used a clip chart. When her students at the top level showed that they deserved to clip up, they would get their clip and could put it on the teacher! Some chose to place it on her lanyard, or clothes hems. She even allowed one student to place his clip in her hair because he showed such desirable behavior. When observing her class, the effectiveness of the clip chart with certain students became apparent. Those who were clipping up responded well to the chart. In addition, those surrounded the successful students were attentive and behaving appropriately. However, the students who clipped down showed less promise with the clip chart. Although their negative behavior typically stopped, many were visibly distressed that they had been punished. Their shoulder's sunk and they withdrew from the class. The clip chart and

behavior charts may work for rewarding positive behavior, but causes stress and self-consciousness in those who clip down.

I experienced Popsicle sticks as a behavioral tool in my time as a T.O.T.A.L. Intern at Indiana State University. Placed in a third grade classroom in the spring semester, I came in using the behavior management program my host teacher already had in place for the year. Each student had a little pocket with their name on it hanging in a back corner of the classroom. Every pocket was filled with five Popsicle sticks at the beginning of the school day. If a student was misbehaving or showing undesirable behavior, I would inform them to “pull a stick”. To “pull a stick” students would get up, go to their pocket, and remove a Popsicle stick. For every Popsicle stick removed, a consequence was given. For the first stick removed, a warning was given. For the second, students were to copy down the class expectation. Recess was taken away for the third. The fourth was a phone call home and the fifth was a visit to the office. Similar to the clip charts, students moved their own sticks in front of the whole class. Contrary to the clip chart, there was no way to earn back the sticks that students lost. Once it was gone, it was gone for good...until the end of the day. The teacher would then record the number of sticks in each pocket. Students who avoided pulling a stick for the entire week would get five class bucks. This method worked for a small number of students, but most grew indifferent to it, or fought back. Many would calmly get up, pull a stick, and return to their seat without a care in the world. Others became defensive and angry, breaking up the relationship between the student and teacher.

During my time in the classroom, the inability to regain Popsicle sticks rubbed me the wrong way. It didn't seem fair that students who corrected their behavior could not earn back the sticks they lost as a reward for displaying appropriate behavior. The system was totally negative.

Adjusting the system by adding colored Popsicle sticks allowed me to reward students for appropriate or exceptional behavior. A child who showed desirable behavior was instructed to add a colored Popsicle stick to their pocket. Even those that had to “pull a stick” could earn the rainbow sticks. Closing the school day, the number of colored sticks in each pocket was recorded. To end the week, students earned one extra class buck for each colored stick they earned throughout the week. Undesirable behavior did not affect the amount that students could earn and they had the opportunity to earn back their lost sticks. Adjusting the system to include a reward showed great promise. The hanging pockets were moved to the front of the class so all could see when a student earned a colored stick. Students became more attentive to my expectations and showed an increase in self-control in managing their own behavior. Positive reinforcements strengthened the relationships between students and teacher and brought excitement to the classroom.

As a student teacher, I implemented many types of behavior management in my classroom attempting to find the right fit for my kids. One method I tried was a point system. I competed against my students to earn points. When students showed appropriate behavior for the classroom, the class earned a point. I earned points when their behavior was inappropriate or unacceptable. At this time, two different groups of students came to me throughout the day. My first block students were advanced math and enriched science students: fifth graders learning sixth grade math. Block two students were fifth graders learning fifth grade math and science. For a reason unknown to me, my second block students thrived under this system. They reminded their classmates of my expectations for behavior and that misbehaving resulted in points for me. This chatty class changed drastically into a quiet and attentive class that participated and gave their all. My first block class struggle with the system. They attempted to

find loopholes in my system and request points for every correct answer they gave in class and every good behavior. The level of noise and distraction in my first block class increased after implementing the point system. An essential lesson of behavior management was taught with these classes. A system that works for one group of students is completely ineffective for another.

### **Conclusion**

As a future teacher, behavior management is a necessary topic of study. Without behavior management, teaching appropriate behavior, let alone curriculum, is impossible. A set of procedures and methods must be in place to succeed in a class. However, a lack of empirical research shown across the board. Individual class management, as well as whole school systems, is essential to success of students, but lacks the support of data to prove effectiveness. The methods used to manage behavior in the 1900's were far different than those used today. Though they show a consistent lack in empirical research. I set out to determine how they differed and how classroom management had developed to the present methods. Some factors changing these management tools and styles include politics, court cases, and tragic events. These factors directly and indirectly affected the way school discipline is designed and implemented. Zero tolerance policies and increasing school violence indicate a need for further research in school wide discipline plans as well.

After gathering and reviewing the literature, one conclusion was very clear. Behavior management is consistently under researched. Looking back to the 1900's, the four models discussed by Martella et al. were hardly tested in research settings. Most of the studies conducted to test effectiveness were flawed in design and provided no significant data. Others relied on teacher and student perceptions, rather than data. This lack of data still exists with current

methods used in classrooms. The only review comes from teachers' personal experiences and feedback. Blogs provide helpful tips and ideas, but no data is available to prove effectiveness. Therefore, the question as to a correlation between the most common tool and most effective goes unanswered. Empirical research is imperative to finding and putting effective behavior management methods into place.

Society and events outside of education do affect schools directly and indirectly. Between the years of 1969 and 1975, the courts greatly affected enforcement of discipline in public schools and changed student perceptions about discipline (Arum 5). Punishments in school were overturned by local, state, and federal courts, undermining the power of principals and administrators to discipline their students. Many school districts hesitated before putting rules in place in fear they could be taken to court by an unhappy student. A correlation between student perception and court climate showed that students felt their school discipline was lax and unfair in districts where courts favored students (Arum 31). Districts that favored teachers were perceived to have more strict and fair school discipline.

Political movements affected discipline in school as well. The Vietnam War brought about a wave of protest and riot culture. This trend made its way to schools and students began to join the movement. Cases concerning protesting students granted students the right to practice freedom of speech on the condition that it did not disrupt the educational environment (Arum 61). Tragic events, such as the shooting at Columbine High School, brought about fear and anger. These emotions led to an increase in zero tolerance policies (Sciba and Peterson 337). Policies that research has not proven to be effective. Policies that can increase the danger in schools, rather than decrease it as hoped. Data and research must guide decisions on educational discipline in order to provide a safe and healthy school environment.

Behavior management methods in schools changed over time as well. Punishment, including corporal punishment, served as the primary form of behavior management. Currently, schools have basically eliminated corporal punishment as a consequence for misbehavior. Consequences are still used, though positive consequences have become much more prevalent. Sciba and Peterson stress the importance of positive consequences saying “the failure to balance positive and negative consequences may indeed yield a coercive cycle that increase the likelihood of disruptive behaviors” (336). The behavior management methods of today are vast. Because little research has been done to comment on the effectiveness of the methods, teachers must experiment within their classrooms to see which methods work for their students. Methods work differently for different teachers and students. Additionally, they can be customized or altered to better serve the teacher and students. Systems of behavior management today are flexible.

Teachers today need training in a variety of behavior management techniques. Sciba and Peterson share that teachers have consistently reported feeling unprepared for or undertrained in implementing behavior management (337). Without this central tool, students cannot thrive in education settings. Classrooms today teach social skills, team work, accountability, self-control, and diversity alongside curriculum. Behavior management systems teach these skills. Students being deprived of behavior management bypass learning these skills and leave the classroom unprepared for the challenges of the workplace and the world.

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