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The “Evil Eye” and Other Prescriptive Classroom Management Practices

Hannah Luken
University of Southern Maine

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◆ Abstract

Teachers often struggle with classroom discipline and management, and school psychologists are well positioned to offer guidance to them. To fulfill this consultative role, school psychologists must know the classroom management strategies taught in teacher training, and later implemented in the classroom. Current classroom discipline and management textbooks provide insight into current classroom management practices taught to teachers. Traditional classroom management practices involve consequences to reduce interfering behaviors based on the form of the student’s behavior. For example, if a student is talking to a peer without permission, a common strategy is to send a nonverbal signal like the “evil eye” to stop the behavior. This strategy may inadvertently increase “talking without permission” if the behavior is maintained by teacher attention. Such an unintentional mistake can be avoided through a function-based approach. In this study, 50 textbooks intended for teachers were evaluated in terms of popularity, and whether the classroom discipline approaches recommended were function-based or topographical. A majority of the textbooks recommended strategies based on the form rather than the function of interfering behaviors. In addition, results indicated that function-based books are not as widely used. According to these results, it is clear teachers are underprepared to effectively manage problem behavior, due to their training on addressing the form, rather than the function, of the behavior.

◆ Introduction

Teachers have a lot to juggle when it comes to running their classrooms. Between standardized assessments, lesson planning, instruction, and managing their students’ behavior, among other activities, they have an array of responsibilities to be concerned about. Despite the wide range of obligations, the one that teachers express the most concern about is classroom discipline (Veenman, 1984). Unfortunately, studies indicate that teachers are underprepared to deal with their biggest concern (Begeny & Martens, 2006; Myers & Holland, 2000; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). Within classroom discipline, teachers report behavior problems as the most troubling student mental health concern, and have expressed frustration both with interventions that are not effective, as well as with their inability to reduce certain problem behaviors in their classroom (Reinke et al., 2011).

There are two approaches for responding to problem behavior in the classroom: topographical and function-based. The topographical approach involves responding to problem behavior based on the topography (or form) of the individual’s behavior. An example of this approach could be a teacher using proximity to address a student’s off task behavior. On the other hand, the function-based approach involves responding to the behavior based on the determined function (or “cause”) of the individual’s behavior. An illustration of this approach could be checking in with a peer for assistance/clarification about a task (providing a brief escape from work) for a student whose problem behavior has been found to be maintained by negative reinforcement (i.e. escape) (Newcomer & Lewis, 2004). Based on research, the function based approach appears to reduce problem behaviors to a greater magnitude than a topographical approach (Filter & Horner, 2009; Liaupsin, Umbreit, Ferro, Urso, & Upreti, 2006; Newcomer & Lewis, 2004).

◆ Research Question

Are the most popular classroom management and discipline books function-based?

◆ Methods

Keywords “classroom management” and “classroom discipline” were used to search for books in Amazon.

To determine the usage of textbooks, the number of raters and the star ratings were compiled from Amazon and Goodreads, and the number of citations were gathered from Google Citations.

To determine whether textbooks were function-based or not, each textbook was rated on a scale of 1 to 4 by two graduate students. A score of 1 indicated the book’s intervention strategies only focused on the topography of behavior, and a score of 4 indicated that the book recommended function-based interventions. Scores were then converted; a score of 1 or 2 was labeled as 0, and a score of 3 or 4 was labeled as 1.

◆ Hypothesis

Function-based books are not widely used, and that the books that are widely used are based on the topography, or form, of the behavior.

◆ Sample

The sample included 50 books that were published between 2000 and 2016, intended for teachers, and pertained to classroom management and/or discipline. Books were published by an assortment of publishers ranging from well-known educational publishers (e.g. Pearson, Guilford, Wiley, Corwin) to lesser-known publishers and self-published.

◆ Assumptions of Our Methodology

Our methodology is based on the following assumptions:

- Teachers are buying these classroom management and discipline textbooks
- Teachers use what they read
- Ratings are an indication of how widely used the books are
- Citations indicate how credible the textbook is

◆ Results: Top 20 Books

Book	FBI	Amazon	Goodreads	Google Citations
Applied Behavior Analysis for Teachers (Alberto & Troutman)	1	6	8	8
Assertive Discipline: Positive Behavior Management for Today's Classroom (Canter)	0	10	14	7
Classroom Discipline and Management (Edwards)	1	25	26	4
Classroom Management for Elementary Teachers (Emmer & Evertson)	0	5	15	2
Classroom Management for Middle and High School Teachers (Emmer & Evertson)	0	15	10	12
Classroom Management Strategies: Gaining and Maintaining Students' Cooperation (Cangelosi)	1	42	24	6
Comprehensive Classroom Management: Creating Communities of Support and Solving Problems (Jones & Jones)	0	9	38	3
Conscious Classroom Management: Unlocking the Secrets of Great Teaching (Smith)	0	12	6	23
Middle and Secondary Classroom Management: Lessons from Research and Practice (Weinstein & Novodvorsky)	0	44	18	10
Positive Discipline in the Classroom: Developing Mutual Respect, Cooperation and Responsibility in Your Classroom (Nelsen & Lott)	0	18	5	49
Principles of Classroom Management: A Professional Decision-Making Model (Levin & Nolan)	0	17	19	5
Resilient Classrooms: Creating Healthy Environments for Learning (Doll, Brehm, Zucker)	0	47	31	9
Setting Limits in the Classroom: How to Move Beyond the Dance of Discipline in Today's Classrooms (Mackenzie)	0	8	4	37
Teaching with Love and Logic: Taking Control of the Classroom (Fay & Fay)	0	3	2	14
The Behavior Code: A Practical Guide to Understanding and Teaching the Most Challenging Students (Minahan & Rappaport)	1	11	9	30
THE Classroom Management Book (Wong & Wong)	0	4	7	41
The First Days of School: How to be an Effective Teacher (Wong & Wong)	0	1	1	1
Tools for Teaching: Discipline, Instruction, Motivation (Jones)	0	2	3	11
25 Biggest Mistakes Teachers Make and How to Avoid Them (Orange)	0	7	32	34

◆ Results and Discussion

Function-based books were cited more. However, function-based books don’t appear to be as widely used as the topographical books, as evidenced by less ratings and not many function-based books making it to the top 20.

The books that are published by the most well-known education publishers are mixed in terms of function-based or topographical interventions.

These results indicate that teachers are not aware of function-based approaches to classroom discipline.

◆ Limitations

Ratings and citations are only an indicator of how widely books are used.

The rating system used to determine whether books are function-based versus topographical may not be reliable and/or valid.

Using books to reflect practice may not reflect the reality of teachers’ discipline practices.

◆ References

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