Teachers’ perceptions of their own classroom management:

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Teachers’ perceptions of their own classroom management:

A case study of an urban high school

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, LEADERSHIP AND COUNSELING OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF ST. THOMAS

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

By

Lindsey Schiffler

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
Teachers’ perceptions of their own classroom management:

A case study of an urban high school

We certify that we have read this dissertation and approved it as adequate in scope and quality. We have found that it is complete and satisfactory in all respects, and that any and all revisions required by the final examining committee have been made.
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I would also like to thank the members of Cohort 25, many of whom encouraged me during the most frustrating moments. Your support helped me more than you can ever know.
Abstract

This case study investigated the experiences of teachers in an urban, Midwestern high school. Specifically, student teachers, novice teachers (1-3 years of experience), and veteran teachers (4+ years of experience) reflected on the perceptions of their own classroom management. The data for this study included classroom observations, field notes, and personal communication with 25 participants. The uniqueness of this study compared to other published research stems from my dual role as both researcher and teacher at the case site.

The data informed a grounded theory of how teachers perceived their own experiences throughout the various stages of teaching. The central theoretical premises of this analysis relied on Goffman’s dramaturgy and moral career, van Gennep and Turner’s rites of passage, and Dreyfus’ skill acquisition model. Analysis of the data identified classroom management issues as a significant stressor in a teacher’s career. The presence of a formal building mentor helped alleviate a negative perception of self. Although the mentor was found to be essential in the early stages of teachers’ careers, veteran teachers also indicated a need for support and guidance.
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Introduction

Growing up, I never thought about being a teacher. Yet, I always had a deep respect for the teachers in my life, specifically those who made an effort to connect with their students. In these cases, the classroom was a fun place to learn. Because these teachers had established clear expectations, there were few behavioral issues. In the rare situation when a student would test the boundaries, consequences were quick to follow. I remember one student in particular who would always test his teachers within the first few weeks of school. Mrs. Dwight, our first grade teacher, immediately recognized the student’s desire for attention. Rather than publicly acknowledging his behavior, Mrs. Dwight quietly talked to the student and re-directed his attention to the assigned activity. As Mrs. Dwight got to know her students, she could anticipate potential behavioral issues. By the end of the first quarter, there were few disruptions. Students thrived in this particular setting. Although Mrs. Dwight ran a tight ship, we all knew she cared about our well-being.

When I stepped into my own classroom nearly 20 years later, I knew managing a classroom would be difficult. Students can smell the fear of novice teachers. The cliché saying of being “eaten alive” is an accurate one in that students literally pounce on those teachers who do not emit an air of confidence when managing a classroom. Luckily, my own experience with being “eaten alive” occurred before I entered the teaching profession. As a young journalist at the Associated Press, my writing skills were tested. Negative responses to interview requests were a common occurrence. On several occasions, I would spend days preparing for feature stories only to be told later the story was not needed. Although frustrating at the time, I now appreciate the criticism I received. By the time I left the AP, I had a newfound maturity and confidence that helped my transition into education.
Had I not experienced adversity at the Associated Press, I do not think my first few years of teaching would have been as enjoyable. I doubt I would have had the same level of confidence needed to adequately manage a classroom. I probably would not have responded the same way when a tenth grader told me to “eff off” after I asked him to sit in his assigned seat or when another tenth grader threw a stool across the room in protest of giving a speech in front of his classmates. To an extent, I felt prepared to deal with such classroom management issues. I had already experienced several rites of passage and I had a framework of imagery for judging myself (i.e. moral career). Unfortunately, I cannot say the same about other novice teachers. I have witnessed that “deer in the headlights” look when teacher candidates are confronted with managing a classroom full of high school students.

Currently, I am a licensed teacher who has nearly a decade of classroom experience. Each year, I encounter new challenges but none is more difficult than understanding how to effectively manage a classroom. The advancement of technology and the urbanization of suburban schools, compiled with the recent implementation of district restorative justice policies to reduce suspensions, have added to the already complex task of adequately managing a classroom. Although not an exhaustive list, classroom management includes arrangement of desks and materials, setting expectations for behavior, managing inappropriate behavior, instructing and managing student academic work, and building positive relationships. Take into account the numerous styles and strategies of implementing these tasks to more than 100 students throughout the day, and even the most experienced teachers will feel overwhelmed, especially during the first few weeks of school.

Researching the history of classroom management, specifically within the context of an urban high school, has caused me to reflect on my own experiences. After mentoring two
student teachers and observing nearly a dozen coworkers, I realized the value of conducting a study about teachers’ perceptions of their own classroom management. In doing so, it became apparent that classroom management skills are honed after years of experience. As a result, novice teachers tend to struggle within their first few years. Attrition often results. Although not always the main reason new teachers leave the profession, classroom management is definitely a factor of teacher turnover. Teacher attrition is just one of the aspects I researched within the context of classroom management. Other aspects include teacher preparation programs, cooperating teachers, classroom management styles and strategies, self efficacy, and urban classrooms.

**Subject of this Research**

In researching these aspects of classroom management, the gaps in the literature became apparent. Although there are many qualitative studies on classroom management, teachers’ perceptions of their own management was generally ignored. Since classroom management is unique to each individual teacher – there is no one-size-fits-all approach – a grounded theory approach was deemed appropriate. Various theories developed from the data collected during the field research. Through the theoretical lenses of Goffman’s dramaturgy and moral career, van Gennep and Turner’s rites of passage, and Dreyfus’ skill acquisition, it was my hope that this study help better explain the phenomenon of classroom management within the context of an urban, secondary classroom.

**Chapter 1: Relevant and Analytic Literature Review**
Review of Topical Literature

Numerous themes emerged from the large amount of relevant literature, including teacher attrition, teacher preparation programs, cooperating teachers, classroom management styles and strategies, self-efficacy, urban classrooms, and teachers as actors. Teacher attrition has become an issue in the United States, especially in poor, urban schools where the rate of attrition is 50% higher than affluent schools (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). While some attrition is expected, the vast number of teachers who leave the profession within their first years of teaching is staggering. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005), approximately half of all teachers leave within a mere five years.

Some researchers believe teacher preparation programs are partly responsible for the high attrition rates. Teacher preparation programs, the second theme discussed in the literature review, are often blamed for the inadequate preparation of their teacher candidates, especially within the area of classroom management. Lacina-Gifford, Kher, and Besant (2002) found a general lack of classroom management knowledge among the pre-service teachers. Cooperating teachers – the third theme – are often thrown into the mentor-student teacher relationship without any training. Teacher education programs have few requirements to participate as a cooperating teacher (Valencia, Martin, Place & Grossman, 2009). Classroom management – the fourth theme – is often reported to be more difficult in urban classrooms where the teachers do not look like their students (Weiner, 2003). In this case, a lack of knowledge about the students’ socioeconomic backgrounds tends to result in teachers’ low self-efficacy, which is the fifth theme in the literature review. According to Lee et al. (2012), low self-efficacy often hinders teachers’ ability to manage a classroom, specifically within the context of an urban setting, the sixth theme in the literature review. The final theme, teachers as actors, includes studies about
teachers’ use of theatrical techniques to manage a classroom; this type of style is considered a preventative classroom management strategy. In the following section, I review and assess what researchers say on the aforementioned themes.

**Teacher attrition.** Teacher attrition has become a national concern, particularly among beginning teachers. Brown and Wynn (2007) found that 33% of all beginning teachers leave the teaching profession in any given year. It is estimated that this rate of attrition costs the United States an annual $2.2 billion (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics, teacher attrition among first-year teachers could be as high as 10%, a statistic Sawchuk (2011) discovered when tracking the career paths of beginning teachers from 2007 and 2008. DeAngelis, Wall and Che (2013) found a direct association between new teachers’ perceptions of pre-service preparation quality and their intentions to remain in the profession.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) outlined the concerns of teacher attrition and high turnover. High turnover was often the result of too heavy a workload or lack of planning time. Approximately 53% of teachers left their schools because of problematic student behavior. In MetLife’s 2004-2005 “Survey of the American Teacher,” new teachers reported being greatly stressed by administrative duties, classroom management, and testing responsibilities (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005). Haberman (2005) discussed the high amount of stress affiliated with teaching, specifically the stress of dealing with disruptive students and large class sizes. In urban schools, lack of discipline and motivation was the most significant predictor of burnout. According to Voke (2002), “difficulties with student discipline are one of the reasons up to 20% of new teachers leave the teaching profession within 1 year and 42% within the first 5 years” (as
cited in Shook, 2012, p. 129). The percentage increases in urban schools where 50% of the novice teachers cite student behavior as the reason for leaving (Shook, 2012). Teachers who were less satisfied with the quality of their pre-service preparation were significantly more likely to leave teaching than those who were more satisfied (DeAngelis et al., 2013).

**Teacher preparation programs.** Teacher quality in the United States has been described as “an acute concern” (Allen, 2003, p. 488). During the State of the State addresses in 2001, the issue of teacher quality was referenced by 46 governors, and one year later, 162 bills relating to teacher quality were adopted and signed into law (Allen, 2003). While this concern has been an issue for more than a decade, recent reports suggest the need to re-examine the nation’s teacher education programs (Elliott, 2013). According to the National Council on Teacher Quality, 75% of teacher education programs admit students who performed poorly in high school. Only 25% of the programs actually limit admission to students in the top half of their high school class (as cited in Elliott, 2013). Wenglingsky (2000) noted that teacher education programs are admitting too many under-qualified candidates, thus emphasizing quantity over quality. Some states – such as California – do not require certification for teachers to be in the classroom. As a result, teachers are not always adequately prepared to enter the classroom, specifically when it comes to managing students (Wenglingsky, 2000).

After receiving feedback from graduates of their teacher preparation program, Kher, Lacina-Gifford, and Yandell (2000) conducted a study about the lack of preparedness felt by student teachers and novice teachers specifically in the area of classroom management. The authors identified pre-service teachers’ knowledge about ineffective and effective classroom management strategies. Findings of the study suggested that pre-service teachers avoid the use of verbal control when dealing with behavior issues. Because these teachers have limited
knowledge on how to effectively deal with the situation, administrators are often brought in to discipline the students (Kher et al., 2000). Lacina-Gifford et al. (2002) focused on student teachers’ knowledge of classroom management, specifically how to handle defiant behavior. Student teachers in this study said they were not prepared to adequately deal with student behavior. The instruction received in their teacher preparation programs was not sufficient. In some cases, the instruction was even counterproductive. The reality shock for beginning teachers occurs when idealisms fostered in teacher training do not hold up in the daily classroom life (Veenman, 1984). This shock is exacerbated by the unpreparedness in classroom discipline and motivating students. Using Max Weber’s theory on authority, Pellegrino (2010) examined the challenges of establishing authority in the classroom. Through trial and error, teachers have to discover their own style when it comes to authority. However, many pre-service teachers have minimal exposure to classroom management in their teacher preparation programs, and therefore do not have an adequate chance to discover their personal style of authority (Pellegrino, 2010).

Boe, Shin, and Cook (2007) criticized the recent emphasis on content knowledge. The authors assert that focusing on pedagogy and teaching practicums will result in a more qualified teaching workforce. Danyluk (2012) surveyed coordinating teachers to determine the preparedness of their student teachers. According to the coordinating teachers, student teachers are not adequately prepared to deal with classroom management issues. Too much emphasis is placed on lesson planning, the coordinating teachers reported. To counteract the focus on theory, Bergin and Walworth (1996) developed a course for undergraduate teacher education students at Armstrong Atlantic State University. The goal was to create a course that Bergin and Walworth (1996) called “more reality based and effective” (p. 1). As a result, the course included a practicum experience in a secondary school setting where teacher candidates would be exposed
to classroom management issues. Landau (2001) argued for stand-alone courses on classroom management in every teacher preparation program. In the study, Landau found a lack of standalone courses. If the program did offer instruction in classroom management, it was generally watered down and embedded within another course. In his study on pre-service teachers’ self-reported knowledge of classroom management, Silvestri (2001) reported on the benefits of providing such classes early on in the teacher education program. In fact, Silvestri (2001) suggested classroom management classes should be a prerequisite for upper-level methods courses. The benefits increase when these upper-level courses reinforce the use of the classroom management techniques learned in earlier coursework.

The most cited concern among teacher candidates as well as new teachers is the lack of preparation to adequately manage a classroom. Wubbels (2011) found that teachers from all parts of the world struggle with classroom management, specifically in the areas of discipline and student behavior. Because teacher education programs tend to neglect specific instruction on classroom management, novice teachers enter the classroom unprepared (Wubbels, 2011). Stough (2006) found few teacher education programs that overtly address the topic of classroom management; only 30% of the programs have course titles that refer to classroom management issues. There is even a scarcity of resources regarding pedagogical knowledge of management (Emmer & Stough, 2001; Garrahy, Cothran, & Kulinna, 2005; Weiner, 2003). The authors acknowledged that the lack of research in this area has contributed to the mystifying nature of effectively managing a classroom.

Cooperating teachers. The inadequate training of pre-service teachers is exacerbated when cooperating teachers are ill-prepared to mentor student teachers. Historically, cooperating teachers – defined as tenured teachers who mentor a teacher candidate in his or her area of
licensure – have received little formal preparation for their role (Sparks & Brodeur, 1987). In their recent study of the student teaching experience, Valencia et al. (2009) found that as both classroom teachers and mentors, the cooperating teachers "were given little support or training in how to serve these dual roles" (p. 318). According to Sudzina, Giebelhaus, and Coolican (1997), the cooperating teacher is the most influential player in the cooperating teacher, student teacher, and university supervisor educator triangle. “It behooves teacher educators to take seriously the particular and unique role of cooperating teachers as they contribute to student teachers' successes or failures” (p. 33). With the exception of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of North Dakota that require completion of an online course, most of the Midwestern public universities and colleges only require that cooperating teachers 1) hold a current teaching license for the content area that the student teacher is studying 2) have at least three years of teaching experience and/or tenured 3) is recommended by the building principal and program manager.

In their two-year study of 134 teacher education programs, the National Council on Teacher Quality (2011) designated only 10 institutions as “model” designs since they require cooperating teachers to be fully qualified and actively participate in the selection of cooperating teachers. Most of the institutions reviewed were labeled as weak, with 25 percent falling into the most deficient category. Specifically, three out of four institutions failed to require cooperating teachers to be effective instructors, while two out of three failed to assess the mentoring ability of a teacher. In interviews with principals at potential student teaching placements, the National Council on Teacher Quality (2011) found that many principals were allowed to choose cooperating teachers since the university provided no information beyond what placement they are looking for. In other cases, principals had no input. Instead, central office personnel selected
the cooperating teacher based on teacher availability. In addition to a lack of training programs for coordinating teachers, the National Council on Teacher Quality (2011) found few incentives to take on the role of mentor teacher. A small stipend, usually no more than $250-500 and the increased workload of hosting a student teacher tend to dissuade quality teachers from participating in the student teaching process.

In the writing about cooperating teachers, there is limited material on cooperating teacher training. Such training is essential for cooperating teachers to adequately mentor pre-service teachers. In her study on cooperating teachers’ perceptions of the necessary conditions for successful field experiences, Graham (2006) found that the frustration levels of the mentor often related to a lack of knowledge in how to teach a certain method or concept beyond a show and tell model. In most cases, such a model failed; this was particularly the case when teaching student teachers about effective classroom management techniques.

Classroom management styles and strategies. A lack of effective classroom management skills continues to cause a significant number of young and mature teachers to leave teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Kher et al., 2000; Manning & Bucher, 2005; McCann, Johannessen & Ricca, 2005; Obenchain & Taylor, 2005). While working in a school with preservice teachers, Manning and Bucher (2005) realized that classroom management continues to be a major concern of educators. In secondary schools, educators continue to try to identify strategies to work with students who lack discipline, disrupt the learning process, and hinder teachers’ effectiveness.

In discussing the challenge of managing a classroom, Laut (1999) compared the management styles of practicum, intern, and experienced teachers to determine whether years in the classroom correlated with a specific management style. In Laut’s (1999) study, practicum
students were just starting their senior year, interns were at the end of their senior year and classroom teachers had three or more years of experience. Prior to conducting the actual research, Laut (1999) hypothesized that practicum students would be less interventionist – driven more by teacher-student relationships – than the interns and the classroom teachers. However, Laut’s (1999) hypothesis did not completely prove true as classroom teachers were also identified as non-interventionist. Contrastingly, intern teachers were found to be interventionist, using more rules, rewards, and punishments to manage students. Roache and Lewis (2011) examined the benefit of using positive discipline strategies, which allow for relationship building between teacher and student. Results of this study suggest using a variety of preventive strategies like discussion, recognition, and rewards. Hinting, or giving non-directional suggestions of unacceptable behavior, was also mentioned as a strategy. Doing so gave the students a chance to fix the unwanted behavior, essentially placing the responsibility on them. Oliver, Wehby, Reschly, along with the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, (2011) investigated the universal classroom management practices in kindergarten through 12th grade.

The report discussed how effective classroom managers use preventive strategies rather than reactive measures. Preventive procedures like rules and routines typically help reduce behavior issues. In relation to student perception, Lewis (2001) studied the relationship between discipline style and gender. Male teachers were more likely to employ coercive discipline, while female teachers were more likely to use relationship-based discipline. Martin (1997) also investigated a potential correlation between discipline style and gender; however, no significant differences were found between male and female teachers. On the other hand, discipline styles
did vary between urban and rural teachers (Martin, 1997); “urban teachers scored significantly more controlling and interventionist than the rural teachers” (p. 11-12).

Shook (2012) focused on pre-service teachers’ dispositions to change classroom management techniques. Novice teachers tended to use positive techniques like praise and classroom organization when faced with general classroom management issues; however, they used more punitive, negative strategies to deal with student behavior. Consistent use of even a few positive strategies – like rules and routines – can aid in managing a classroom (Shook, 2012). According to Marzano (2003), positive management strategies like focusing on teacher-student relationships can decrease disruptive behavior by 31%. Praising students for appropriate behavior keeps students engaged in the lesson and often reduces unwanted student behavior (Marzano, 2003). Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, and Sugai (2008) identified 20 evidence-based classroom management practices that were considered effective. One of the more common practices includes maximizing structure and predictability. Classrooms with more structure usually had fewer behavioral issues. Reviewing, monitoring, and reinforcing expectations as well as acknowledging seemingly appropriate behavior also proved to be effective practices (Simonsen et al., 2008).

Palumbo and Sanacore (2007) outlined techniques that allow for effective classroom management. New teachers need support, the authors contend, thus these techniques are suggestions to better manage a classroom full of students. One such technique – an increase in academically engaged time – led to fewer management issues. Teaching to students’ strengths tends to increase students’ engagement. Interactive lessons also helped keep students engaged (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2007). After conducting several classroom observations, Emmer,
Evertson, and Anderson (1980) found that setting the stage on the first day of school established the tone for the rest of the year. Implementing effective management strategies on the first day resulted in fewer student behavior issues. “The more effective managers clearly established themselves as the classroom leaders. They worked on rules and procedures until the children learned them” (p. 225). In describing the urban classroom, Jones, Jones, and Vermete (2013) examined the importance of developing student-teacher relationships. Other components to better manage a classroom include using non-verbal cues, being consistent, and having high expectations for students. Self-efficacy can also impact teachers’ ability to effectively manage a classroom.

**Self-efficacy.** Using the construct of teacher efficacy, Lee et al. (2012) explored how student teaching experiences influenced teacher candidates' feelings of preparedness, or their skills, knowledge, and dispositions. The authors found that teacher candidates with high self-efficacy – one’s belief in his or her ability to perform a certain task – typically managed student behaviors more effectively. These candidates felt well prepared to enter the classroom. Those feeling a lack of preparation tended to exhibit low self-efficacy. Rosas and West (2009) compared the beliefs of teacher candidates and teachers already in the profession, specifically regarding classroom management, to see if there was a difference. Generally speaking, teacher candidates had “naive,” idealistic beliefs concerning classroom management, while experienced teachers expressed a more realistic expectation for classroom management. Because new teachers are often ill-prepared to deal with student behavior, their anxiety level often significantly impacts their ability to maintain control (Bucalos & Lingo, 2005). A study of firstyear teachers found that 65% felt anxiety about their ability to maintain control (Bucalos &
Bucalos and Lingo (2005) reported that this anxiety often led the teachers to use negative disciplinary techniques.

The goal of Martin and Baldwin’s (1994) study was to determine whether experienced and novice teachers differed in their attitudes toward classroom management. Using Wolfgang and Glickman's continuum of beliefs, Martin and Baldwin discovered that novice teachers tended to be more interventionist in their beliefs toward classroom management. However, the authors acknowledged that experienced teachers might score as non-interventionist because they have had the time to adjust their perceptions. Sutton, Mudrey-Camino, and Knight (2009) investigated the impact of teacher beliefs on the ability to manage a classroom. Among the findings, the most critical was teachers’ acknowledgement in their practice of regulating the intensity and duration of their emotions. Teachers believed that regulation makes them more effective in management, discipline, and their relationships with students. Overall, positive emotions were easier to regulate; negative emotions were harder to reduce. The research of Garner, Moses, and Waajid (2013) focused on the extent to which prospective teachers’ emotion regulation styles and perceptions of student behavior were predictive of their attitudes about classroom management. The authors found that when teachers “believe that they can effect positive change in the classroom, they are more likely to respond to challenging classroom behavior in ways that facilitate student learning and to persist when positive change is not immediately evident” (Garner et al., 2013, p. 484).

Urban classrooms. Despite the increase of diversity in suburban schools, teacher preparation programs – even those specializing in urban education – fail to adequately prepare their candidates for a diverse mix of students (Darling-Hammond, 2010). According to Schultz,
Neyhart, and Reck (1996), student teachers tend to have stereotypical beliefs about urban children such as “believing that urban children bring attitudes that interfere with education” (p. 95). These stereotypical beliefs are never confronted in many teacher preparation programs. A lack of knowledge regarding students’ cultural and ethnic needs often results in the inability to connect personally with students. Effective classroom management thus becomes more challenging, especially when the teacher is not able to respond to the various emotional, social, and cognitive needs of the students (Brown, 2003).

Effectively managing an urban classroom involves the awareness of potential economic, social, and political barriers (Weiner, 2003). Understanding the barriers, Weiner (2003) indicated, will help teachers better understand classroom management, specifically the influence of social context like student mobility and low socioeconomic status. In order to change the attitude prospective teachers have about inner-city schools, Mason (1997) advocated for urban field experiences within teacher preparation programs. Mason found that early field experiences within an urban school was beneficial in that prospective teachers learned how to deal with difficult teaching situations not always found – at least not to the same degree – in suburban schools. Early exposure to inner-city classrooms will help prospective teachers understand diverse groups of students (socially, economically, and culturally). Even if attitudes did not change toward the “teachability” of inner-city students, prospective teachers’ motivation to pursue urban teaching increased after inner-city field experiences (Mason, 1999).

Matus (1999) investigated the issues in urban teaching that make the situation completely different than suburban teaching. Factors such as student jobs and family problems often result in conflict, sometimes manifesting into student behavioral issues. Considering these issues, Matus (1999) argued for a more humanistic approach (student centered) to managing an urban
classroom. To help combat the challenge of managing an urban education classroom, Dobler, Kesner, Kramer, Resnik, and Devin (2009) studied a collaborative model to help new teachers develop management skills, particularly for the urban school settings. Because college courses may not sufficiently prepare pre-service teachers, experience and immersion within urban classrooms proved significant. Immersion within diverse settings was key to the success of this model. Additionally, teacher candidates had the opportunity to hold regular dialogues with experienced teachers. Critical reflection also proved effective, especially when members of the school and university worked collaboratively (Dobler et al., 2009). Critical reflection often allowed for discussion on classroom management skills revolving around culturally responsive strategies. Brown (2003) examined the importance of establishing a culturally aware management style when teaching in an urban school. The teachers in this study all used culturally responsive management strategies like showing care and flexibility. Showing genuine interest in students resulted in caring classroom communities where classroom management was less interventionist (Brown, 2003).

**Teachers as actors.** In his article for new teachers, Milner-Bolotin (2007) discussed the metaphor “teachers as actors.” In teaching, interaction between the instructor and students can make the difference in the communication and retention of knowledge. An effective teacher knows how to play off the behavior of the students. Regulating emotions and actions is also part of the show.

Baruch (2006) investigated the use of theater in the classroom as an effective management strategy. Teachers are often forced to “think on their feet,” much like an actor often has to improvise on the stage. Using Hofstede’s framework of the five dimensions – power distance, masculinity/femininity, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and the

Stern (1980) explored the importance of using an expressive speaking voice both on the stage and in the classroom. Varying intonation and volume can help maintain the attention of students. Duration and number of pauses can also aid in engagement. Stern (1980) believed vocal training should be a requirement of teacher education programs so the strategies can be honed and practiced. Heath (1993) found role playing to be an effective classroom management strategy, especially when teaching English language learners within the inner city. The author referred to performance theory as a way to engage students. Community organizations have found success in using drama to educate youth, thus Heath (1993) argued for similar practices within the classroom.

**Relevant Analytic Theory**

**Goffman’s theory of dramaturgy.** Erving Goffman’s dramaturgical sociology evolved from the idea that our world is much like a stage in that society interacts via theatrical performance. For Goffman, social interaction was a given; however, he was more concerned with interaction on a micro level. He simply wanted to describe the workings of everyday life (Goffman, 1959). According to Goffman, our daily interactions with other individuals resemble theatrical performances, which often involve roles, scripts, costumes, stages and sets.
Goffman’s theory focuses on what he called the team, or a cooperation of individuals. In social settings, teams are responsible for creating perceptions of reality (Goffman, 1959). Much like actors in a play, teams within commercialized settings adhere to certain roles. These roles are carefully selected in order to effectively portray a specific reality. Societies’ commonly held assumptions of each role help dictate the image each wants to portray. For example, an accountant will depict different traits than a party and event coordinator. Both sell their services, yet one is assumed to do so in a more celebratory, outgoing manner. In order to conform to each role, the actors – or accountant and party planner – use scripts, which Goffman (1959) believed was an essential part of socially-driven interactions. In less structured commercialized settings, employees probably have permission to veer from the script. Workers in commission-based settings might use similar scripts to lure the customer but then improvise to close the deal. In this way, scripts are not just used to control the worker; they are also created to manipulate the customer.

In addition to roles and scripts, Goffman’s theory of dramaturgy includes costuming, stages and sets. The costumes can also vary within the context of a profession. Auditors who travel to the client might dress more formally than a tax accountant who sits in a cube. Similarly, party planners will probably dress according to the occasion. Coordinating a wedding will require different attire than planning a high school prom. Stages and sets are another tool actors use to influence its audience. Like a theater, most commercial settings include a front stage and back stage. The front stage is where the action takes place; the script is usually carried out via the front stage. However, it is the back stage that supports the success of the performance out front. Goffman (1959) emphasized that the “back region will be the place where the performer can reliably expect that no member of the audience will intrude” (p. 113). This does not mean
customers never see the back stage as some are purposely positioned so the audience can see a portion of it. Such intentional positioning of the back stage creates intrigue and imagination. At this point, the employee has the upper hand as it becomes easier to manipulate public perception.

**Extension of dramaturgy to teaching.** Griggs (2001) showed how theoretical frameworks and concepts within the realm of performance can also be used in training potential teachers. Griggs (2001) acknowledged the role of epistemology when training teacher candidates. Specifically, he posed questions rooted in epistemology, or the theory of knowledge. The prospective teachers were asked to think about their own approaches to learning, particularly how they experience the world both as students and potential educators. Like actors who reflect on their theatrical performances, teacher candidates should be trained to assess their own practices in the classroom (Griggs, 2001).

**Rites of passage.** The term rite de passage was first used by Arnold van Gennep in his book *The Rites of Passage* that was published in 1909. Nearly 50 years later, Victor Turner explored van Gennep’s rites of passage via his study of the Ndembu tribe in Zambia. Both anthropologists explored rites of passage as a series of rituals that signaled an individual’s transition from one social state or status to another. In analyzing ceremonial activities, van Gennep believed it was possible to distinguish three phases including preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation). In the preliminal phase, the individual experiences separation from a socially-defined space or relationship. Next, the individual enters a liminal state where social ambiguity occurs. Once the liminal rites are complete, the individual reenters society with a new status.

Van Gennep (1960) suggested that “the life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another” (p. 2) and that transitions
from one group or social situation to the next are “implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man’s life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings” (p. 3). Turner (1985) described rites of passage as “one way of seeing and understanding to another, a passage not vouchsafed to those who hold hard to values, meanings, goals, and beliefs they have grown up to think of as reality” (p. 205).

Van Gennep and Turner both recognized these stages as having a sequential pattern. They also acknowledged that passage from stage to stage is not dependent on a specific period of time. In other words, the amount of time spent in each phase is not the same for all individuals. Furthermore, van Gennep (1960) suggested these three stages can have varying degrees of importance. Rites of separation tend to be emphasized at funerals, while rites of incorporation are the focus at weddings. Turner was more concerned with the liminality – or the ambiguous state that occurs between stages of rituals – of all rites of passage; he labeled this transitional period as being betwixt and between in that “the ritual subject passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state” (Turner, 1985, p. 94). This phase differs from the other two in that liminality lacks symbolic allusions. As a result, the individual experiences ambiguity.

Throughout the ritual, the tribal elder oversees the various stages of transition (van Gennep, 1960). Turner (1985) believed that the neophyte, or initiate, plays a submissive role, while the tribal elder plays the authoritative role. In this way, there exists a set of relations that create a “social structure” of highly specific type (p. 8). Authority over the neophyte is based on adhering to the tradition that the elders best understand the common good of the community. In other words, there is a reliance on what can be called "traditional wisdom," or knowledge based in the teachings of the elders (Turner, 1985).
Extension of rites of passage to teaching. McNamara, Roberts, Basit, and Brown (2002) applied van Gennep’s rites of passage to the rituals experienced in teacher education programs. Specifically, McNamara et al. (2002) explored the symbolic acts performed during initial teacher training like the Numeracy Skills Test, which is used to assess math skills of preservice teachers in Manchester, England. Passing the test symbolized one of the steps needed to formally enter the teaching profession. Rather than portraying rites of passage as linear—as posed by van Gennep and Turner—McNamara et al. (2002) described a more complex liminal stage of passage in which student teachers experience a state of “in-betweeness”, where they are neither just a student nor fully a teacher. In the study, student teachers identified “teacherlyness” when given the freedom to create lessons and guide student behavior. However, they felt like that status was temporary because they still had to perform the symbolic acts of a student, or teacher in training.

Head (1992) and Cook-Sather (2006) also investigated student teaching within the context of rites of passage. Both authors considered student teaching as the liminal phase of a rite of passage for teachers, but Head (1992) expanded on the idea to include student teaching as an initiation rite of an educational rite of passage. Since student teachers are separating from their previous roles as students and preparing to enter the field of teaching, the student teaching process has “the potential to initiate them and serve as the liminal phase” (Head, 1992, p. 94). At the same time, Head (1992) found that student teaching does not fully reflect the rites of passage in that it does not “capitalize on the transformational process inherent within this betwixt and between period of student teaching” (p. 99). Cook-Sather (2006) also focused on Turner’s framework; however, the study emphasized the process of identity formation, specifically how student teachers view themselves in their transition from university student to classroom teacher.
According to White (1989), student teachers often judge their own performance based on the feedback of cooperating teachers. These experienced, veteran teachers essentially act as guides, exuding their knowledge of the profession. The cultural knowledge, or “traditional wisdom,” that their cooperating teachers hold has “the power to make intelligible what has previously appeared mysterious and threatening” (White, 1989, p. 182). At this point in student teaching, the novices are ready to be shown the unseen, including the social relationships, beliefs, and practices of teaching. However, student teachers must accept the indubitable beliefs of teaching before they can obtain this cultural knowledge.

**Dreyfus’ model of skill acquisition.** In their analysis of chess players and air force pilots, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) studied how humans acquire skills through formal instruction. From their research, the authors proposed that humans pass through a series of stages which Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) called the Dreyfus model of skill acquisition. The five stages include novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. The model is a “situated and descriptive phenomenological account of development of skill over time,” so it does not point to “isolated competencies nor enabling traits or talent” (Benner, 2004, p. 190). As applied to teaching, a teacher may demonstrate different skill levels in different areas of practice. For example, a teacher skilled in managing a high school classroom might not be at the same skill level when managing an elementary school classroom.

In passing from novice to expert, Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) proposed that skill acquisition develops over time and is based on experiential learning. The model assumes the novice has no previous experience, thus rules – or objective attributes – are needed to help the beginner make decisions. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) called these attributes “context-free rules.” According to Benner (2004), “the rule-governed behavior of the novice is extremely
limited and inflexible” (p. 191). The novice needs close supervision and tends to see situations in isolation; the novice has little ability to predict future incidents. The next stage, advanced beginner, assumes more experience within that particular area of practice. According to Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), the advanced beginner can now recognize more situational components. These situational components – along with the context-free rules used by the novice – allow the advanced beginner to better understand the environment. As a result, the advanced beginner has the ability to more accurately assess situations. However, the advanced beginner still needs occasional supervision and is only able to accomplish partial resolution of complex situations.

The competent stage requires the ability to see actions in terms of long-range goals or plans (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). At this stage, “there is no objective procedure like the novice’s context-free feature recognition,” thus choosing a plan can be a laborious process and the choice “crucially affects behavior in a way that one particular situational element rarely does” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 26). Unlike the novice and advanced beginner, the competent participant now has the experience needed to recognize the relevance of specific situational characteristics. Complex situations are dealt with through deliberate analysis and planning. Proficiency is reached once the problem-solving becomes more fluid and rapid. At this stage, the participant has an enhanced ability to read a situation. Specifically, participants at the proficient level can see the overall picture and how individuals fit within that picture. Previous experience allows for “holistic discrimination and association” when assessing a situation (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 28). Even though the proficient participant can intuitively respond to patterns without decomposing them, there is still a conscious awareness of analytical processing. The final stage – expertise – assumes an intuitive grasp of situations based on vast experience. According to Benner (2004), “action, thought, and feeling” are fused in this
stage (p. 197). Experts do not consciously decide what to attend to and what to do in any particular situation. Intuitive, fluid responses are typical of the expert. Oftentimes, the expert cannot rationally explain their intuitive responses but their decisions are generally correct (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

Research on Dreyfus’ model as applied to teaching. In describing the characteristics of effective teachers, Berliner (2004) discussed several theories for the development of expertise, including Dreyfus’ model of skill acquisition. Berliner studied three groups – student teachers, those with a few years of experience, and those identified as proficient – using Dreyfus’ five-stage model. The first few stages, including novice, advanced beginner, and competent were easier to identify as Berliner found these stages to be a progression of skill acquisition. As expected, the novice student teacher had minimal skill in teaching and often exhibited rational, inflexible behavior (Berliner, 2004). While the novice demonstrated a limited understanding of situated knowledge, the advanced beginner had acquired more practical knowledge through the reflection of prior experiences. After a few years of teaching, the advanced beginner could recognize when it was appropriate to ignore context-free rules like “give praise for the right answers” and “wait 3 seconds after asking a higher order question” (Berliner, 2004, p. 206).

However, like the novice, the advanced beginner still had no sense of what was important when it came to making decisions. The competent teacher could determine the importance of situations, which is a defining characteristic of this third stage of skill development. Berliner (2004) found teachers at this stage felt more in control of the events around them, which often resulted in an increased feeling of responsibility in the classroom. The next two stages – proficient and expert – were hardest to discriminate when studying teaching. Berliner (2004) reported the desire to combine the proficient and expert stage. The biggest distinction between
the two stages is the expert’s arational behavior. According to Berliner (2004), the experts “are
not consciously choosing what to attend to and what to do. They are acting effortlessly, fluidly,
and in a sense, this is arational because it is not easily described as deductive or analytic
behavior” (Berliner, 2004, p. 207). Like the expert teacher, those in the proficient stage had a
holistic way of viewing situations. As a result, proficient teachers could accurately predict
classroom events.

**Moral career.** In his book *Asylums*, Goffman (1961) discussed moral career within the
context of total institutions, which he defined as enclosed social systems that are created to
exercise considerable control over the lives of those who work or reside there (Goffman labeled
these individuals as inmates). Schools, prisons, and mental hospitals are examples of total
institutions. Within these total institutions, inmates experience certain conditions in which they
must adapt. Inmates adapt differently to these phases in moral career, a term Goffman (1961)
used to refer “to any social strand of any person’s course through life” (p. 130). Although the
concept of career could relate to a person’s social position within the institution, Goffman was
more concerned about the internal matters of career, including its moral aspects which he defined
as “the regular sequence of changes that career entails in the person’s self and in his framework
of imagery for judging himself and others” (Goffman, 1961, p. 128).

Goffman’s (1961) moral career has several stages. Prior to inclusion in the total
institution, the individual’s cultural knowledge is to the “home world” (p. 12). The inmate only
realizes the benefits of this culture after the institutionalization process. According to Goffman
(1961), these cultures – and the activities associated with that culture – have been taken for
granted. The stripping of these activities often causes the individual to feel humiliated and
degraded. As a result, the inmate experiences a change in moral career, “a career composed of
the progressive changes that occur in the beliefs that he has concerning himself and significant others” (Goffman, 1961, p. 14). Such change includes the desire to remain anonymous, which might be a response to the lack of group formation with other inmates.

Later, once the intentional anonymity becomes exhausting, the individual actively engages with inmates. At this point, the inmate wants to be considered a part of the total institution community. Regarding the inmate’s career, the construction of self image is often adapted in a way “as to provide him with a view of himself that he can usefully expound in current situations” (p. 150). For example, if the individual’s current self image is the result of a positive past image – and an encouraging future self image awaits him – then the story is a favorable one. However, if the inmate has a poor self image both in the past and present then “the best he can do is to show that he is not responsible for what has become of him” (Goffman, 1961, p. 151).

**Extension of the moral career to teaching.** In her study on the identity development of pre-service teachers, Galman (2009) applied several theoretical frameworks including Goffman’s theory of identity and the moral career. Specifically, Galman (2009) examined how pre-service teachers experienced dissonance as a catalyst for development. When the structures of the teacher education program – specifically the program structure that included courses aimed specifically at developing methodological skills, or “best practices” – conflicted with the preservice teachers’ experiences and beliefs, some of the participants left that particular program because their identity as “teacher to be” was challenged. Those who remained in the teacher education program said dissonance actually forced them to alter their stories of “self-as-teacher” (Galman, 2009, p. 474). These teacher candidates were willing to change their self image in order to pass through the teacher education institution.
Chambers and Chambers (1978) also conducted a study using Goffman’s theory of the moral career. The authors analyzed teacher motivation in relation to in-service education. Those with vocational role constructs of “I am a teacher”, or a firm belief in one’s role, were more motivated to enroll in in-service educational opportunities. In order to increase involvement, Chambers and Chambers (1978) believed cooperating teachers should be allowed to give input regarding in-service education. In this way, school officials acknowledge their teachers’ ongoing moral career.

Teachers reaching the expert phase consistently exhibit the role of “I am teacher” and are often labeled as adept because they actively pursue leadership opportunities – like hosting a student teacher and engaging in professional development – in order to improve their own teaching (Steffy, 2000). This active pursuit of self-improvement – for the sake of “being the best you can be” is often absent in novices. According to Steffy (2000), novices’ pursue professional development mainly for the sake of achieving tenure or salary increases. Thus, the moral development of the novice and expert often differ significantly. However, in working collaboratively with an adept expert or guide, novices are more likely to successfully transition into the role of “veteran teacher” (Galman, 2009).

Chapter 2: Research Methodology

This qualitative study – anchored by Goffman’s theories of dramaturgy and moral career, van Gennep and Turner’s rites of passage, and Dreyfus’ model of skill acquisition – allowed me to explore teachers’ perceptions of their classroom management abilities, specifically in an urban classroom setting. This study provided pre-service, novice, and tenured teachers the opportunity
to describe their classroom experiences through the lens of dramaturgy, moral career, rites of passage, and skill acquisition.

**Research Design**

**Qualitative research.** In order to explore the perceptions, attitudes and lived experiences of the teachers in this study, I knew a qualitative approach was most appropriate. As Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested, qualitative research is “rich in description of people, places, and conversations and not easily handled by statistical procedures” (p. 2). The ingredients of an effectively managed classroom cannot be quantifiably measured. Additionally, classroom management strategies and teacher perceptions are often subjective and unique to the individual teacher. Thus, qualitative research was the most appropriate method.

Through this qualitative research, I was better able to understand “the complexities of the human condition,” which Harper (1992) believed can “take the qualitative researcher through and beyond description to concept development and theory building (as cited in Bazeley, 2013, p. 4). The phenomenon of classroom management is complex in that strategies are definitely not one-size-fits-all (in terms of how the teacher decides to manage his/her classroom). The issue further complicates itself in an urban classroom where the needs of the students are extremely diverse.

**Grounded theory.** Prior to conducting observations in the classrooms of pre-service, novice, and tenured teachers, I assumed that various theories could develop from the data collected during the field research. As a result, I saw the need for a grounded theory approach because it allowed me to “direct, manage, and streamline [my] data collection and, moreover, construct an original analysis of the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). I did not approach the research with a specific hypothesis, mainly because the phenomenon of classroom management is
multifaceted and unique to each classroom. Class size, the type of course, and the personality of
the teacher all come into play when managing a classroom. What works for one teacher does not
necessarily work for another. Using grounded theory allowed the focus to develop in a more
naturalistic and descriptive manner, which are key features of qualitative research (Bogdan &
Biklen, 2007).

Once a fair amount of the data was collected via participant observation, I coded and
analyzed the findings. Definite patterns in the data then guided my writing of interview
questions. The in-depth interviews allowed for interpretive inquiry in that participants were
asked to reflect on their everyday experiences (Charmaz, 2006). Analysis of the initial
interviews suggested the need for more information. Creswell (2013) described this process as a
“zigzag” in that the researcher makes several visits to the field, analyzes the data, conducts
multiple interviews, returns to analyze the data, gathers more information, and so on.

**Case study research.** Case study research concerns the framing of the issue being
studied. Such research starts with the identification of a specific site, group, organization, or
project. As Creswell (2013) suggested, researchers using a case study framework focus on
“reallife cases that are in progress so that they can gather accurate information not lost by time”
(98).

I utilized case study research in order to better understand a specific issue – teachers’ perceptions
of their classroom management – within the context of one particular urban high school. I decided
on a single-site study for multiple reasons. In addition to the convenience of working at this
particular site, I knew my familiarity with the site was likely to provide authentic data in that my
presence would not impact the usual behavior of students and staff. During the observations,
students rarely acknowledged my presence as they knew I taught in the building.
Conducting case research required me to collect in-depth data through various sources like observations, interviews, and documents. In-depth understanding of the data required the exploration of more than one source. I knew that analyzing multiple sources would provide a more rich description of the case. In fact, Yin (2009) speculated that a major strength of case study data collection is the ability to combine multiple sources of evidence. Yin (2009) explained that the main advantage of multiple data collection instruments is triangulation, or “the development of converging lines of inquiry” (p. 115). According to Yin (2009), data triangulation offers multiple measures for the same phenomenon thus increasing the validity of the study. My use of triangulation will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Data Collection

The Case Study Site. During my research, I looked at one specific high school named Urban High School (UHS), which is located in a first-ring Midwestern suburb. I chose this school for multiple reasons, one being its unique student and teacher body. Even though this school is located in the suburbs, it is considered an urban school because of the high percentage of students who “open enroll” under a desegregation program that allows low-income urban families to attend suburban schools. The school’s urbanization has resulted in its stigma as the district’s “ghetto” school. This label is often used by students at the district’s other high school, which is located in a second-ring western suburb. In the last 10 years, the demographic make-up of the students at UHS has changed significantly. With a student body population of 2000, UHS now has approximately 65% students of color compared to 33.9% in 2004. The teaching staff at UHS does not reflect the diversity of the student body. According to 2013-2014 data from this Midwest Department of Education, approximately 81% of the teachers at UHS are White. Regarding experience, the average number of years at UHS is 12. New teachers with less than
three years of experience compose 15% of the teaching staff, while 36.4% have 3-10 years of experience. Approximately 48.54% have been teaching for more than 10 years. Regarding age, 47% of the teaching staff is between 30-44 years old and the average age is 40. Concerning educational level, 37% of the teachers at UHS have their master’s degree.

Another unique aspect of the school is its International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme and course offerings. The IB, an international educational foundation headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, creates globally-minded curriculum in four educational programmes for children aged 3–19. UHS is one of 20 high schools in this Midwestern state that offers the Diploma Programme, which encompasses the junior and senior years. As an IB diploma candidate, students take a full IB course load including global language, English, math, social studies, and science. The program also involves completion of an extended essay, enrollment in a course called Theory of Knowledge, and fulfillment of volunteer hours. At the end of the junior and senior year, the diploma candidate tests in each of the subjects. These assessments are eventually packaged and sent to various IB examiners around the world. Of the 29 diploma candidates in the 2013-2014 school year, 23 earned the diploma, or 79.3 percent, which is consistent with the global IB diploma pass rate of nearly 80 percent. Students not attempting the IB Diploma can also take individual IB courses at their own choosing. Freshmen and sophomores can also take honors classes as part of the IB Middle Years Programme (IBMYP).

UHS also offers many regular, non-IBMYP courses. This is rare in that many IB schools in this Midwestern state do not offer non-IB courses.

Besides its unique demographics and course offerings, I selected this school for another reason. In order to elicit genuine responses during the interview process, I knew my participants had to feel comfortable with the researcher. Additionally, I needed easy access to multiple
classrooms where I could observe the daily interactions between the teacher and students. Even though teachers are asked to keep their doors closed and locked during class – to maximize safety and to minimize the distraction of the often noisy and chaotic hallway – administrators encourage the “open door philosophy” of observing and learning from each other. Because students were used to the presence of other teachers and administrators, they were less likely to be influenced by the observer. Finally, this particular high school was selected because triangulation of the data could not occur unless the pre-service, novice, and veteran teachers all encountered the same students. The data collected had to come from one school where teachers experienced similar classroom management scenarios.

Since teachers experience similar management scenarios within the same place and under the same authority, UHS can be described as a total institution. All activities are tightly scheduled and “imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials,” (Goffman, 1961, p. 6). At UHS, four administrators – one head principal and three assistant principals – implement the rules, or a single rational plan, in order to fulfill institutional goals (Goffman, 1961). Teachers enforce the rules to meet the goal of educating students to become active, compassionate, principled critical thinkers. When teachers need additional support enforcing these goals, the appropriate grade-level dean will step in and help manage student behavior. In the worst cases – such as fights, theft, and drugs – in-school police officers get involved. Violent offenses involving weapons warrant out-of-school suspensions, while nonviolent offenses result in in-school suspension. When deemed necessary – often a result of several fights in one day or suspected gang activity – the principal will issue a “code yellow” which requires a soft lockdown where students are contained in the classroom during instructional time. No passes to the bathroom or locker are permitted. Once the bell signals the
end of class, students are allowed to move to their next class. In emergency situations – like sickness or distress – teachers call the front office for an adult to escort the student to the designated place. Being on “code yellow” is an authoritative control that the students dislike because their movements are restricted. Teachers tend to like code yellow because students know they can’t come to class late or ask for passes, which tends to disrupt the learning environment. Code yellow ends once administration believes the environment is safe and calm. In the most severe cases, code yellow has lasted several days at UHS. Although many of these features are found in places other than total institutions, it is the collective occurrence of the total institution characteristics that makes UHS a prime example.

Participants. I began recruiting participants during the 2013-14 school year and continued to accumulate data through 2014-2015 and until second semester of the 2015-2016 school year. Before I did any of the recruiting, I brainstormed several criteria that would help determine the sample size. In a perfect world, the sample size of UHS teachers would reflect the demographic representation of the teaching staff. The most recent demographic data reports the UHS teaching body as 52 percent female and 48 percent male. Although the sample size should reflect these percentages, other criteria – that were deemed critical to the study – made the 52 percent female, 48 percent male sample impossible to achieve. Instead, I focused on including teachers from various disciplines, including social studies, English, EL, global language, science, math, music, special education, and physical education. In this way, my sample size would more accurately reflect the school’s diverse population. Also, I wanted to see if the type of course as well as class size (special education and EL classes tend to be smaller) had an impact on teachers’ perceptions of their own classroom management.
Another criterion I used for recruiting was years of experience. After researching several career teacher models, I decided to select teachers to interview and observe with the aid of the following phases: pre-service (also referred to as student teachers), novice (1-3 years), and tenured (4 years or more). In the district in which I work, tenure is not achieved until the beginning of the fourth consecutive school year. I thought it was important to include newly tenured teachers as I wanted to explore the possible evolution of perceptions regarding classroom management. Within the veteran phase, I identified three separate stages – competent, proficient, and expert – to align with Dreyfus’ skill acquisition model. “Competent” teachers are the newly tenured with at least four years of experience. Regarding skill, these teachers have the experience and frame of reference needed to recognize the relevance of a situation. In the context of this study, teachers with four to six years of experience fall into the competent stage of Dreyfus’ model. The proficient teachers have seven or more years of experience. These teachers now have the experience to view situations in a holistic way. They can accurately predict classroom events. The one teacher who fell into the expert stage was institutionally identified as such since she is the school’s official mentor and educational functionary. Additionally, this teacher has more than four decades of teaching experience at seven different high schools in various states. By including teachers from various stages in their career (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2), I was able to include a quasi-retrospective viewpoint and compare these perceptions to those just entering the profession.

Originally, I wanted to include teachers from different teacher education programs to see if preparation – and thus a teacher’s perception – played a role in the pre-service teacher’s ability to manage an urban classroom. However, I realized this was not possible considering the sample had already been reduced according to discipline and years of experience. In total, I interviewed
25 teachers. I observed and then interviewed 10 of these participants by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Teachers observed included three males and seven females. The majority of disciplines were included except health, foods, and science. At the time of the observations, the school had four student teachers. All were observed within their English, social studies, band, and EL classrooms. Two first-year teachers – special education and social studies – were included as well as one third-year English teacher. In the tenured phase, one teacher was a physical education teacher, another taught math, and the other was a global language teacher.

Later, once the initial observations and interviews were concluded, the data revealed a need for more participant interviews. Although the specifics will be discussed in the data analysis section, it is important to mention the additional 15 participants before moving on. Of the additional participants, eleven had more than four years of experience. (I specifically selected more tenured teachers – including myself as an additional, reflexive source of data – in order to triangulate the data of the less experienced teachers). Of those participants, four were English teachers, one was EL, another was math, two were science, one was AVID – a college preparation program – and the two others were social studies teachers. The other four interviewees included one male first-year social studies teacher, one female second-year social studies teacher, one female third-year social studies teacher, and a former student teacher who taught in my classroom during second semester of the 2012-13 school year.

Finally, like former University of St. Thomas students David Johanek, Diane Fittipaldi, Allison LaBree Whittlef, and Theresa Anne Trexler were participants in their own study, I also felt it necessary to include myself as a participant. My familiarity with the school district – I went to elementary school, middle school, and high school in the same district as UHS – provided me with the background necessary to create thoughtful, potentially illuminating research questions.
Furthermore, my vast amount of knowledge and experience in the district – more than 20 years as a student and teacher – helped establish credibility both with the participants and readers of this study. Throughout the data collection, including classroom observations and in-depth personal interviews, I kept a personal journal where I reflected on my own experiences as a teacher at UHS. Additionally, I often responded to the various ideas and opinions of the participants. These personal experiences will be described in the subsequent chapters. In chapter 3, I discuss my journey to becoming an urban teacher. In chapter 4, I used observer’s comments (based on field notes taken during classroom observations) as well as excerpts from my personal journal. I also used excerpts from the journal in chapter 5.

The following tables provide detailed information about each of the participants. The notable characteristics of student teachers and novices are included in Table 2.1, while the characteristics of the newly tenured and veterans teachers are displayed in Table 2.2. Characteristics like age and years of experience apply to the 2013-2014 school year. With the exception of the four student teachers and Ms. Bates, all of the teachers listed below were still teachers at UHS during the fall semester of 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years taught</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade(s)/subject(s) taught</th>
<th>Physical appearance (race, height, build, hair style/color, dress)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Ryan</td>
<td>Student teacher</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mixed grades, English Learner (EL) teacher and Spanish</td>
<td>White, 5’4”, petite build, long dark hair, trendy professional dress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1
*Characteristics of student teachers and novices (1-3 years of experience)*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Years taught</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Grade(s)/subject(s) taught</th>
<th>Physical appearance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Scott</td>
<td>Student teacher</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9th grade English</td>
<td>Mixed race, 5’2”, average build, shoulderlength dark hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Roering</td>
<td>Student teacher</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12th grade social studies</td>
<td>White, 5’6”, average build, shoulder length blonde hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Somers</td>
<td>Student teacher</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mixed grades, band</td>
<td>White, 5’8”, slender build, longer brown hair, beard, glasses, young hippy attire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Anderson</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>Mixed race (Hispanic/White), 5’8”, athletic, slender build, dark hair often worn in a pony tail, business casual attire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Knudson</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11th grade English</td>
<td>White, 5’8”, slender build, long blonde hair, trendy business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. O’Donnell</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9th grade social studies</td>
<td>White, 5’7”, slender build, short brown hair, beard, professional dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Dodson</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>9th grade social studies</td>
<td>White, 6’1”, slender build, short brown hair (thin &amp; balding), business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Miller</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mixed grades, math</td>
<td>White, 5’0”, small athletic build, shoulderlength blonde hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Nelson</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Mixed grades, social studies</td>
<td>White, 5’3”, heavy-set, shoulder-length brown hair, wears glasses, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Halverson</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>10th grade English</td>
<td>White, 5’5”, average build, long brown hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Name</td>
<td>Grade Year</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Class Description</td>
<td>Physical Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Evans</td>
<td>5th year</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mixed grades, social studies</td>
<td>White, 4’11”, petite build, long brown hair, fashionable professional attire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Larson</td>
<td>6th year</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mixed grades, AVID</td>
<td>White, 5’6”, average build, wavy, long brown hair, professional attire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Richards</td>
<td>7th year</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Mixed grades, math</td>
<td>White, 5’10”, slender build, buzzed blonde hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Pahl</td>
<td>7th year</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Mixed grades, English Learner (EL) teacher</td>
<td>White, 5’7”, average build, shoulder length brown hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Koch</td>
<td>8th year</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10th grade English</td>
<td>White, 5’10”, stocky build, thinning dirty blonde hair, casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Donaldson</td>
<td>8th year</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9th/11th grade English</td>
<td>White, 5’7”, slender build, short dark hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Bates</td>
<td>10th year</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>White, 5’9”, slender build, shoulder-length brown hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Higgins</td>
<td>11th year</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mixed grades, social studies</td>
<td>White, 5’5”, average build, shoulder length sandy blonde hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Peterson</td>
<td>11th year</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9th grade English</td>
<td>White, 5’1”, petite build, shoulder-length sandy blonde hair, professional dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Swanson</td>
<td>11th year</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9th grade physical education, AVID</td>
<td>White, 5’11”, athletic build, long red hair, athletic attire for physical education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Wilson</td>
<td>11th year</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mixed grades, social studies</td>
<td>White, 5’5”, average build, short brown hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Hess</td>
<td>12th year</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>White, 5’9”, substantial build, shoulder length brown hair, casual dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Paulson</td>
<td>41st year</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>White, 5’4”, stocky build, short brown hair, business casual dress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Observations and interviews.** Research began with classroom observations. In order to accomplish my goal of observing 10 teachers, I had to get substitute teachers to cover my own classes, but in doing so, I was able to extend the observations throughout the school day and over the course of several weeks. I wanted to avoid taking a mere snapshot of the data, which might have occurred had I done all my observations within a few days or during my prep hour – the
same class period every day. Once potential participants were identified, I personally asked the
teachers if they were willing to be observed in their classrooms. Additionally, these teachers had
to be willing to participate in face-to-face, audio-recorded interviews. All of the teachers I
approached agreed to participate in the study.

During the 10 classroom observations, I took field notes recording information about the
physical and social environment (i.e. course name, class size, demographics, desk arrangement).
I also recorded information about the particular lesson taught as well as the actions and behaviors
of the students. Formal and informal interactions between the teacher and students were also
noted. Both during and after the observations, I made observer comments that emphasized
impressions, insights, and hunches, which included ideas for future action.

According to Charmaz (2006), a researcher who “engages in observation and concludes
the study with ten intensive interviews of key informants has far more to draw on than someone
who has simply conducted ten rich interviews” (p. 18). Thus, I analyzed the data collected from
the observations, noticing certain themes and patterns that helped guide the writing of interview
questions. Initial interview questions were open-ended and geared toward the participants’ own
experiences and perceptions regarding classroom management. Follow-up questions during the
second round of interviews were more detailed and included references to the theoretical lenses
used in this particular study. The first round of interviews for the first 10 participants all
occurred at school during common prep periods and took about 45-60 minutes to conduct.

Quiet, familiar areas such as a teacher’s unoccupied office or classroom were utilized in order to
keep the participants comfortable and relaxed.
**Data Analysis**

**Processing and interpretation of data.** The processing of data was ongoing during the collection period, mainly because the data built quickly. From the start, I checked data quality and usefulness to ensure adequacy for the research purpose and question (Bazeley, 2013). While there were several ways to process and analyze the data, Creswell (2013) highlighted strategies like writing marginal notes, summarizing field notes, and making connections among the categories. After concluding the classroom observations, I analyzed my observer comments and summaries of the field experiences. Patterns and themes began to reveal themselves, specifically within the three phases of teaching, thus substantiating my initial method for sorting the current teachers. The data collected from veteran and novice teachers substantiated the data collected in the student teachers’ classrooms. In this way, data was triangulated and I was able to narrow the focus of interview topics to ensure eventual development of the theoretical frameworks. In addition, I used my observer’s comments from field notes to assist my own interrogation of my moral career, both as a teacher and at UHS. These comments then became a template that informed my development of the subsequent data chapters.

As Charmaz (2006) suggested, interviewing is a “flexible, emergent technique; ideas and issues emerge during the interview and interviewers can immediately pursue these leads” (p. 29). Although I entered each interview with a list of specific questions, I was prepared to shift the conversation and follow hunches. Since the majority of the questions required personal, reflective responses, I tried to let the participant direct the conversation. This approach – combined with prior relationships with most of the participants – resulted in a more organic interview experience. In pursuing various themes in the interviews, I was able to gain further insight into teachers’ perceptions of their own classroom management. However, on many
occasions, I realized more data was needed thus I returned to the field to gather more focused data “to answer analytic questions and to fill conceptual gaps” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 29). In several cases, I asked participants to answer follow-up questions. Diving deeper into a participant’s classroom experience helped fill some of the conceptual gaps; however, the data was still revealing new aspects of the potential theoretical frameworks. Grounded theory saturation had not yet occurred. As a result, I schedule more interviews – 15 total – until I noticed theoretical saturation. Glaser (2001) called this “theoretical completeness” (p. 191).

Large amounts of data resulted from the interviews and observations conducted over the course of two school years. Thus, it was important to reduce the data by organizing it; identifying emerging themes, categories, and patterns; and testing hypotheses against the data (Patton, 1990). Computer programs like Microsoft Excel helped organize the data into the appropriate text units. Using an organizational tool like Excel aided in coding the data later on. The interpretation process began with developing codes, forming themes from the codes, and organizing the themes into larger units (Creswell, 2013). These larger units of “abstraction” helped to make sense of the data. Interpreting data based on instinct and intuition involves “abstracting out beyond the codes and themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 187). Before I could get to this point, however, I had to transcribe the recorded interviews and start the initial coding phase. Bazeley (2013) provided several ways to “break open the data” including open coding, line-by-line coding, and microanalysis (p. 161). Noting repetitions and patterns within an interview is another coding strategy (Bazeley, 2013). Building thematic understanding can help identify the ‘essence’ of a phenomenon like effectively managing a classroom as well as aid in the analysis of the ‘lived experience’ of the person undergoing the phenomenon (Bazeley, 2013).
Once I “broke open the data” by using open coding and line-by-line coding, I generated preliminary coding categories, or coding families. Codes tended to be based on setting, definition of the situation, perspective held by subjects, activities, and strategies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The authors’ suggestions provided clues of where to look when I coded but they did not “imply that analysis and interpretation rises only from the data and not from the perspectives the researcher holds” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 180).

After generating preliminary coding categories, I assigned them (as abbreviations) to pieces of the field notes and interview transcripts. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), assigning the coding categories to the data serves as a test to determine the usefulness of the categories. As expected, not all codes proved useful, in which case the data was reduced.

Special Considerations

Validity and generalizability. According to Nardi (2006), validity is “about accuracy and whether the operationalization is correctly indicating what it is supposed to” (p. 58). Throughout the research, I tried to accurately and truthfully describe the subjects and the resulting data. In order to ensure validity in the research, I used various data collection techniques that required constant cross-checking. During the transcription of taped interviews, I often referred back to my notes to make sure the participants’ responses were accurate. Because transcription can be “plagued with interpretive difficulties” (Bazeley, 2013, p. 73), I used a high-quality recorder and professional transcription service. After receiving the transcripts from rev.com, I reviewed each transcript to make sure there were no inaccuracies. In this way, I was able to “build intimate knowledge” of my data (Bazeley, 2013, p. 73).

To increase the credibility of my conclusions, I conducted comparative analysis, considered alternative explanations, and gathered all relevant evidence in preparing my claims.
(Bazeley, 2013). Additionally, I compared and triangulated results, thus seeking alternative interpretations and testing these against my data. According to Mathison (1988), “triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions because traditional scientific techniques are incompatible with this alternate epistemology” (p. 13).

Generalizability is one of the concepts suggested by Stenbacka (2001) as the structure for both conducting and documenting high quality qualitative research. However, generalizability does not work the same way in qualitative research as it does in quantitative research. According to Bazeley (2013), “as qualitative studies rarely achieve the required degree of precision in representative sampling, and don’t aspire to, clearly the concept of generalisation in that sense is inappropriate” (p. 410). Instead, qualitative researchers focus on analytic or theoretical generalisation where theories can be applied to other contexts. Rather than use the term generalisation, Lincoln and Guba (1985) defined transferability as a way to “refer to case-to-case transfer of knowledge” (as cited in Bazeley 2013). In this way, it was my intention to provide a case that can be used by other researchers. Although my findings are unique to this particular high school setting, the data collected can still be used as a starting point for other researchers.

**Ethics and confidentiality.** Participation in this study was voluntary. In each case, I made it clear the subject’s decision to participate would not affect his or her current or future relations with UHS or the university in which I was enrolled. Once the teachers agreed to participate, I told them they were free to withdraw at any time during the research process. This data would then be destroyed. The participants were also free to skip any questions I asked during the interviews.
Prior to the observations, participants were asked to read and sign a consent form. However, I knew that simply giving a consent form to a subject does not constitute informed consent. Because consent itself is a process of communication, I read a script to the prospective participant describing my study. This consent form briefly outlined the purpose of the study. Research procedures were then explained, specifically regarding the potential length of participation in the study itself. Confidentiality issues were addressed, particularly the measures I used to protect the participants’ identity and involvement in their place of work. Since participants voluntarily shared personal information, I promised to use pseudonyms. The consent form also explained the risks and benefits of being in the study. Although there was no monetary compensation for participants, their involvement included the benefit of learning about a phenomenon that is complex in nature.

**Risks and benefits.** The study had several risks for participants; however, I worked hard to minimize them. First, I asked the participant to identify the teacher education program s/he attended; however, the institution remained anonymous within the study itself. The name of the institution was for my own records. Second, if students, other teachers or specific classes were mentioned, these names were changed so sources remain anonymous.

**Protection of data.** The data collected for this study is confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify the institution or participants. The data stored on my home computer is password protected. I will delete and shred any document that originates from this particular study.

**Personal bias.** Having taught at this particular school for the past nine years, I have definite opinions about classroom management. I have also mentored two student teachers within the last five years. I witnessed their struggle, particularly when trying to manage student
behavior. My own classroom management experiences have also shaped my opinions about managing an urban high school classroom. During my research, I was aware of these personal biases. As a result, I was intentional about sharing my own stories with my dissertation chair in order to examine and expose these biases. In this way, I hoped to minimize any contamination of the data or analysis.
Chapter 3: Becoming an Urban Teacher

My pathway to teaching included various rites of passage, specifically transition and initiation rites, first as a college student studying abroad in a third-world country and then as one of the only females working in a male-dominated bureau at the Associated Press. Frequent changes in social condition impacted the way I perceived my identity and moral status, or moral career according to Goffman (1959). In this chapter, these social changes will be discussed in detail.

As mentioned in chapter two, Goffman’s (1961) description of “moral career” as changes one goes through in a career that shape one’s sense of self seems suited to serve as a way to reflect upon certain events in my career up to this point. Moreover, as outlined in this chapter, my moral career mirrors those of many teachers at UHS. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter offers useful background for the data analysis in chapters four and five.

A Leap of Faith

It was not until I was 24-years-old that I considered teaching. I still do not know exactly why I left my job in journalism to pursue a master’s degree in education. I just think it was the path I was destined to follow. The decision felt right and after taking a few classes that first semester, my “leap of faith” seemed appropriate and less uncertain. In addition to enrolling in the MA program – and earning a teaching license in 5-12 Communication Arts and Literature – I had to take additional English courses in order to upgrade my English minor to a major. There is no doubt that my journalism experience helped me succeed in those additional English courses. My writing had matured and I was more open to feedback from peers and professors. For the first time since elementary school, I looked forward to attending classes. School was fun
because learning had become enjoyable. I had morphed into an engaged, active learner. I had become a life-long learner. This is the mindset I wanted to instill in my future students.

During the two years in the education program, I listened attentively to the stories of our professors. Being adjunct instructors allowed them to keep their day jobs in education. Some were administrators, while others were K-12 teachers. The stories they shared about their students and staff were practical, applicable, and timely. On several occasions, the professors brought in co-workers or friends from other school districts to answer questions about curriculum and instruction. Even though there were no courses focused solely on classroom management, the professors were cognizant about discussing strategies appropriate for that course. Much of the philosophy revolved around engaging curriculum. In their opinion, as long as the material connected to the students’ lives, there would be less of a need to manage behavior. For example, in my “Reading for the 5-12 Teacher” course, the professor emphasized the importance of selecting books that related to the students’ lives. At the time, this philosophy about classroom management seemed to make sense, especially within the context of my own K12 experience. Only later – when I had my own classroom – did I realize that engaging curriculum was not the magic ingredient when attempting to manage a classroom of 30 hormone-crazed teenage students.

Exposed to Reality

Prior to student teaching, and as part of the 5-12 Communication Arts and Literature licensure requirement, we had to complete two field experiences – one in a middle school and the other in a high school. At the time, I did not consider any urban schools mainly because I was so unfamiliar with them. To be honest, such an opportunity never entered my mind; to an extent, I was still stuck in the metaphorical cave. I was unaware of what existed beyond the
stereotypical suburban, middle-class world. As a result, I chose to conduct my placements in two mostly White, suburban school districts.

The field experience in the middle school was short – a mere 20 hours – but it was long enough to realize I did not want to teach these grade levels. The middle school curriculum – determined by state standards – did not interest me. Also, I had a preconceived notion of middle school that was based on my own 6-8 grade level experience. After an exceptional elementary school experience, my time in middle school was disappointing and forgettable. Generally speaking, I was not challenged academically. Furthermore, several of my classes were more like social hour than a time of structured learning. Intentional misbehavior among students was a common occurrence. Teachers openly displayed their frustration, often yelling in their attempt to correct behavior. One teacher in particular lost his temper and physically pushed a young man into the hallway, injuring both the student and himself. His replacement – in lieu of his firing – did not fare much better with this bunch of rambunctious students. I am embarrassed to admit that I was a participant. The herd mentality took over. Even the highly motivated, usually wellbehaved students joined in.

After concluding the middle school placement, I observed 40 hours at a high school in an affluent western suburban district. I chose this particular school because of its high standardized test scores. I was curious to see how this school always surpassed the state average on the comprehensive assessments. Additionally, my interest in the school had a lot to do with the various connections I had there. I knew several of the administrators as well as the teacher I observed. From day one, the high school curriculum hooked me. State standards required more direct writing instruction, which I felt confident teaching after surviving the various rites of passage in the field of journalism. Also, I noticed the developmental difference in high school
students, specifically in their ability to analyze and synthesize material. Their maturity also resulted in less squirrely behavior compared to the middle school students. By the end of this placement, I knew I wanted to student teach at a high school. However, I was less certain about where. Regardless, I was about to embark on one of the symbolic acts of the teacher education program – student teaching.

**Student Teaching: A Liminal Phase**

Like many of the teacher candidates in my program, I chose a placement that was familiar and resembled my own high school experience. I think my fear of the unknown – and the liminality of the experience – compelled me to choose the safe route. I was also intrigued with the reputable journalism program at this high school. Both its newspaper and yearbook had won several national awards. Furthermore, several of my education professors had worked in this district so my placement request was easy to secure. Despite being granted my first choice, something did not feel right. Why didn’t I choose to student teach in more diverse setting? Why was I returning to the metaphorical cave I worked so hard to escape?

Because of this hesitation, I went into student teaching with a tiny chip on my shoulder. I was disappointed in myself and I let that influence my attitude toward the students and staff at this high school. It was no secret that many of the students grew up in wealthy families. During my first few days of student teaching, I met students who had well-known parents, including a popular journalist and the senior vice president of Pepsi. I let my assumptions dictate my actions. My pre-conceived notions about “rich, White kids” influenced the way I approached the students on a personal level. The interactions felt forced, which I am sure the students noticed as well. It is still hard to understand why I was so guarded with these students. Although I did not grow up in a rich family, I never had to worry about money. Throughout grade school, we could
afford to travel at least once a year. I was also involved in year-round competitive swimming, which required expenses for out-of-state meets and high tech equipment. I even attended an expensive private college.

Why did I now have such an issue with money? In retrospect, I think my frustrations were misdirected. It had only been a few years since I studied in the Philippines. Until that point, I had no idea what poverty looked like. Every morning, I saw Filipino women combing the beach for shells and other trinkets they could sell at the market. While walking to Silliman University every morning, we passed the shacks that Filipinos called home. Despite their impoverished lifestyle, we Americans never encountered jealousy or hostility. In fact, we were only treated with the utmost respect. Upon returning to the United States, I struggled with my identity. I now felt uncomfortable labeling myself as a middle-class, White female. Four years later, my attitude had not changed much, which is probably why I switched careers and embarked on a career in education. As cliché as it sounds, I wanted to make a difference in the lives of our youth. I wanted to teach students about experiences different than their own.

My opportunity came in my third week of student teaching when I was asked to create curriculum for the next book, Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting by in America*. My mentor teacher said her students had little experience with literature directly relating to social issues like low wages and welfare. I realized this unit could result in a powerful learning experience. At the same time, I wondered if these students would be receptive to learning about poverty. As we were often told in teacher education classes, students have to be able to identify with characters and the conflicts within a novel. My initial fears were confirmed when one young man asked why he had to “learn about an issue he would probably never experience.” At first, I was stunned. I actually thought I misunderstood him. When I asked him
to clarify his concern, he said “my family is not poor so why do I have to read this book?” It was at that point that I questioned my own assumptions and pre-conceived notions coming into student teaching. I recognized how assumptions serve as a barrier to authentic learning, particularly about experiences different than our own.

The next four weeks passed quickly. By this point, I was teaching a full schedule including sophomore regular English, honors English, and yearbook. My idealism was challenged when I realized how much time it took to create 53-minute lessons for three different classes. By the seventh week, I was emotionally drained. Teaching was more difficult than I had anticipated. I felt ill-prepared to deal with various classroom management issues, including diversifying instruction in order to accommodate special education students. After attending my first Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting, my frustration grew. The following entry in my student teaching journal describes my thoughts at the time:

March 2006:

Until this week, I hadn’t really faced much adversity in terms of the students. I have learned more from this experience than anything I absorbed in graduate school. This just proves that knowledge can’t always be taught from a professor or read in a book. We as student teachers have to “live it.” Well, I “lived it” earlier this week when I attended an IEP meeting for one of my junior students. Zach is on an IEP plan for a learning disability. However, as I see it, he doesn’t need an IEP – a 504 plan maybe but not an IEP. He is a smart kid who refuses to do any work outside the classroom. Participation isn’t a problem for him; he will voice his opinion periodically.
I remember entering the meeting feeling optimistic. I was confident that as a team – including his teachers, counselor, and mother – we could find a solution for Zach. The remainder of that day’s journal entry reveals otherwise:

Zach and his mother arrived 15 minutes late, just minutes before first hour. In the few minutes I had before teaching, my mentor teacher and I shared Zach’s grades with the group. As of this week, Zach is at 17 percent. He is passing only one of his six classes. The counselor asked Zach if he would take advantage of extra time to complete assignments. Such a request could then be added to his IEP as long as he agreed he would take the initiative and ask for the extra time. As my mentor teacher and I walked back to class, we agreed that a kid like Zach won’t suddenly change just because he is afforded a few more days to complete homework. This is disheartening and frustrating. As an energetic new teacher, all I want to do is help him. After today, I now know this isn’t realistic; I can help only if the student wants help.

Prior to student teaching, I assumed – like many novices – that the theories we learned in our education classes would be easy to integrate into my own practice. However, situations like the IEP meeting made me realize how difficult it is to do so. I learned that it takes quite a bit of time and effort to ensure that I’m teaching in a way that is best for students and not doing things just because I read about it in a book. Although there are a plethora of books on managing student behavior, I quickly realized that there is no quick fix or magical checklist:

To be honest, this week was nothing but emotionally draining. I will be the first to admit that my classroom management skills need refining. I think the problem started on the first day of student teaching – I didn’t take a hard enough stance. In other words, I let my “niceness” show too early. I know it is cliché, but if you give students an inch, they will
take a mile. I have to learn how to establish personal connections without relinquishing control. I have not yet found this balance. I want students to think I care; I firmly believe this will promote student learning. At the same time, I have to realize I am not that much older; I look younger than 26 years old. After this week, I have come to the conclusion that it is better to keep my distance in the beginning. I need to gain respect first. Students have to know that I am in charge – I am the authority figure.

During the remainder of my student teaching experience, my idealism continued to be challenged with a reality far different than my expectations. I assumed students would automatically like me because I was outgoing and energetic. I figured managing students would be easy as long as my instruction was creative and engaging. The unrealistic nature of these beliefs became clear when a student told me he wasn’t going to follow my classroom policies. I was taken aback because the comment was unprovoked; it literally came out of nowhere. Although a minor infraction, I was still surprised because I was not used to blatant disrespect.

Overall, my student teaching experience was a positive one. I learned so much by watching my mentor teacher interact with students. She was firm as a classroom manager but her desire to establish relationships took precedence. Students knew this and thus followed her classroom norms and expectations. When I took over her classroom, students still regarded her as the authority figure. Like most student teachers, I came into a situation where the expectation and classroom rules had already been established. Furthermore, I was teaching in someone else’s classroom. The inauthenticity of the situation – and the discomfort associated with the state of “in-betweeness” where I was neither just a student nor fully a teacher – did not hit me until my first year of teaching when I looked at my six class rosters and realized I was now responsible for the learning and well-being of 120 students. Fortunately, however, I had been
“trained” and guided by an exceptional coordinating teacher. I received the support and feedback needed to transition more confidently into the role of “I am teacher.” Unfortunately, not all teacher candidates and novice teachers receive such guidance, and are therefore, “stuck” in the liminal phase. Such a situation will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

**Experiencing Rites of Transition and Incorporation**

Prior to accepting my first teaching job, I promised myself I would not automatically choose the safe path like I did when selecting my student teaching placement. I applied for openings at charter schools, urban schools, and suburban schools. Several interviews felt impersonal and forced. I kept searching. Then everything fell into place. My supervisor in the teacher education program knew of an English position opening in the district where I went to school. However, the opening was at the “other high school”, also known as the “ghetto school.” During the interview, I knew immediately this was the school for me. Two days later, one of the assistant principals called to offer me the job. Without hesitation, I accepted the position. Prior to that first year at UHS, I had few rites of passage in the realm of teaching so my knowledge was limited. I had little experiential background to base my understanding. Luckily, this was not my first job out of college; I had already experienced several initiation rites at the Associated Press. As a result, I was more prepared to manage a classroom than the average novice. However, like most novices, I felt like I had to “act” confident in order to convince my students I knew what I was doing. To emit such confidence, I knew I had to dress professional so I looked like a teacher. Even though I was older than most novices, students still knew it was my first year of teaching. Plus, I looked younger than my 26 years of age. I also assumed that my front-stage presence needed to be authoritative. No smiling and a firm, loud voice – along with professional attire – were regular elements of my costuming that first year.
In the novice stage, I encountered many rites of initiation including observations by administrators, failed lessons, and managing student behavior. At this point in my career, I assumed that teaching involved one script, one set, one audience, and few props. Such assumptions led to the failed lessons and disruptive student behavior. I had not yet developed the skills needed to view the scene in a holistic way. Like the typical novice, I used context-free rules to guide my decision making. I did not have the experience needed to recognize the relevance of a situation. Struggling through that first year – and the initiation rites that came with it – was definitely a result of gaining a new level of responsibility, which changed the way I experienced myself. I began to judge my performance on the successes and failures of my students. On several occasions, I questioned my role within this particular institution. I often wondered if I could “hack it.” Had it not been for the help and guidance of Ms. Paulson – the lone expert included in this study – I would not have felt as psychologically prepared to start another year. Ms. Paulson’s willingness to share curriculum and knowledge of classroom management allowed me to focus on making my instruction as convincing as possible. When I did experience frustration – usually a result of initiation rites involving student misbehavior – Ms. Paulson offered advice in the form of “I did this in a similar situation” or “I realized this didn’t work in a situation like that.” I used her specific feedback to more effectively navigate the various rites of passage experienced within my first years at UHS.

By the time I started my second year of teaching, I had more experiences to help better understand my classroom environment. As a result, I had the ability to more accurately assess situations. At the same time, I still had not acquired the skills needed to recognize the relevance of a situation. Controlling the classroom environment was my main focus; I did not realize that building student relationships needed to occur before I could expect students to care about my
instruction. Students needed to know that I cared about them as individuals, which could be demonstrated by creating lessons that related to the students’ own experiences. However, I still struggled to operate from multiple scripts. Granted, I was now aware that one script was not beneficial for my students. Each class required a different approach, or script. I had to let the students’ needs guide my practice rather than adhering blindly to the context-free rules I used as a novice. Now an advanced beginner according to Dreyfus’ skill acquisition model, I was more consciously aware of my presentation of self.

Receiving tenure at the beginning of my fourth year marked my rite of incorporation into the teaching community at UHS. It also symbolized my competency as an educator. After three years teaching at the same high school, I now had a frame of reference that could be used to anticipate similar situations. The additional experience allowed me to see actions in terms of long-range plans. As a result, my moral career changed from acting as a novice – and often thinking of myself as an anonymous “newbie” – to orienting myself within the confines of this particular school system. When my students performed well, I felt excited. However, when they showed a lack of growth, I felt remorse. This remorse only motivated me to work harder and acquire the skills necessary to improve student learning.

It was not until second semester of my sixth year that I feel like I reached Dreyfus’ proficiency stage. During first semester, I was asked to mentor a student teacher. Since I had not experienced any rite of passage since achieving tenure, and because I considered this an informal rite of incorporation – cooperating teachers have to be tenured – I was intrinsically motivated to accept the placement. (I intentionally labeled the rite of incorporation as informal because there is no formal recognition or financial incentive at UHS to be a cooperating teacher. In fact, placement often occurs by default; the student teacher is placed with the teacher who has
the most conducive schedule). Yet, I had no cooperating teacher training so I was hesitant to accept the additional responsibility. In retrospect, I would have benefited from some sort of training, either from the district or university. However, as the literature indicated, few opportunities exist for coordinating teacher training. When my student teacher demonstrated incompetence, I had no idea how to handle the situation. My biggest concern was lack of sound judgment. On a daily basis, I had to remind him to do things that should be obvious (i.e. not leaving a class unattended, engaging only in appropriate conversations with students).

In the end, I did not write a recommendation for the student teacher – thus he remained “stuck in the liminal phase – since he did not meet his university’s established standards for student teaching. Although the experience was frustrating and time-consuming, my teaching and managing skills developed quicker than had I not been a mentor that semester. The constant need to evaluate situations enhanced my ability to predict the potential outcomes. Additionally, I now had the skills needed to reflect on prior experiences, which helped guide my assessment of the current situation.

This first experience with a student teacher turned me off to the possibility of ever being a mentor teacher again. The lack of support from student teaching supervisors at the university, a negligible stipend of $500, and no formal recognition or incentive by UHS, made the reasons to take another student teacher minimal. With that said, I wanted to provide the same guidance my cooperating teacher gave me. I also knew it was not fair to judge the entire student teaching process on one bad experience. So when I was offered another student teacher in 2013 – for reasons unknown to me, the university program specifically requested me – I seriously considered the opportunity. I had heard good things about this particular teacher licensure program. However, rather than accepting the role before meeting the candidate, I decided to
interview her. I could tell she was self-motivated, and like my first student teacher, the second student teacher – Ms. Knudson – was enrolled in an institution that focused on urban education. Although she lacked some of the skills I was looking for, Ms. Knudson possessed the work ethic needed to be a successful student teacher. One month prior to her formal placement at UHS, Ms. Knudson asked to observe my classes twice a week. This was not a requirement of her program. Instead, Ms. Knudson wanted to familiarize herself with the students she would eventually be teaching. Her dedication impressed me so I accepted her placement.

Although the experience with Ms. Knudson was more positive than with the first student teacher (and successful since I was able to guide her transition out of the liminal phase), I still had concerns throughout the mentorship, specifically relating to classroom management. By this time, it became apparent that licensure programs might not be adequately preparing their teacher candidates. Obviously student teaching is where the candidate practices the craft; however, how can student teachers practice what they do not know? In other words, the candidates need the right tools to be able to effectively practice certain skills. Granted, management techniques are not one-size-fits-all so I realize it is hard to provide every tool necessary. However, there are basic strategies that can be taught to better manage a classroom. Ms. Knudson said she had little instruction on management in her licensure program. She believed a course in classroom management would be helpful for all teacher candidates, especially those who do not “innately” know what to do.

Looking back on my licensure program, I did receive some instruction on management but there were no courses specifically geared toward classroom management. At the same time, these courses were not as necessary as they are now. When I started teaching, classroom management was necessary but only to a certain extent. There might have been a few students
talking when I was teaching, but the blatant defiance did not exist to the same level it does now, particularly in schools seeing families with few economic resources. The subsequent chapters provide data and analysis on these issues as manifested in UHS.
Chapter 4 Dramaturgical Roles of a Teacher in Three Stages

Sets, Scripts, and Props

At Urban High School (UHS), each class performance, or set, lasts 46 minutes. Between each of the eight set changes, teachers have 5 minutes to prepare for the next audience. Such a short intermission does not leave room for major changes in the script. However, the skilled teacher knows how to improvise in such situations. The most difficult set changes involve moving to another classroom. In most departments, the newest teachers do not have their own classroom. These “teachers on a cart” often struggle to beat their students to the next class. Navigating the mobile classroom through packed hallways is an unfortunate part of the traveling teachers’ routine. At the same time, these teachers often become effective classroom managers as they have to adapt and improvise on a daily basis.

Throughout the school day, teachers at UHS typically teach five classes. At most, teachers have four preps, or different classes. More commonly, though, teachers have 2-3 preps. In addition to the five classes, teachers are required to attend daily team meetings. They also have lunchroom duty once a week as well as a daily preparation period. Student schedules usually include six required classes, study hall, and lunch. Depending on the class, students are often part of a jam-packed “audience.” It is not uncommon to see 35-40 students in a classroom that can barely hold them. In this case, the staging of the classroom is critical to effective management. Even though it is more teacher-centered, traditional rows make it easier to pack more students into a small space. Such a setup also allows teachers to make eye contact with all students.

With such large class sizes, student engagement becomes more difficult. This is where props – like technology – can increase audience participation. However, access to the necessary
educational props is often limited because of inadequate funding. As a result, teachers often buy their own supplies and replenish them as needed. Supplies dwindle quickly as students demonstrate the need for folders, pencils, paper, and calculators.

Like class size, student demographics in each class depend on the course level. The regular education classes more accurately reflect the school’s diverse student body, while the honors courses tend to have fewer students of color. Special education classes tend to be packed with more boys and students of color, which is often the result of erroneous labeling and inappropriate referrals. (Professional literature has identified several causal factors of overrepresentation including insufficient resources and less skilled teachers). Classes in English, social studies, physical education, and science usually include students from one grade level, whereas global language and math are more skill based, resulting in a mix of grade levels within one class. As noted, teacher demographics do not reflect the diversity of the student population, and the majority of teachers are White and female. Diversity increases at the administrative and support level. Of the four administrators, two are not White. The majority of the academic deans and support staff are also not White. Such a diverse mix creates a unique environment which outsiders often refer to as “ghetto.” Although suburban in location, the school is considered urban because of its demographics and financial struggles. High student mobility and low socioeconomic status also add to the school’s “ghetto” status. Insiders – especially teachers – reject this particular degrading label; however, most will agree there is a skill to managing an urban classroom. Oftentimes, management becomes closely akin to a performance. Like an actor on stage, teachers know they must actively engage their audience members. This dramaturgical focus will be examined in the remainder of the chapter.
Performance Level 1: The Student Teacher

The following section is structured in such a way that it reflects Goffman’s emphasis on dramaturgy. During the data collection phase, I observed several classrooms including those of student teachers. This section discusses the field notes that resulted from these observations. In addition to commenting on the performance itself, I used the observer’s comments to assist my own interrogation of my moral career as a teacher at UHS.

Field notes #1: Ms. Knudson

Date: Tuesday, April 2, 2013
Class observed: English 11
Student teacher: Ms. Knudson
Number of students: 33
(20 females, 13 males; 21 students of color, 5 EL, 4 on IEP) 7:20 a.m. – 8:06 a.m.

It is the first day back from spring break. The students are chatty, excited to catch up with their friends after more than a week of vacation. I am sitting in the back corner of the room, pretending to be busy so as not to attract the attention of my students.

Today, my student teacher will introduce the next unit on August Wilson’s Fences. Prior to spring break, Ms. Knudson co-taught with me. This will be the first time I am not at her side teaching.

O.C.: I remember the first time I took over for my coordinating teacher. I was so nervous. I knew the students loved Ms. Steil and would be hesitant to accept me as their temporary teacher. My nerves got the best of me because when I asked for their attention, my voice sounded shaky and unconfident. I am sure my outward appearance and mannerisms impacted
the impressions of the students. At 26, I was older than the typical student teacher but I still looked young for my age.

At 7:20 a.m., the final bell rings indicating the beginning of first period. At the front of the classroom stands my student teacher, a 21-year old petite blonde dressed in freshly pressed khakis and a cashmere sweater most likely purchased from one of the trendy, preppy brand-name stores. Her quiet, shaky voice and constant shifting of body weight from foot to foot suggests a lack of confidence. Within the first 30 seconds, the audience of 33 high school juniors – the majority students of color – begins to form a critical definition of the situation.

O.C.: After doing research on Goffman’s theory of dramaturgy, specifically personal front, I can’t help but wonder if Ms. Knudson’s young, preppy appearance and quiet manner will negatively impact her initial performances and ability to give a convincing performance. Personally, I have been in her shoes. I have noticed over the years how students instantly judge based on perceived social statuses. At the beginning of every semester, I have felt the stares, just knowing students are “sizing me up.”

While the students construct their initial impression, I can tell Ms. Knudson wants to get the class started in a positive way. In doing so, she moves toward the students in the front row who appear frustrated by the commotion surrounding them. She makes eye contact with these friendly faces, smiles and says, “Welcome back from break. I can tell you have a lot to talk about but we need to refocus our energy and get back to work.” Students look up for a second and continue their conversations. Hesitating briefly, Ms.
Knudson says, “I will stand here and wait until you are ready. You are taking time away from those who want to learn.” Close to where I am sitting, I hear a student mumble “you are not the teacher. I do not have to listen to you.” Most students refocus their attention to the front of the classroom. Three female students toward the back of the room continue to whisper among themselves. Ms. Knudson glanced their way but ignored the behavior and proceeded to introduce the first activity of the day.

O.C.: As a new teacher, I experienced similar situations where students would continue their conversations even after I asked for attention up front. One situation in particular really bothered me. Two female students were whispering and looking at me. It was pretty apparent they were talking about me and wanted me to know it. Rather than ignore it, however, I put them on the spot asking if they wanted to share their conversation with the whole class. I still do not know if that was the best way to handle the situation but I could not just ignore it. I did not want them to believe I was scared to address disrespectful behavior.

As the lesson progresses, Ms. Knudson seems to gain confidence. She stands a little taller and appears more relaxed. After students have read a brief article on the use of the N-word in educational settings, Ms. Knudson tells students they can choose their own small groups to work on the next activity.

O.C.: Prior to the lesson, we had talked about the potential controversy and sensitive nature of the topic. We thought it was appropriate to allow students to work with those they felt most comfortable.
Most of the students are engaged in conversation about the use of the N-word in educational settings. However, one group of girls – the same students who ignored Ms. Knudson at the beginning of class – appears off task. Like before, they are whispering and looking at Ms. Knudson. Since I had experienced a similar scenario as a novice teacher, I had a fairly good idea of their ultimate goal – they wanted to see if Ms. Knudson had the confidence to call them on their inattentiveness and inappropriate behavior, and if so, whether she could control her emotions. As Ms. Knudson works her way around the room, checking in with each group, I hear the girls’ conversation escalate in volume. Ms. Knudson approaches the girls and asks them if they have questions about the reading. I cannot hear their response from where I am sitting but I can see one of the girls shake her head no.

O.C.: At this point in the lesson, I had stopped taking field notes because I thought I might have to intervene in a situation that occurred with minutes left in the class period. As Ms. Knudson walked away from the small group, one of the girls got out of her chair and shouted across the class to another student, purposefully disrupting work time. A few expletives were exchanged before a young man – looked at as a leader by many in the class – told the girls to stop being so dramatic. His nonchalant response seemed to work because the girls turned their attention to packing up before the bell rang. Just as I was leaving the classroom to start relaxed study hall in the cafeteria, I noticed the girls approach Ms. Knudson.

Debriefing the performance. I did not find out the nature of the conversation until later since I had to teach the next few classes. During lunch, Ms. Knudson and I discussed her
performance first hour. She admitted that she needed to be more firm when asking for attention at the beginning of class. We talked about using the same routine; one example might be standing at the front, saying good morning then asking for “all eyes up front.” After that request, I told her to stand there until every student is ready, even if that means waiting 2-3 minutes in complete silence. The silence can be uncomfortable but over time, the students catch on and usually hold each other accountable in order to avoid the awkwardness. Once the lesson began, Ms. Knudson said she felt overwhelmed with the task of meeting all the needs of the students, including five English language learners and four special education students. (On a regular basis, two of the special education students took most of Ms. Knudson’s attention as they needed constant redirection to stay focused on the task at hand). Although the English language students were now in mainstreamed English classes, their skill level was still low, especially in the area of writing. By no fault of Ms. Knudson, the remaining 24 students often had to wait to get their questions answered because the EL students required more attention. Generally, most students would patiently wait. Others, like the small group of girls, would take the opportunity to screw around.

While making her rounds that class period, Ms. Knudson said she noticed the girls’ disengagement but had so many other students asking questions. Every time she tried to approach the back of the room, another hand would shoot up. Once Ms. Knudson finally made it to the group, she asked them if they had questions. When they said no (which I observed as the shaking of their heads from my position across the room), Ms. Knudson moved on to other students who were engaged in the activity. During our debriefing, I asked Ms. Knudson what transpired when she first approached the girls. Rather than accuse them of not working, Ms. Knudson asked if they needed anything. While one student shook her head no, another said she
was just going to copy her friend’s responses. Ms. Knudson described her response to the girls:
I reacted by saying that I wanted to know what each individual thought, and I hoped to read
about their real opinion. I don’t know if it was the “right” way to respond. However, my true
goal in teaching is making sure that kids know how much I care about them. That may not be the
most effective approach in student-teaching (in terms of classroom management) because you
don’t get a lot of time to build relationships with students. I think this is why classroom
management was one of my more challenging parts of student-teaching. I didn’t have a lot of
time to build a relationship with the classes as a whole, which caused a delay in creating the
environment that I wanted to have. (Ms. Knudson, personal communication, August 2014)

When the girls confronted Ms. Knudson after class ended, they asked why she did not address
their own misbehavior. They even implied that her lack of response had to do with their race (all
African American). The girls assumed Ms. Knudson did not want to single out four black
students. Ms. Knudson told them she should not have ignored the situation and if they wanted to
talk about it further, they could do so after school.

Unfortunately, managing this particular class continued to challenge Ms. Knudson
throughout the remainder of the semester. Students pounced on Ms. Knudson’s inexperience and
lack of confidence in certain situations. As a frequent observer, I caught glimpses of confidence
but this tended to occur in one-on-one interactions with students. More often than not, when
confronting groups of students, Ms. Knudson failed to maintain a confident manner, which
negatively impacted her personal front. As a result, her belief in her role as teacher was
challenged. These dramaturgical aspects – among others – have been observed and discussed
with other teachers included in this study. In the following section, I analyze the dramaturgical
experience of the student teacher using data gathered from other teachers at UHS, including student teachers, novices, and veterans.

**The Dramaturgical Experience of the Student Teacher**

For any student teacher, the dramaturgical experience is one of fluctuating emotions. Some performances are exhilarating, while others are full of paranoia, frustration, and failure. Much of the paranoia and frustration comes from playing the part of teacher, an inauthentic role for a teacher in training. For this reason, student teachers spend much of their energy managing the impression of the audience. The following subsections are dedicated to the various components of impression management, specifically those most vital to the student teacher’s dramaturgical experience, including personal front; belief in the part one is playing; dramaturgical discipline, expressive control, and misrepresentation; and scripts.

**Personal front: Appearance and manner.** In general, people are acutely aware of their public self-image, especially their physical appearance. Such awareness is exacerbated when standing in front of an audience full of appearance-driven high school students. Therefore, teachers often try to control student impressions. According to Goffman, people are constantly managing their impression, whether consciously or not. He believed that when an individual comes into contact with other people, that individual will attempt to control or guide the impression that others might make of him by changing or fixing appearance and manner, otherwise known as personal front (Goffman, 1959).

In the educational setting, personal front tends to shape the audience’s first impressions of the performer, or teacher. When students walk into their classrooms on the first day of school, they immediately take note of their teacher’s physical appearance, particularly gender, age, and size. During informal discussions with students, it became apparent that a teacher’s physical
stature is immediately noticed, which students said formed impressions about the teacher’s ability to control a classroom. For example, a petite, young female is assumed to be a pushover, while an athletic-looking, tall middle-aged man is presumed to be firm and assertive. In the students’ mind, specifically on first impression, a person’s size and build is indicative of that individual’s personality or manner. Although not easy to accurately pinpoint, a person’s age is believed to relate to knowledge and experience. When it comes to inexperienced, young student teachers, such assumptions further influence the students’ largely negative initial impressions. With the exception of career changers, student teachers are young – usually seniors in college during their practicum experience. At a mere 21-22 years of age, student teachers often struggle to be taken seriously since they are close in age with the audience members. Ms. Larson, a sixth year teacher at UHS, elaborated on this challenge: “I think that’s probably the hardest thing as a student teacher, especially because the kids see you as someone who’s like their older cousin’s age or their older brother or sister’s age” (Ms. Larson, personal communication, June 2014). The age of the student teachers definitely influences the students’ ability to see them as an authority figure. Unless boundaries are established early on, students often view the student teacher as more of a sibling or friend. Ms. Ryan, a 23-year-old, White, petite student teacher encountered this issue early on in her experience.

As a young teacher, it is hard to gain their respect without them wanting to be friends. I felt I could really relate to them and they could relate to me and stuff; it's because of being closer to their age. At the same time you want there to be the whole, ‘Yeah, okay we can get along but I also want you to listen to what I say and take it seriously.’ (Ms. Ryan, personal communication, May 2014)
To combat their young appearance, student teachers attempt to manage impressions by dressing professionally. Upon reflecting on her student teaching experience 6 years prior, Ms. Larson – then 21 years old – said she tried to dress the part of someone much older. She wore heels and always did her hair. Dressing up helped her act more like a grown up, thus shaping the perception of her young audience (Ms. Larson, personal communication, June 2014). According to Goffman (1959), clothing, posture, and speech patterns are less fixed aspects of appearance and can therefore be adjusted. Manner, the other component of personal front, is more difficult to modify, even if it is just for the duration of the performance.

"Manner” refers to the performer’s interactive role, which often involves gestures, facial expressions, and body language. In an attempt to shape the audience’s impression, the performer often relies on these nonverbal communicative techniques. Manner also includes personality and behavior (Goffman, 1959). As mentioned earlier, students believe a young, petite looking female would have a quiet, passive manner. Although not always the case, such an assumption was correct about Ms. Knudson. While co-teaching with me in her first few weeks at UHS, I overhead students discuss Ms. Knudson’s appearance and manner. The phrases “she is so tiny”, “she is quiet”, and “she is too nice” were repeated several times amongst audience members. On several occasions, students in the back row asked her to speak up when giving directions. Ms. Knudson’s quiet voice insinuated a lack of confidence and control, which the students tested on a daily basis.

In reflecting on her experience at UHS, Ms. Knudson said her quiet demeanor made her performances difficult to execute. To compensate for her quiet voice, she had to be more mobile in the classroom, which required more energy. When she would debrief with student teaching colleagues during her teaching practicum course, they discussed how personality impacts the
teaching experience. Specifically, those with naturally assertive personalities thought their experiences were fairly successful. According to Ms. Knudson, these student teachers confronted behavioral issues more easily and overall were more confident in their classroom management. Along similar lines, Ms. Larson, a sixth-year veteran who has observed the classrooms of several colleagues, has witnessed young teachers struggle with classroom management. Much of their struggle came from a failure to appear confident, which was communicated through a quiet, shy manner.

I feel like younger female staff, if you have a quiet or shyer personality, I think students are like … is she going to take charge, or is she not? Can we walk all over her or is she going to be on top of us? I think you have to have a really strong belief in yourself, even if you are shy and quiet. (Ms. Larson, personal communication, June 2014)

At the end of her placement, Ms. Knudson assessed her performance and admitted she did not convey the desired first impression. As Goffman (1959) stated, “When the interaction that is initiated by “first impressions” is itself merely the initial interaction in an extended series of interactions involving the same participants, we speak of “getting off on the right foot” and feel that it is crucial that we do so” (pp. 11-12). In order to “get off on the right foot” the following school year, Ms. Knudson said she would force herself to be more assertive and direct when managing a classroom. She knew her performances would continue to be questioned unless she adjusted her personal front.

**Belief in the part one is playing.** Belief in one’s performance – along with their personal front – is essential when managing impressions of others. This particular aspect of impression management is important when trying to establish perceptual congruence between what one wants to be and how one is perceived (Goffman, 1959). However, when the role is
new and unfamiliar – like in the case of a student teacher playing the part of the classroom authority figure – perceptual congruence is hindered. The student teacher wants to be perceived as a legitimate, authentic performer, but his or her personal disbelief in the role being played often results in skepticism among audience members. Goffman (1959) suggested that belief in the role one is playing typically follows a cycle of disbelief-to-belief, which American urban sociologist Robert Ezra Parks described as follows:

It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role … It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves (as cited in Goffman, 1959, p. 19).

For example, in the beginning of her student teaching experience at UHS, Ms. Ryan, a Spanish and English Language teacher candidate, thought she would immediately exude confidence since she knew the content being taught; however, the audience’s behavior while she was teaching – laughing and engaging in side conversations – made her feel insecure about her role: “At first I was more self conscious about their thoughts and actions. I often wondered if they were making fun of me or if they were even listening to anything I said” (Ms. Ryan, personal communication, May 2014).

Disbelief in one’s role can also result from a lack of experience. Prior to student teaching, teacher candidates only have field experience and university courses as a reference. What student teachers have learned in the university classroom – in a controlled environment with no teenagers present – is often significantly different from the reality of their first teaching experience. Fifth-year teacher Ms. Evans entered the teaching field with little knowledge about the challenging aspects that often impact one’s ability to manage a classroom: “You don't always
hear about the classroom that has 40 students, 10 with IEP's, another 4 that are EL, a few gifted students, etc. So when you are actually dealing with it on your own, your views can quickly change” (Ms. Evans, personal communication, July 2014). Feeling unprepared to manage such a diverse classroom can result in low self-efficacy (as discussed in the literature review chapter). Low self-efficacy, here capsulized as disbelief in one’s role, can then impact the performer’s dramaturgical discipline and expressive control. In some cases, specifically when the student teacher attempts to present an idealized view of a situation, misrepresentation occurs.

Dramaturgical discipline, expressive control, and misrepresentation. Dramaturgical discipline requires presence of mind and self control. Because student teachers lack prior experience and belief in their role as teacher, presence of mind and self control have yet to be discovered. Consequently, successfully staging a character – and maintaining dramaturgical discipline – remains a challenge. “Expression control” – specifically in the “management of one’s face and voice” – is the focus of dramaturgical discipline and is “the crucial test of one’s ability as a performer” (Goffman, 1959, pp. 216-217). While second nature for the veteran teacher, managing one’s voice during times of frustration proves difficult for the student teacher. Literally, the performer must use effective volume and intonation. The performer must exude a commanding presence, which can only be communicated through confidence. As previously mentioned in the chapter, even those with a quiet voice can be successful; however, they must convey a strong belief in themselves. For instance, Ms. Swanson, an 11-year veteran at UHS who has served as a student teacher mentor, explained why teacher candidates struggle with this type of expressive control:

I think [student teachers] struggle to find their voice because the experience is inauthentic. It's not really that person's classroom, so [the student teacher] walks a fine
line of trying to do what you need to do to meet the requirements of your teaching program because they're saying “you need to do this, you need to do this, and you need to do this,” without totally restructuring whatever the previous teacher's expectations were. I think finding your own voice is hard to do because you have to be a pretty competent person to step into somebody else's classroom and then make it your own. And then sometimes I think when you student teach older kids, they don't see you as that much older than them, so they don't really see you as an authority figure anyway. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, June 2014)

Expressive control becomes more challenging when trying to balance intellectual and emotional involvement. Such an act can be dangerous if the performer cannot control affective responses, particularly responses to the audience when they “induce untoward affection or hostility in him” (Goffman, 1959, p. 217). Sometimes the audience even intentionally provokes the performer to see how he or she will react.

During her early performances, Ms. Knudson struggled in the maintenance of expressive control. As a result, students were skeptical of the reality being impressed upon them. According to Goffman (1959), audience members are likely to assess the performance based on minor cues conveyed by the performer. In some cases, the audience can misinterpret the meaning of such cues. Student teachers, and many novices, do not have the experience needed to read and address misunderstandings. When this occurs, the audience has “a tendency to pounce on trifling flaws as a sign that the whole show is false” (51). Unmeant gestures can convey impressions that contradict the intended message promoted by the performer.

Repeatedly during her first weeks of teaching, Ms. Knudson verbally expressed her intention to build relationships with students. However, her initial reaction to ignore the girls’ disrespectful
behavior contradicted her earlier message. As the performer, she acted in such a way that suggested she was not concerned with the interaction (Goffman, 1959, p. 52). The audience interpreted the unmaint gesture as not caring about those involved.

Goffman (1959) considered it natural for the audience to analyze the performer’s enactment of a role as true or false, valid or phony. In doing so, the audience members – or in this case the students – “give special attention to features of the performance that cannot be readily manipulated” thus enabling the audience “to judge the reliability of the more misrepresentable cues in the performance” (Goffman, 1959, p. 58). Like any student teacher, Ms. Knudson had no control or ability to manipulate the fact that her role was temporary. Students knew this and often reiterated their frustration of her imposter status. On multiple occasions, Ms. Knudson was reminded she was not the "real teacher." Students perceived her as misrepresenting the role of their permanent teacher.

**Scripts.** In order to conform to their role, performers use scripts to impress upon the audience the intended message. Goffman (1959) believed scripts are an essential part of socially-driven interactions. When interacting with students, teachers also use scripts, or lesson plans. In less structured classroom settings, teachers often have permission to veer from the script. The student teacher, however, sticks to the script in an attempt to control the performance and the audience members. Since student teachers have no frame of reference and are taught to implement management strategies learned in teacher education classes, they tend to use only one script. Such a script is prescriptive and often devoid of the need to take context into account. When I was doing my student teaching, my approach to classroom management was using the things you read in a book, what professors tell you are supposed to use and it was really prescriptive. There was really only one right way to deal with anything. During student
teaching, that was all I knew. I was trying to go by what we had been told in class but had never practiced. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, June 2014) Goffman (1959) found that such prescriptive scripts can be effective as long as there are no disruptions. However, disruptions always occur in the classroom (e.g. a phone call, knock at the door, student misbehavior, etc). An inexperienced performer like the student teacher may not be able to pick up where the planned sequence had been disrupted. “Scripted performers, then, can get themselves into a worse position than is possible for those who perform a less organized show” (Goffman, 1959, p. 228).

**Performance Level 2: The Novice (1-3 Years of Experience)**

Like performance level 1, the following section is modeled after Goffman’s dramaturgy. In this section, however, the field notes and observer’s comments are based on the performance of a novice teacher. Such actors also have limited experience and thus frame of reference, but unlike the teacher candidates feel more authentic in the role of “teacher.” The observer’s comments are used to reflect on the teachers’ performance – in this case Mr. O’Donnell – as well as on my own experiences when I was a novice.

**Field notes #2: Mr. O’Donnell**

Date: Thursday, May 15, 2014  
Class observed: Social Studies, 9th grade  
Teacher: Mr. O’Donnell, 1st year of teaching  
Number of students: 21 students  
(12 females, 9 males; 17 students of color, 3 EL, 3 on IEP) 7th hour time: 12:32 p.m. – 1:19 p.m.
As I settle in to a desk in the corner of the classroom, I notice few students in the room itself. Granted, it is just after the last lunch period so some students have to navigate their way from the opposite end of the school. However, the commotion just outside the classroom suggests that many of the students congregating there might be in Mr. O’Donnell’s freshmen social studies class, which I plan to observe. Mr. O’Donnell is writing the day’s agenda on the board so I doubt he is paying much attention to the group clustered outside his room. With 30 seconds until the final bell, most of the desks are still empty.

O.C.: When I was a novice, I didn’t have time to stand outside my class and control the chaos that often exists in the hallway. (This is one of the expectations placed on teachers by administrators). I was too preoccupied with re-setting the stage after the conclusion of the last class. It was not until I reached the competent stage that I realized the benefits of encouraging students to come straight to class rather than socialize in the hall until the warning bell. Managing the start of class takes less energy when students are already in their seats, which I am able to encourage by standing outside my classroom. As students approach my class, I show them what will be needed that day to start class. Usually, students respond by going to their desk and taking out the appropriate materials. As a result, little time is wasted at the beginning of class.

When the final bell rings to signal the start of class, Mr. O’Donnell notices a few students still standing outside the classroom. Rather than raise his voice, the 24-year-old,
first-year teacher uses his slender 5’7” frame to guide them into the room. Patiently, he reminds the students of his expectations – once the bell rings, students should be sitting in their desks ready for that day’s lesson. In response, a few students roll their eyes while others nod in agreement.

O.C.: Prior to this observation, I interviewed Mr. O’Donnell about perceptions of his own classroom management. When asked about his own style of management, Mr. O’Donnell said he has had to rely on classroom management techniques learned in teacher education classes as well as during his practicum experience. Mr. O’Donnell admitted that he is not an intimidating presence nor does he have a deep voice. Instead, he said humor is his main management technique. Because he teaches both freshmen and seniors, he said it is hard to navigate the differences in management techniques. He said this freshmen class I am observing has been a challenge in that students have purposely tested his classroom expectations.

During the first few minutes of class, it is apparent that several students are disengaged. One student is digging through a bag of suckers, while another is counting out change to buy one. Mr. O’Donnell notices and asks them to conduct business after class. Rather than comply, the students continue to disrupt class. Now a few other students want to buy suckers. Mr. O’Donnell gives them another verbal warning and says if he has to ask a third time, then he has to take the bag of suckers until the end of class. Most of the students take him seriously, but one student with the bag does not. She empties the bag of candy onto the desk, creating a noise as the suckers hit the desk.
Mr. O’Donnell again stops his instruction but does not take the bag away from the student.

O.C.: Over time, I have learned that consequences have to be consistently employed. In those first days of school when teachers are setting the tone, students often test the boundaries to see how far they can push. Setting expectations and then sticking to them is the key to effectively managing a classroom. At the start of every school year, I have had at least one student who challenges me. Calling them on their behavior and following through with consequences usually prevents future issues. Other students also take note and realize I am not a pushover. When observing novice teachers, I have witnessed a lack of consistency when managing student behavior. Second and third chances are frequent, which seems to frustrate those who have always complied.

Fifteen minutes into the class period and little instruction has occurred. Mr. O’Donnell has had to stop class several times to redirect students. One young lady – the one who had the bag of suckers – seems to be the biggest challenge. As Mr. O’Donnell gives instructions about labeling countries on their hand-drawn maps, the young lady gets up to sharpen her pencil. Mr. O’Donnell asks her to wait until he has finished talking. In response the student says, “I am just going to sharpen my pencil.” Mr. O’Donnell says, “yes, but it makes noise and it is rude to get up and walk around when someone is talking.” The student walks to the pencil sharpener and is about to sharpen it when Mr.
O’Donnell asks to her to join him in the hallway. As they are in the hallway, many of the students start talking to each other. A group of boys in the corner blast music from their headsets. Another cluster of students near me just sit there quietly. They appear frustrated. I asked one student if she was okay and she said this behavior happens almost every day.

O.C.: I have heard such responses before from my junior and senior students. On the first day of school, I have them write a letter to me about their expectations for themselves, their classmates, and the teacher. A common request is that I establish a healthy learning environment where misbehavior is not tolerated. In many of their letters, students describe past classes where teachers have failed to maintain control. After I have read the letters, I usually hold a brief discussion about their experiences. I like to respond to the entire group so they understand my expectations. This allows the students to verbalize their past frustrations. Also, I have noticed students tend to hold each other accountable in the future because they are now aware of each other’s expectations.

When Mr. O’Donnell returns to the classroom, he is by himself. He tells the students that the young lady has to release some of her energy by walking around the social studies circle a few times. (From the outside of the school, it is apparent that one end of the building looks circular. On that particular end, the hallways are circular. Each level houses a different department. The social studies classrooms are on the third floor circle). The students’ lack of response – almost perceived as indifference – suggests they are desensitized to such behavioral management issues.
Now Mr. O’Donnell has to redirect the students to his original instructions, which he has been trying to do since class started more than 20 minutes ago. He tells the boys in the corner to turn off their music. In doing so, Mr. O’Donnell jokingly tells them to improve their taste in music. He says he can offer a few suggestions. Using humor seems to do the trick because the boys comply without arguing. Without the young lady in the room, Mr. O’Donnell is able to complete the instructions for the day’s activity. He announces that the remainder of the class period is their work time. Whatever they do not finish in class will be homework. As soon as he stops talking, the students in the corner near me raise their hands. A few ask clarifying questions, which suggests they did not understand the assignment. Only later do I find out these particular students are English learners.

O.C.: Being able to effectively manage a classroom involves more than controlling student behavior. In creating their daily lessons, teachers have to diversity their curriculum for all types of learners, including English learners (formerly known as ELL, or English Language Learners) and special education students. During class, it is then essential that the teacher check in with these students to answer additional questions. Large class sizes and misbehaving students often limit the teachers’ ability to do so. I experienced this in my first few years of teaching. At that point, I had no frame of reference to guide my decisions. By the time I hit my fifth year of teaching, I had experienced many managerial and instructional situations. Creating seating charts, having students teach each other, and scaffolding instruction – breaking up the learning into chunks and then providing a tool,
or structure, with each chunk – alleviated the frustrations felt as a novice teacher. In doing so, I was better able to address the needs of all my students, including EL and special education.

With 10 minutes still remaining in the class period, I see students putting away their materials. Mr. O’Donnell prods them to keep working but it seems like a lost cause at this point. It is 1:10, which means there is only an hour left in the school day.

O.C.: Afternoon classes are the hardest to teach in that student engagement is more difficult to maintain. This is especially the case in freshmen and sophomore classes. Study halls are commonly scheduled in the afternoon, which is a nightmare when students prefer to socialize rather than complete homework. Knowing this, I scheduled my observations for all hours of the day. I wanted to see if my own experience with afternoon classes rang true for other teachers. With the exception of physical education, art and cooking classes, afternoon classes appeared more difficult to effectively manage.

Rather than fight the situation, Mr. O’Donnell sits next to the students who already put away their materials. He asks one of the students about the track meet that afternoon. Another student joins them and they talk sports for the last few minutes of class. I can tell the students like Mr. O’Donnell. Even though the students did not always follow Mr. O’Donnell’s directions, I don’t see the friction or tension that sometimes exists between the teacher and students. Throughout class, Mr. O’Donnell joked with the students and demonstrated a genuine interest in their lives.
Debriefing the performance. The next day during second hour, Mr. O’Donnell and I talked about the class I observed. I asked him about his strategy when dealing with misbehavior. In doing so, I referred to the young lady who needed the most redirection along with the young men who blasted their music.

It's not fun to have to redirect a bunch of times but if I'm going to get anything out of that kid, then it has to be redirection rather than correction because some kids just shut down if you go after them. During class, I tried to do a lot of the Redel signal (walk-talk and give nonverbal cues like a harsh look or tap on the desk). That was what I was big on when I started. It doesn't necessarily work as much with freshmen because they don’t really care that you're standing right next to them or that you're pointing something out to them. That’s what I like to use so I can keep going with my lesson but with freshmen it gets a lot ... It doesn't work as well, so I have to do more direct intervention. I try to set my lessons up so I can work one-on-one with students and try to talk to them that way. One-on-one is the best way to get through them but there are days where they're just not ready to learn and they'll say that. I mean, I'll write them a pass and say, "You need to take 2 laps around the circle and you got to come back" or "Go to the bathroom, go downstairs, come back." (Mr. O’Donnell, personal communication, May 2014) As a teacher who has never taught a freshmen class (study hall not included), I asked Mr. O’Donnell about the difference in managing freshmen and upperclassmen. The seniors can really be redirected and they can earn a little extra leeway. Seniors also tend to have more empathy. You can talk to them about how they're doing in class and how you feel they're doing in class. They understand a lot. There's a lot more maturity there. The freshmen are not as empathetic. They might want to help and make you happy but that's 15th on their list of “things I want to do,” and those other 14 are going to take priority. I think if I had just freshmen, I think eventually I would want to get out. I
mean seniors have their own challenges but with them, you can usually talk to them. They understand a lot more, just about how to interact with people and our freshmen generally do not. If I had 5 classes like my 7th hour, I don't know if I would ... I probably wouldn't be here. I'd still teach but I probably wouldn't be here. (Mr. O'Donnell, personal communication, May 2014)

Reflecting on his own performance, Mr. O'Donnell said he has learned a lot since the beginning of the school year.

Compared to the beginning of the year, I put my foot down down a lot more with the freshmen. In September, I tried to take a similar approach to what I do when teaching seniors. It didn't work very well. It's not fun getting mad, raising your voice or explaining why you're upset with the situation. I try to do it more at the class rather than at an individual student. Sometimes you have to let them know that you're not very happy and send that message that it's not okay. As a holistic teacher, I don’t like doing that at all but I've learned that that's how I get my class to run. For whatever reason, the kids seem to respect that more and will work more. At the start of next year, I'm going to put the hammer down a lot harder because I think I came off too nice at the beginning which caused me some problems. It may cut back at a little bit of the relationships, which is not something that I'm super excited about, but I think I can get more done in the classroom by not doing that. It's 50/50. It goes against who I am but at the same time...

Our group of freshmen, they'll just do whatever they want to if you don’t go a lot hard on them. That’s my opinion that has formed throughout the year. (Mr. O’Donnell, personal communication, May 2014)
The Dramaturgical Experience of the Novice Teacher

Even though the novice teacher has transitioned into an authentic, less temporary role, the dramaturgical experience is still nerve wracking. As a performer, the novice has many of the same concerns as the student teacher relating to impression management. Executing a believable performance is one such concern, and doing so is difficult when prior experience is limited. Additionally, the novice’s appearance and manner are likely to influence the audience’s impression. Personal front, along with belief in the part one is playing and a more flexible approach to scripts, will be discussed in the following sections.

**Personal front: Appearance and manner.** Based on their experience as a student teacher, novices are more aware of their personal front. Generally speaking, novices look young, and therefore, have to convince the audience of their role as an authority figure. At 5’0”, Ms. Miller is not a passive, shy person but students assume so based on her small stature. She learned this in her first year of teaching. When she started her second year, Ms. Miller said she anticipated the stereotype. “I have to work a little harder to get students to take me seriously. I know that I will never strike the kind of fear into them as [my 6’3”, 300-lb husband] can, so I don't try” (Ms. Miller, personal communication, July 2015). First-year teacher Mr. O’Donnell said he has to compensate for his 5’7” slender appearance. Moreover, he admitted that he doesn’t have a mean or deep voice like many of his male colleagues so he relies on his genuine desire to build relationships with students.

Early on, I just started talking to them about what they are interested in and share a little bit about me and learn about them. Inevitably, you'll find something in common with them. I also use a lot of their slang out of context which they find funny and appealing.
That's what I'm trying to do, and some days it works better than others. (Mr. O’Donnell, personal communication, June 2014)

Another aspect of personal front that still concerns novice teachers is evoking an assertive, decisive manner, which novice Ms. Halverson communicated through non-verbal cues.

During that first week of school, I didn’t smile, ever! And it was hard. Like, um, I used a technique that I don’t even remember where I picked it up, but I would bite my tongue to not smile. Or I would think about something serious, because let’s be honest, kids do things all the time that makes you want to smile or like be light-hearted about, but when you’re trying to establish that in your classroom that, you know, you’re the one who’s in control in the first couple of weeks. And so I really tried not to [smile], or I did a lot of glaring at kids if they did something; I just threw visual “daggers,” at them. I would look at them and try to squash potential misbehavior. (Ms. Halverson, personal communication, June 2014)

When students buy into the act, novice teachers are more likely to feel confident in their role. However, when challenged, novices tend to struggle because they lose belief in the role they are playing.

**Belief in the part one is playing.** In contrast to the student teacher whose disbelief is a result of an inauthentic, imposter-like role, novices often doubt the continuously persuasive nature of their performance. According to Goffman (1959), when an individual moves into a new position in society and has a new part to perform, “he is not likely to be told in full detail how to conduct himself, nor will the facts of his new situation press sufficiently on him from the start to determine his conduct without his further giving thought to it” (p. 72). Prior to entering a new environment as a novice, Ms. Stevenson – a fourth-year Spanish teacher at UHS – worried
that her unfamiliarity with an urban population would negatively impact her ability to adequately manage a classroom.

I was not prepared [in classroom management]. I remember that being my biggest concern. That was the thing I was most nervous about. I grew up in a very middle class background, not that diverse of a high school. Going into an urban environment, I was nervous if I was going to have the skills or have the knowledge to really be able to reach a lot of those kids. (Ms. Stevenson, personal communication, June 2014)

As Goffman (1959) suggested, novices have blind spots regarding how to conduct themselves. As a result, they are often forced to “fake it” when they have not yet learned the school’s policies. Having no frame of reference also negatively impacts the performer’s decisions. Ms. Larson remembered questioning many of her performances, which led to an overwhelming firstyear teaching experience.

There were definitely times in that first year where you're like, “oh my gosh, I don't know.” [I'm unfamiliar with] some of this content. I don't know the actual rules and now something is happening and I have to take a stand. I don't know if I'm taking the right stand, but I have to keep the class moving and keep the learning happening. I do think that there is a learning time where you're like, “Okay, until I actually know what I'm doing, I better appear to look like I know what I'm doing.” (Ms. Larson, personal communication, June 2014)

Goffman might consider these “fake it” situations necessary when the audience does not allow performers to be sincere (sincerity will be discussed in detail in the veteran teacher section). The performer may “delude his audience for what he considers to be their own good, or for the good of the community, etc.” (Goffman, 1959, p. 18). In doing so, however, the performer essentially
admits he is not taken in by his own routine “since no one is in quite as good an observational position to see through the act as the person who puts it on” (Goffman, 1959, p. 17).

**Scripts and audience.** Scripts remain an imperative tool for the novice teacher; however, they tend to become less prescriptive with the completion of more performances. This is especially the case for second and third-year novices who realize the importance of going off script in order to create stronger relationships with students. Ms. Miller said that the pressure to dive right into the content – and adhere to the script – does not deter her from straying from the script that first week of school.

For the first few days of school, I do a lot of activities that allow me to talk about myself and I encourage students to tell their classmates and me about themselves. If I jumped right into math during that first week, I think that would reinforce students' assumptions that I am shy and am maybe only comfortable talking about math. (Ms. Miller, personal communication, July 2015)

For the novice, an occasional departure from the script can be an effective management strategy; however, a complete improvisation is dangerous considering that new teachers are often assigned the toughest audiences (i.e. freshmen). At UHS, for instance, due to a lack of training and experience, newer teachers usually do not teach upperclassmen and International Baccalaureate or honor students. Fourth-year teacher Ms. Stevenson has witnessed the burnout of new teachers who are assigned the toughest classes.

I do feel like there are times when new teachers are assigned the most difficult classes (e.g. underclassmen and non-honors) because no one else wants to teach them. Plus, the new teachers don’t have any say … That being said, I know before I got here, at least I’d heard that there had been a lot of turnover and there still is … I think part of it has to do
with wearing these teachers out so quickly by giving them all these sections of level one and maybe a couple of level twos. Those are tough classes to teach. (Ms. Stevenson, personal communication, June 2014)

Performance Level 3: The Veteran (4+ Years of Experience)

This final section includes field notes from an observation of a veteran teacher at UHS. Unlike the student teacher and novice, this veteran has the experience needed to guide her decisions. Similar to the previous performances, the observer’s comments are used to aid my own understanding of my moral career. Since I consider myself a veteran, the observer’s comments are more reflective of my current practice in the classroom.

Field notes #3: Ms. Swanson

   Date: Tuesday, May 20, 2014
   Class observed: Physical Education, 9th grade
   Teacher: Ms. Swanson, 11 years of experience
   Number of students: 27
   (15 females, 12 males; 19 students of color, 6 EL, 5 on IEP) 7th hour time: 12:32 p.m. – 1:19 p.m.

   With a few minutes until the beginning of class, Ms. Swanson stands outside the community gyms, welcoming students by shaking hands and giving high-fives. On several occasions, Ms. Swanson pokes her head into the gym and tells her freshmen to have a seat on the make-shift cement bleachers. I am sitting near the entrance to the gym so I can see Ms. Swanson while also observing the students already in the gym. Five minutes after the bell (physical education students get an extra five minutes to change into athletic clothes), Ms. Swanson enters the gym, blows her whistle, and asks students to move to the center of the bleachers. Once students are settled, she welcomes them
again, and begins to explain rules for a game of handball. I notice a small cluster of
students in the corner, clearly not listening to Ms. Swanson’s instructions. Ms. Swanson
stops talking and walks in the direction of that group of students. She announces to the
entire class that she will wait quietly until everyone can show they are ready to listen. A
few of the students who had already been listening stare at those who were talking.

O.C.: As a veteran myself, I use a similar approach when managing
instructional disruptions, particularly at the beginning of class. Rather than
verbally single out students who are not paying attention, I stop talking and
walk toward the area that needs redirection. Usually other students will
correct each other before I even have to step in. Of course, this only happens
after weeks in my classroom when students become fully aware of my
expectations.

At 5-feet, 11 inches, Ms. Swanson – a former volleyball player with an athletic
build – is a physical presence, yet it is her firm tone of voice and confident manner that
attracts the attention of her students. When Ms. Swanson finishes giving instructions on
the game itself – there were no more distractions after the initial disruption – she asks
students to line up at one end of the gym for their daily warm-up exercises. Students
quickly situate themselves so they are standing on one of the lines at the edge of the gym.

O.C.: From an outsider’s point of view, it is apparent that Ms. Swanson has
established a routine where students enter class, sit on the bleachers, receive
instructions, complete a warm-up, and partake in the main activity.

Even the warm-up seems to be the same everyday because all Ms. Swanson
does is call out the exercise (i.e. lunges, high knees, hops) and blow her
whistle. At the chirp of the whistle, students begin the exercise. In my own experience, having a pre-established routine helps maintain a more predictable environment. In other words, students are less likely to act out when they operate out of habit, which is the result of establishing structured routine. When students are left guessing what will happen that day, discomfort and boredom can result in misbehavior.

Within the first 10 minutes of class, it is apparent that the teacher consistently gives effective performances. I can say this because students naturally respond to her instructional commands. Students have already learned the meaning of “lunge,” “hops,” and “high knees.” As students are warming up, Ms. Swanson encourages individual students while also providing feedback on their form. After warming up, Ms. Swanson blows her whistle and asks students to sit in the middle of the gym. As students congregate in the center, Ms. Swanson corrals the stragglers. It is at this point that I notice two students sitting on the ground on the opposite side of the bleachers from where I had been sitting (I am now closer to the center of the gym). The two boys are still wearing their street clothes. I know from my own K-12 experience that students cannot participate in gym class unless they change into their gym clothes. I also know that they will lose that day’s participation points.

O.C.: Prior to this observation, I had never watched a physical education teacher conduct class. I had always wondered what it would be like to manage a class within a large gymnasium. I had not thought about factors like the echoing of voices or keeping an eye on those students sitting out because they didn’t change into their gym clothes. I have no doubt a larger
space also makes management more challenging. In the spring, our physical education classes take place outside so that definitely would make communication of instruction difficult. In these cases, immediately establishing structure and expectations are imperative to effectively managing the class.

As soon as the students have arranged themselves accordingly, Ms. Swanson says they are going to review the rules of handball. She asks students to explain the rules based on the information provided earlier in the week. With one minor correction, the students quickly review the rules. The day prior, they had played team handball outside so the application of the rules helped solidify their understanding of the game. Because rain forced them to play inside today, Ms. Swanson tells students they can choose their own teams of six. However, she emphasizes they only have one minute to do so otherwise she will create teams for them.

O.C.: Establishing a time limit on such an activity tends to alleviate the drama of choosing teams. In my English classroom, I have used a similar strategy. Usually, students gravitate toward others sitting near them. In other cases, students form similar groups to ones I have created in the past.

Also, such a strategy reduces any wasted time. Disagreements are less likely to happen when all the students can think about is the time on the clock.

With 10 seconds left, Ms Swanson counts down. 10-9-8-7-6 … By the time she reaches 3, the groups are formed. The community gym has two basketball courts so there is room for two games to take place simultaneously. Ms. Swanson also decides to play on the all-girls team. With both games underway, it is clear that the students enjoy this
game. I hear laughter and see several smiles. When a student makes a good move, Ms. Swanson gives positive feedback. She encourages those who look like they are struggling with the quick pace of the game. One young lady seems particularly frustrated with her ability to keep up. Ms. Swanson observes this and asks for the substitute. (Prior to the forming of groups, Ms. Swanson realized there would be one student left out of a group. Ms. Swanson anticipated this and asked one of her students to start out as the substitute for all four teams).

O.C.: Ms. Swanson’s “withitness,” a term used by educators to describe a teacher’s inherent sense of awareness, prevented an awkward situation when forming teams with an odd number of students. She also noticed the young lady tiring before it became much of an issue. Ms. Swanson made the decision rather than waiting for the embarrassment that sometimes results from the first request for a substitute. Ms. Swanson’s ability to anticipate situations helps avert potential management issues. Prior experience, and thus a frame of reference, is an invaluable tool that allows veteran teachers to concentrate on student learning and instruction.

The games continue without disruption. Once, Ms. Swanson leaves her game to check on the other court. She also checks in with the students who did not change for class. As a reminder, Ms. Swanson shows them the grade book. I hear the phrase “you have earned a 0 for the day.” Rather than get angry, Ms. Swanson emphasizes her disappointment that the boys are unable to participate. “You are so good at this game,” she says to one of the boys. He smiles in return and promises he will change the
The following day. The other boy says he doesn’t like the game. Ms. Swanson admits that not every activity will be liked by everyone, but that is not an excuse to avoid participating. Prior to walking away, she tells the student he has a choice. “Follow the expectations or sit out again and lose another day of points.”

O.C.: Throughout my observations, I have witnessed that the veteran teachers put it back on the students when they refuse to follow directions. What I mean by that is the emphasis on student choice. Never have I heard veteran teachers say “you have to do this” when trying to encourage a student to participate or abide by classroom expectations. Just the word “choice” seems to elicit a more positive response from the student.

After a break in the action, the winning teams face off in another game of handball. The losing teams also start their second game. Rather than participate this round, Ms. Swanson walks around the gym and writes comments in her grade book. Throughout the entire observation, I hear Ms. Swanson’s voice echoing throughout the gym. Whether she is giving encouragement, providing tips on form, or reminding students to involve every teammate, Ms. Swanson reminds students of her constant awareness. At 1:06, Ms. Swanson gives the five minute warning before class ends. I notice that a few students take this warning as a last ditch effort to score another goal. Others take the opportunity to rest a bit. As the games wrap up, Ms. Swanson asks one of the teams to help put equipment away. This allows Ms. Swanson to stand near the gym doors where students will be exiting in a mere 30 seconds. As each student walks
by, Ms. Swanson says “see you tomorrow” or “well done today.” Most students respond
with “see you later” or “have a good day, Ms. Swanson.”

O.C.: Clearly, Ms. Swanson’s energetic, welcoming nature has created a
positive learning environment. For the most part, students appeared to enjoy
themselves. Even those who struggled had smiles on their faces. As a
veteran myself, it was interesting to watch another veteran perform
effortlessly. The conception of Ms. Swanson’s role seemed second nature,
which then positively impacts the students’ belief in her performance.

**Debriefing the performance.** Later that afternoon, Ms. Swanson and I sat down to talk
about the class I observed. I shared my own observation notes then asked her how she
establishes such a structured, positive learning environment.

I think all kids want limits and expectations. They all need them. But I think it's how you
present it to them. I think they respond well where it seems like it's a collaborative
conversation of, “Okay, let's talk about some things that are acceptable; these are my
non-negotiables. What are your non-negotiables?” Then they feel that if they have some
input into it and some ownership in it, then I think that they feel like it's more of a
community and not just "This is my class and these are my rules. Follow them or else"
kind of thing. (Ms. Swanson, May 2014)

I then asked Ms. Swanson how she would describe her classroom management style.
I'm not just totally relationship based or totally rule-based. I think the evolution of my
career in the last five years has been more towards having those two things fit together
where the kids know what the expectations are, but they also don't want to disappoint you
because you have that relationship with them. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication,
As both a physical education and AVID teacher (AVID is a college preparation program, especially for students traditionally underrepresented in higher education), Ms. Swanson has had to learn how to appeal to all types of student learners. Prior to becoming an AVID teacher, Ms. Swanson only taught physical education. I asked how the physical education experience, specifically in a gym, helped her better manage the AVID classroom (and vice versa). I think it lends itself naturally to AVID because so much of what we do is collaborative and team work, and it's you as a teacher essentially relinquishing control over your classroom to allow the kids to experience the learning in a hands-on way; not always I give you the information and you learn it because of me. You can actually be learning from each other, which is a very PE thing because everything is collaborative. I mean, you can't have anything going in PE if you don't have kids work together. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, May 2014)

Student engagement was our final topic of discussion during this debriefing. In a class such as physical education where students are active, I wondered if student engagement was much of an issue. Ms. Swanson said engagement is still a challenge during instructional time and transitions between activities.

With teenagers today, teachers are looking at different ways to engage them because kids everywhere are exposed to technology 24/7, so their attention spans are ridiculously short. I think teachers want to find ways to engage kids and get them interested in the new material that needs to be learned. I think in an urban setting specifically, we just have kids who have more needs, like the basic things they need for school. I think that we just work with a population that maybe needs more and needs us to provide more for them. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, May 2014)
The Dramaturgical Experience of the Veteran Teacher

After years of experience in the same role, the teacher – now a veteran – has a frame of reference to help determine how performances will be perceived and a better grasp on what constitutes an effective performance. When similar situations arise – specifically relating to classroom management – the veteran is better equipped to act in a way that exudes presence of mind and self control, or dramaturgical discipline. Additionally, there is now coherence among setting, appearance, and manner. As a result, the audience interprets the performance as authentic. Essentially, the role as classroom teacher has become second nature for the veteran. There is a belief in one’s part that did not exist as a student teacher or novice. Scripts, setting, audiences, and staging are now confidently managed.

Personal front: Appearance and manner. After years of teaching, the veteran now has the presence of mind to manage personal front in a different way. Rather than adjusting it after the audience conveys their impressions, the veteran takes a more active role prior to even meeting the students. The veteran has acquired the knowledge necessary to anticipate various scenarios. In this way, the veteran has a better chance of adjusting “the line of treatment that is being pursued once the interaction is underway” (Goffman, 1959, p. 11). In order to get an idea of the students’ preconceived notions and assumptions, the veteran talks to teachers who have taught the same students. Also, the veteran researches the audience members’ backgrounds and interests. This helps the veteran anticipate audience impressions on the first day of school. For example, Ms. Peterson – a 5’1”, petite, young-looking White female – has learned over her 11 years how to dispel assumptions that she will be passive and easy to control.

When I first started teaching, I think I was less concerned with accurately understanding student perceptions of me. I began the year believing that they would see me as a
pushover due to my size and being female and (at the time) quite young, and I actively worked against that perception all year. Now I still begin the year that way, but I try to read the students a bit better and realize that when, or if, I earn their respect, then I can lighten up a bit. (Ms. Peterson, personal communication, July 2015)

This additional awareness allows the veteran to manipulate personal front, thus setting the stage for a more effectively managed classroom.

Especially in the first few days of school, I try to be very well organized, set firm routines, give clear expectations, and address any deviations from those expectations quickly and directly. Of course, these are strategies I use all year long, but I am more cognizant of them at the beginning of the year. I also have a seating chart for students on the first day. When students come in and realize there is a seating chart already, I often hear them say something like, "Oh, you're one of those teachers." I like to think this means they recognize immediately that I am taking charge of the class and am ready to get down to business right away. (Ms. Peterson, personal communication, July 2015) A heightened awareness also helps the veteran realize that manner can create more of a presence than appearance, or “dressing the part.” Ms. Swanson said she has become more aware of the importance of using non-verbal techniques to manipulate audience impressions.

I think [body language] shows that you're confident … not just shoulders kind of down, head kind of down … so walking proud or at least having some level of charisma where the kids know that you will engage in a conversation with them. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, June 2014)

Mannerisms that evoke charisma can be managed through expression control, specifically voice. As emphasized in the section about the student teacher’s dramaturgical experience, the
performer must use effective volume and intonation to control audience impressions. In the case of personal front, expression control – or the management of one’s face and voice – can positively shape the performer’s manner. Over the course of her 11 years of teaching, Ms. Peterson learned how to manage her voice intonation, which she said helped convey a more firm, authoritative manner.

I actually try to be quite aware of my vocal intonations. My first semester of teaching high school, I probably had a somewhat higher intonation and was louder to try to get students' attention. I quickly learned, through professional development and practice, that a lower intonation is much more effective as it seems to communicate authority and calmness, so that is what I try to use. I save the higher intonations for when I want to get students excited about something we're reading or studying. (Ms. Peterson, personal communication, July 2015)

Since dramaturgical discipline is naturally ingrained into the veteran’s role, even the most mild mannered (and small in stature) can learn how to effectively manage a classroom. Rather than act out of character – like a tough, disciplinarian – Ms. Stevenson, a 5'8”, slender blonde with glasses, relies on her presence of mind and prior experience in the classroom.

I think in terms of behavior and discipline, I'm not someone who's super stern ... really, at all, ever. I think it took me a little while to figure out what was going to work with my personality and I realized I'm not someone whose students are going to be intimidated by or am not someone who's going to be the teacher that yells so I just had to figure out how am I going to do this if I'm not that teacher that they fear. (Ms. Stevenson, personal communication, June 2014)
Compared to the novice, the veteran has the presence of mind and self control needed to effectively manage personal front. In doing so, the audience’s belief in the performer – as well as the performance – is impacted. Specifically, the audience is more likely to “take seriously the impression that is fostered before them” (Goffman, 1959, p. 17). This impression is also shaped by the veteran’s belief in one’s own act.

**Belief in the part one is playing.** While the novice often questions the belief in one’s own part, the veteran “is sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality” (Goffman, 1959, p. 17). Essentially, the sincerity comes from a performance that is now second nature. As a result, the confidence that was missing as a novice is now part of the veteran’s persona. The veteran has now formed a mask that Park says represents “our truer self, the self we would like to be” (as cited in Goffman, 1959, pp. 19-20). Ms. Hess, a 13-year veteran at UHS said years of teaching has resulted in a more confident self, one that more accurately reflects her true persona.

I believe that the act of teaching became easier, or more second nature to me, as I gained experience. I find myself thinking less about my ability to present curriculum and work with the students and more on differentiating and creating more effective ways to present the material. I can focus more on teaching content than on the teaching itself. I can work on better ways of getting difficult concepts across to learners of differing abilities instead of focusing on the (what I now consider) more trivial part of "teaching". Don't get me wrong, there are still challenges with each new group of kids, with each different class period etc. in which that fundamental aspect of teaching is revisited, but I think I adapt "on my feet" and without thinking about it more now than I used to. I think it comes with confidence in knowing the curriculum, experience in knowing what has worked before
and what hasn't, confidence in my ability to build relationships with the students, and confidence in knowing how things work in the building/district. (Ms. Hess, personal communication, July 2015)

Confidence in one’s role also leads to sharing more about oneself, which Goffman (1959) believed would benefit the performer. When the audience is given information about the performer, “the less likely it is that anything they learn during the interaction will radically influence them” (Goffman, 1959, p. 222). Mr. Richards, a seventh-year math teacher at UHS, said he is “an open book” with his students:

I have no problem sharing who I am with them. I talk (maybe too frequently) about my experiences and interests. I want them to know that I am a real person that goes to Target and buys toilet paper. I do not simply grade their work and sleep in my office. By allowing them into my life they will be more comfortable letting me into theirs. Through this relationship, everyone is more comfortable in the classroom and there is a sense of respect. (Mr. Richards, personal communication, June 2014)

Belief in one’s part also allows the veteran to sustain the role even when mistakes or errors are made. Often, though, the veteran has the presence of mind needed to conceal the flaws. In other cases, the “errors and mistakes are often corrected before the performance takes place. In this way an impression of infallibility, so important in many presentations, is maintained” (Goffman, 1959, p. 43). When distractions occur, Ms. Larson intentionally conceals the disturbance in order to avoid a potential disaster.

There might be times where I'm acting like I have control over the classroom. I'm like, “oh my gosh, one student could do something and things could get crazy.” I'm just trying to act like I know that I have it under control. I'm not being like a fake person. I'm not lying to
the kids or anything like that. (Ms. Larson, personal communication, June 2014) In the case of Ms. Larson, as well as other veterans, the conception of the role as classroom manager has become second nature and “an integral part of [one’s] personality” (Goffman, 1959, pp. 19-20). Since the role is now a fundamental part of the veteran’s persona, “acting” or “faking it” does not mean the performer or performance is disingenuous. Unlike the novice who “fakes it” to maintain one’s own credibility and belief in one’s role, the veteran improvises to avoid disruption in student learning. Decisions are now instantaneous, thus giving the impression that the veteran is confident in the resolution. Ms. Larson said confidence in one’s role also leads to experimentation with scripts, which will be outlined in the following section.

**Scripts, setting, audiences, staging.** No longer prescribed and one-dimensional, the veteran’s script varies according to setting and audience. Unlike the student teacher and firstyear novice, veterans recognize the need to adjust the script to better suit the audience members. According to Ms. Larson, veterans usually have the confidence to experiment with the script. “Veterans are willing to try new things and go out on a limb and give students control in the classroom. They aren’t always the one in the front of the class kind of talking all the time” (Ms. Larson, personal communication, June 2014).

Veterans also have the experience needed to tailor scripts for individuals within the same audience. As a novice, Mr. Richards said he treated all his students the same in his first couple years, but as he has grown, he has been able to create multiple scripts based on each student’s needs. “Some need to be pushed or challenged, while others need more time to develop a skill” (Mr. Richards, personal communication, June 2014). Ms. Swanson also alters her script, but in her case, she does so according to the age of the audience members. She also takes into account the time of the performance.
I have different classroom management with different classes, depending on the day, the time, whatever, because ninth graders in the afternoon are crazy. You might have to be a little more serious and I have to adapt a little bit more to an afternoon class than I would to a morning class. I think it's impossible to say that you would have the exact same classroom management for every class. You can have the exact same expectations for every class, but how you disseminate that information, I think, can look really different.

(Ms. Swanson, personal communication, June 2014)

At UHS, it is common for veterans to teach various audiences (i.e. grade levels, IB versus nonhonors, etc.). These teachers recognize the importance of “teaching to your audience.” Eighth-year veteran Mr. Koch discussed his own approach to managing different audiences, specifically in an urban classroom.

To have effective management in an urban setting, the teacher must be sensitive to the needs and lives of their students. The best advice I ever received was from a seasoned colleague, whom I taught with in an at-risk school in Las Vegas. He told me, “Leave your own values and experiences at the door when you walk in, in the morning. Pick them up again as you leave.” It took some time for me to understand what he meant, but essentially, he was telling me that our own views and methods on managing a classroom are influenced heavily by how we perceive and expect our students to behave. By and large, we expect them to enter the classroom quietly and respectfully, sit down at their desk, ready to learn and eager to participate. This is largely not the case in their home lives. ... For the most part, teachers today haven’t had much, if any, experience with these type of challenges in their own lives. Therefore, having a sensitivity and empathy to
those types of needs of our students is paramount in possessing strong classroom management. (Mr. Koch, personal communication, June 2013)

After years of experience, the veteran has also endured many “first day of school” performances. By now, the veteran knows that properly setting the stage on those first days is crucial to the effectiveness of future performances.

When I first started out, I wanted everybody to think I was nice, and I remember getting trampled over by some kids, probably earlier in my career. Then in my third or fourth year I was more hard-edged. I had students who didn't like it, which was fine, but I don't think that I had the relationships that I do now with students. My fifth year was when I developed more into how I am now where I can set the rules and expectations but also have the relationship with the kids. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, June 2014) Like the script, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to effectively managing a classroom. After years of experience and numerous failures in the performance, the veteran is more aware of the multifaceted, complex nature of classroom management.

**Review of the Dramaturgical Experiences**

In this chapter, I used Goffman’s dramaturgical theory to analyze the experiences of student teachers, novices, and veterans. When it comes to personal front, all teachers – regardless of age or the number of years in the classroom – should be aware that appearance and manner can help control or guide students’ impressions. However, once teachers have gained enough experience to be deemed a veteran, their own perception of personal front might change. Unlike the novice who is more likely to alter appearance (by dressing up or growing a beard), the veteran tends to focus on manner when managing impressions. Veterans do so by manipulating their body language as well as voice intonation. Among those interviewed, it was their manner,
specifically one that exuded charisma, that created a presence that facilitated more effective
classroom management. It makes sense that awareness and better understanding of expression
control leads to a more seamless, efficient performance. Dramaturgical discipline – often absent
in the student teacher and novice’s performance – ensures that the performance can continue
with few disruptions, which the veteran knows are bound to happen in an urban high school
classroom. In such cases, veterans have the presence of mind to discipline themselves in such a
way that they play their roles fully while maintaining an ability to recognize and react to
unexpected and possibly detrimental occurrences in the classroom.

A heightened presence of mind allows the veteran to anticipate disruptions, while prior
experience helps the veteran predict the potential result of such disruptions. Also, confidence in
one’s performance, or a belief in the part one is playing, allows for a continuous performance
despite these disruptions. During such disruptions, the audience is less likely to pounce on any
flaws since they perceive the situation as being under control. The student teacher and novice do
not yet have the dramaturgical discipline needed to perform in a similar manner. As a result,
students often take advantage of the situation and the classroom becomes more difficult to
manage. At UHS, novices are likely to experience these difficult classrooms considering they
usually teach audiences that are younger. Therefore, it is hard to experiment with curriculum, or
script. Even when novices have easier audiences, lack of experience hinders their ability to
improvise or even modify the script between set changes.

In analyzing the various dramaturgical experiences of the student teacher, novice, and
veteran, it has become apparent that impression management is crucial when attempting to teach
an audience full of teenagers. At the same time, it is evident that the phenomenon of classroom
management is difficult to fully understand. The next chapter helps further unravel the complex
nature of classroom management. To do so, it uses Dreyfus’ five stage skill acquisition model; van Gennep and Turner’s rites of passage; and Goffman’s moral career.
Chapter 5 From Novice to Expert: An Incomplete Passage of Rites

In analyzing teachers’ perceptions of their own classroom management, several theoretical concepts helped shed light on the complex phenomenon, including Dreyfus’ skill acquisition model, van Gennep and Turner’s rites of passage, and Goffman’s moral career (as introduced in chapter 1). During coding and evaluation of the data, it became apparent that the theories were interrelated. In other words, no concept could be analyzed in isolation when applied to the data collected. For example, rites of passage signaled a change in skills and moral career. Similarly, movement to a new stage of the skill acquisition model impacted moral career. In order to advance through these various stages, and thus rites of passage, the presence of a guide – in this case an expert teacher – is essential. This will be discussed throughout the subsections in the remainder of the chapter.

The Novice: Rites of Separation and Transition

The role of student teacher, or novice according to Dreyfus’ skill acquisition model, can be a mystifying, lonely experience. Prior to even starting the practicum, student teachers experience several rites of separation (Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1960). First, the novice is stripped of the constant support and supervision provided by the university environment. The shift to a new environment then brings several symbolic rituals, including dressing in professional clothes and adopting the Mr. or Ms. title before the surname. To add to the unfamiliarity of the situation, the student teacher endures the confusion of a liminal state (Turner, 1969). Essentially, the student teacher is stuck between two worlds. The novice is not completely cut off from the teacher education community nor has there been formal acceptance into the world of teaching. Turner (1969) referred to these individuals as being liminal in that they are “neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed
by law, custom, convention, and ceremony” (p. 95). During her student teaching, Ms. Knudson experienced the discomfort of this liminality.

My transition from university student to student teacher was difficult because of the blurring of these roles. I still felt like a student looking for guidance and support. However, I was in a position of a teacher who didn’t necessarily have those supports there anymore. This made it difficult for me to “perform” as a teacher because I felt unsure about my role in the classroom, particularly with curriculum. I did not often feel confident in the lessons, which made me look unsure in front of students. There were many examples of this that occurred during student teaching, such as students asking me questions about why they needed to complete an assignment, and I didn’t feel confident (or display confidence) in my response. This, of course, made it difficult for me to earn their trust as a teacher and see myself in that role as well. (Ms. Knudson, personal communication, August 2015)

As indicated by Ms. Knudson, a liminal state can be frustrating because of the lack of formal recognition as classroom teacher. As a result, the role of the coordinating teacher is pivotal. However, the lack of coordinating teacher training combined with guiding the mentee through such an ambiguous state, often challenges even the most proficient classroom teachers. As someone who has mentored three student teachers, Ms. Donaldson acknowledged this challenge. I think that might be the toughest process, because they’re coming from a place of being students. They’re adults. They’ve been in college, but they’re still a student. They’re coming from a place of college privilege where everyone’s there and everyone does their work and they want to do it. That’s your immediate most recent memory of school. Then, you come into school to teach and it's obviously not like that at all. I think sometimes
that's part of the challenge. It's like guiding them through having realistic expectations for students and realizing the reality sometimes. (Ms. Donaldson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

Because she is quite aware of the “betwixt and between” status of student interns, Ms. Paulson – an expert of 43 years who has hosted more than a dozen student teachers – provides her interns with constant supervision and guidance.

I supervise them constantly. I hardly ever leave them alone, unlike other people who leave them alone from the beginning and some people who supervise them a little bit. Number one, I usually won't take them if I have them for less than a semester, because I don't think the quarter is really possible to teach them very much. I also interview them before I take them. I don't just take anybody. I try to make sure that there's some personal compatibility there. Then I start by having them observe. By the end, they can plan a unit, plan individual lessons and implement the lessons. So that's why I need them for a semester, rather than just a quarter. I would say that because they are in that sort of nether land between student and teacher, I treat them as a student at the beginning, and by the end, they're functioning as a teacher. (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015) Essentially, the personal compatibility Ms. Paulson mentioned has to stem from a mutual commitment – almost a contract of sorts – between the mentor and student teacher. Ms. Wilson acknowledged the importance of such a commitment. After mentoring two student teachers, Ms. Wilson said she is not the type of coordinating teacher who leaves the classroom once the student teacher takes over. Instead, she insists on being a constant presence in the classroom. In this way, Ms. Wilson can give immediate, specific feedback. “The mentor still has to be very aware of what is going on in the classroom and
offering ‘in my experience, I have seen that and I did x, y, z and this worked while this didn’t so you might want to try …’” (Ms. Wilson, personal communication, Nov. 2015).

In addition to extra time spent during the mentorship process, both the student teacher and mentor have to be willing to listen and learn from each other. Ms. Wilson said her constant presence in the classroom resulted in learning new instructional strategies being taught in the teacher education program. Sometimes these strategies are not as applicable within the context of an urban school like UHS. In this case, Ms. Wilson provided feedback but also “has to be willing to let the student teacher try and fail on his or her own” (personal communication, Nov. 2015). Ms. Wilson said failure is essential for learning to occur. However, in order to learn from the experience – and thus progress through the rites of passage – the coordinating teacher needs to help the student teacher reflect on the situation.

Mr. Dodson said his student teaching experience might have been more successful had there been a “mutual commitment” between himself and the coordinating teacher.

It was a lot of “okay, we are going to get through these worksheets here and you are going to sit at your desk.” There was no room for the strategies I learned in my university classes like Socratic seminar or philosophical chairs. During my teacher training, I always assumed that you were a bad guy if you gave worksheets. I also had a hard time figuring out what was more important – having a good lesson or updating grades. I wish my mentor helped me prioritize because I often felt overwhelmed. (Mr. Dodson, personal communication, Nov. 2015)

The already perplexing and overwhelming role of the student teacher is exacerbated by the fact that these individuals are stuck in an ambiguous state, and are therefore less inclined to explore various styles of teaching. In the first few weeks, imitating the coordinating teacher can be
helpful since the entire experience – creating lessons, implementing the lessons, managing the classroom, and grading assignments – can be overwhelming. However, in the later weeks, it is important that the student teacher be allowed to identify a style that best reflects his or her personality and core educational beliefs. In the case of Mr. Dodson, he did not want to question the coordinating teacher’s preferences so he “followed the leader.” As inferred in the personal communication above, Mr. Dodson did not receive the support needed to explore his own teaching style, and as a result, did not feel well prepared to formally enter the teaching field.

Coordinating teachers are also faced with the challenge of helping their mentee navigate their beliefs about how teachers should act. Oftentimes, student teachers bring techniques – both curricular and management – learned in their university courses. They come in with memories of their own schooling and idealized beliefs about education.

I assumed that students would be automatically more engaged in my lessons because of their desire to learn and further their education. However, as I began teaching I realized that it is my duty to make my lessons more engaging and interesting to students in order to activate their desire to learn and further their education. I also assumed that more students planned on going to college or had their futures more mapped out. However, many students do not have a plan for their future or they have nothing they are interested in that they could make a career out of. Teachers need to help students think about their futures and the steps they need to take to accomplish what they want to accomplish in life. (Ms. Ryan, personal communication, August 2014)

Ms. Scott, another student teacher, assumed teaching was simply making fun activities for students and keeping them engaged. Ms. Donaldson – Ms. Scott’s coordinating teacher – helped reconcile her ideologies with the realities of teaching in an urban high school like UHS.
I think realizing [the reality of teaching] is absolutely a rite of passage or whatever you want to call it. Something that you're going to go through is having that realization of, "What do I do when a kid doesn't do the work or when they storm out of the room or do this or that?" Because they're going to do that, especially with the student teacher. It depends on what kind of education the student teacher has experienced in their own life in high school. Maybe that wasn't the experience they had and that's certainly not the experience you're going to have in college even though you're still the student. I think it's absolutely a rite of passage where you have to make that realization. (Ms. Donaldson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

In addition to the idealistic beliefs, novices like the student teacher bring context-free "book knowledge" about classroom management. Ms. Knudson said she assumed it would be easy to integrate theoretical concepts. Once she began student teaching, however, she realized it would be difficult to do so. Student teachers hold tight to such beliefs since they have no experiential background to base his or her understanding. Thus, classroom management decisions are often based on rules – or objective attributes – Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986) called “context-free rules.” The novice ignores context in favor of following the rules, many of which are often communicated through university courses and the mentor teacher. Prescribed, one-size fits all strategies are all the novice knows. Their behavior is rule-governed, limited, and inflexible. Novices tend to see situations in isolation and have little ability to predict future incidents, and as a result, need close supervision. A veteran teacher who has supervised an intern mused on her own misconceptions as an intern.

I think I remember the rigidity of student teaching for me personally. It was you do this and you this and you do this and it's black or it’s white. When I became a teacher, I
realized there's a tiny bit of black and a tiny bit of white and then a whole bunch of grey in varying shades. I think letting student teachers know to use their discretion and that that's okay and that you sometimes have to make judgment calls and make them on the fly often and give them the strength to know it's okay. I think sometimes they don't know that that's what they're supposed to do because they're taught step one, step two, step three, step four, step five. I think just trying to keep it real with them but not in a “I'm going to scare you away from teaching way,” but keeping it positive. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

Still, Ms. Swanson worried about the student teaching rite of passage’s effect on would-be teachers. She acknowledged that the role of intern supervisor has its own learning curve and fretted that she had been akin to a novice supervisor.

Our jobs are not easy on a daily basis. We have to be up front and let new teachers know that situations come up and you have to be able to react. It is difficult as a mentor because you also have to give them the confidence to do that while still stepping away enough to make them an authority in the room. That's a super fine line you have to walk. Again, I don't know that I was very good when I had my student teacher because I really pride myself on my relationships with my kids. When I was in the room still, they were still coming to me and they're like, why is she doing it? I'd be like, "No, no. Just try it out. This is the way they want to do it and that's totally fine." You have to try to give the kids confidence in the teacher also. It was probably easier for me to just not be there quite honestly because it was really hard. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)
Like Ms. Swanson, I found it hard to navigate the simultaneous role of teacher and mentor. With my first student teacher (as discussed in chapter 3), I played more of a gatekeeper role in that I had to intervene frequently when students rebelled. The following excerpt is taken from my personal journal:

I wanted to give the student teacher more responsibility but he proved incapable of making sound decisions. For example, I caught him leaving a study hall full of 60 students unattended just so he could make it back to the classroom early and prepare. These are things I should not have to “teach.” As a result, I found myself playing teacher to my intern and students. It was less of a mentor-intern role. To be honest, the whole experience was a nightmare. He never should have advanced that far in the teacher education program. But he did and then when other teachers in my department could not take him [they were either not yet tenured or had schedules that were not conducive to mentoring a student teacher], I felt pressured to accept the role. (personal journal, July 2014)

In reflecting on whether coordinating teacher training would have helped deal with such a situation, I wondered if it would have made a difference because the outcome would have been the same.

Training might have helped in terms of “what do I do if the student teacher is incompetent?” but it would not have prevented the series of events that followed. My “guidance” felt less constructive and more critical. Really, most of my advice had to do with inappropriate judgments and had nothing to do with the content. I had to protect my students so I stepped in more than a coordinating teacher should probably have to do. I
also wanted to protect potential future students he might teach, so I recommended that he not be licensed by the university. (personal journal, July 2014)

During the mentorship process, the novice is bound to experience weak and failed lessons. However, because the student teacher has no prior experience and is considered “betwixt and between,” there is no “framework of imagery for judging himself” (Goffman, 1961, p. 128). The intern supervisor, however, does have a framework established, and therefore, is apt to judge him or herself based on the success of the student teacher. In reflecting on her mentorship role as a coordinating teacher – a role that can develop or hinder one’s moral career – Ms. Donaldson said personal investment in the overall process can result in a rollercoaster of emotions. With her first student teacher, Ms. Donaldson did not feel a memorable amount of guilt, judgment, or other negative feelings regarding the experience. Ms. Donaldson recalled her student teacher having good and bad days; however, she seemed to take them all in stride and "bounced back" from each one as a more seasoned teacher would. In addition, Ms. Donaldson did not have a recollection of her struggling in any particular area (lesson planning, classroom management, engaging students) which she believed contributed to the fact that the experience was, in a good way, not very memorable. Ms. Donaldson’s second coordinating experience differed significantly, which she explained below:

The second experience, which was an overall very positive one, brought some measures of guilt when [Ms. Scott] would become overwhelmed either due to student behaviors, lessons that did not go as planned, or just the general stress of the student teaching experience. When these times presented themselves, I often felt that I wasn't doing enough to support her or that I wasn't guiding her in the right way so as to avoid these situations in the first place. In a way, I felt more I was in more of a "big sisterly" role to
her; when her day was bad, so was mine. I don't know that I would necessarily call it "guilt" but I did feel considerable measures of sympathy and empathy.

Finally, with her third student teacher, Ms. Donaldson again experienced guilt but the reasons were much different than with Ms. Scott.

In my last experience with [my third student teacher], I did feel much more guilt and negative feelings both because of and for her. On one hand, I felt that my classroom was not always going in the direction that I wanted it to due to her actions or non-actions. In this way, I felt that I wasn't doing my students due diligence in their learning. On the other hand, there were many days when she seemed overwhelmed and depressed; as with Ms. Scott, I felt bad when I wasn't able to prevent these days from happening. At the end of the experience, I had a much more negative feeling than with the previous two experiences.

Similar to Ms. Donaldson, I often felt guilty that I was not able to guide him adequately through the process. The following journal excerpt describes this guilt:

I definitely judged my performance as a mentor based on his lack of success. Later, I realized my guilt stemmed from putting my students through that. With my second student teacher several years later, I did not feel guilt but rather always wondered if I pushed her too hard or provided the "right" advice. It was difficult for me to dissociate myself from her performance. At the same time, the overall experience was much more successful. (personal journal, July 2014)

**The Novice/Advanced Beginner: Rites of Transition**

Upon transitioning from a university student – now graduate – the novice teacher is stripped of a status that had remained constant for several years. At this point, the novice teacher as intern
has experienced several changes in condition – partial separation from the university environment, permanent separation from the university upon graduation, and once hired as a novice teacher, viewed as an untested new member of the teaching staff – which seriously impacts the social aspect of a teacher’s developing moral career. Ms. Higgins equated the transition period to “being the new kid” and that “you have to know your place. You need to wait until others recognize your presence” (Ms. Higgins, personal communication, August 2014). When Ms. Swanson started at UHS, she knew she was the “low man” in that she deferred to whatever everybody else in the department said. “I followed the rules and I played the game and did what I was supposed to be doing.” (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

Unlike the student teacher, the first-year novice no longer experiences the liminality that often creates confusion and discomfort – among students, the coordinating teacher, and student teacher. However, the first-year teacher is now left to his or her own devices. The comforting presence of the coordinating teacher is absent. In my personal journal, I recalled my first few days of teaching:

I remember standing in front of the students, wishing for the presence of another adult in the room. I just wanted someone there to back me up if students questioned me. It is weird because I felt confident with the curriculum but was unsure about how to manage the classroom. I was afraid that students would smell my nervousness and just act out for the sake of testing my patience. (personal journal, Sept. 2015)

At the time of my hiring in 2006, there was no formal mentorship program at UHS. Monthly meetings were required for all new teachers to the district. Because these meetings included new teachers from the elementary, middle school, and high school levels, the topics were general and
overarching. These meetings were not particularly helpful in answering specific questions about curriculum or classroom management. However, two of my colleagues provided the support needed to survive that first year of teaching. One individual happened to be Ms. Paulson, who was teaching English fulltime and had yet to be hired as the building’s mentor teacher. My reflections of this informal mentoring are described in the following journal excerpt:

I am lucky in that they took me under their wing. We were all teaching sophomore English so I could ask specific questions about the material and I would get an immediate answer. More importantly, however, they provided me with sound advice from years of teaching at UHS. Both colleagues were so approachable, no matter the time of day. They had already encountered many of the management issues I was struggling with so their feedback was practical and valid. There is no doubt my first year of teaching was still challenging because I had not yet established a reputation, but these mentors helped me survive. They helped me tread water. (personal journal, July 2014)

Because these novices have yet to be recognized – and therefore have not established a reputation – students can (and usually do) make that first year of teaching more difficult. Students pick up on the novice’s passive nature, which Turner (1969) believed to be a result of the transition stage. In essence, “testing experiences” like students’ purposeful disregard for classroom rules and expectations can be deemed rites of initiation. In my novice years, I anticipated this “testing,” mainly because it is a natural part of the transition phase.

Oh, there is no doubt that students tested the boundaries because I was a new teacher but I knew how to handle it because I experienced similar “initiation rites” in my first career as a journalist. It is just a part of the process of being new. It is scary, though, because
you can almost see the students’ sizing you up. Thirty pairs of eyes staring at you would intimidate most new teachers (personal journal, July 2014)

In that first year of teaching, the novice experiences many rites of initiation, which often present themselves as “firsts.” Parent conferences, being disrespected by students, justifying a grading decision, experiencing a failed lesson, and writing a referral are all situations the novice can expect to encounter. How the novice responds is critical to the outcome of similar situations in the future. The popular saying of “only the first time counts” is truly universal and is often expressed to some extent through special rites. In reflecting on her “first” of writing a referral (consequences include in-school suspension the following day), Ms. Miller remembered taking it personally, mainly because she blamed herself.

I remember feeling bad about writing my first referral as I felt like if I had been better at classroom management, I wouldn’t have students acting out. I didn’t know what the referral process was, so I had to ask a fellow department member what to do. I was embarrassed asking. I thought that person would judge me, and would think that I was having a tough time getting control of my classes. (Ms. Miller, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

Even though Ms. Miller relied on school rules to make her decision, she still felt responsible for the outcome. Essentially Ms. Miller’s moral career was negatively impacted because she feared being judged by her colleagues. Relying only on rules (and not having the clout or foresight to assess situations on a case-by-case basis) can be stressful for the novice. This is when the guidance of a mentor becomes essential. At UHS, Ms. Paulson is the mentor teacher for all new teachers to the building (regardless of age or experience in the field of teaching). Her first goal as an educational functionary is to familiarize new teachers with the culture of the building. This
is something a mentor can help with, of understanding how the system works. What do I do if I have to send a student out of the room? How do I handle that? Where do they go? Who do I call? You know … the day to day business of how the institution works. The advantage we have as veterans is institutional knowledge and we know the culture. New teachers to the building don't have that background, that cultural knowledge to know these are the rules. These are the unwritten rules. The unwritten rules are so hard to figure out when you're trying to do lesson plans the night before for what you're going to do on Wednesday. It's such a big period of transition for someone new to a building. That's why I think it's a great thing that I mentor, not just new teachers, but anyone new to the building. There is kind of that building shock. (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

Mr. Dodson recalled his own experience with building shock, specifically regarding classroom management. He remembered the difficulty in sorting through the maze of possible decisions when managing a classroom.

During my first year, I struggled to prioritize classroom management responses. For instance, I might have worried more about a kid doing something minor, such as doodling or playing with gum, and take only small steps to correct a student who was talking over me during my instruction. Furthermore, if students weren’t learning due to their own misbehavior, I felt like they were choosing to fail and would try to put them in positions not to bother me rather than put them in positions to learn. (Mr. Dodson, personal communication, July 2014)

Ms. Evans said she struggled with classroom control for many of the same reasons as Mr. Dodson. “I had huge classes and little control. I had so much focus on getting the students to do
exactly what I wanted them to do (maybe from pressures higher up) that I lost sight of what was important” (Ms. Evans, personal communication, July 2014).

During those first years of teaching – prior to earning tenure and being formally incorporated into the institution’s social environment – the novice often has to endure factors that hinder the ability to effectively manage a classroom. One such factor is the absence of a permanent classroom. Before tenure, science teacher Ms. Bates did not have a classroom so she pushed a cart full of lab equipment, laptops, a skeleton model, fetal pigs, and microscopes. “It was awful. I felt like I was never fully prepared because I was always rushing from room to room and never had enough time to set anything up ahead of time” (Ms. Bates, personal communication, July 2014).

Regarding moral career, Goffman (1961) associated such situations with those at many total institutions where like the neophyte within total institutions, the new teacher is “stripped of many of his accustomed affirmations, satisfactions, and defenses, and is subjected to a rather full set of mortifying experiences” (p. 148). Similar to Ms. Bates, Ms. Nelson had to travel on a cart and felt like she could never do her job well.

Travel on a cart is a very stressful situation. My worst experience included moving each hour and being forced to change floors every hour with the student body. Another issue is teachers on a cart are usually teaching our underclassmen who need so much time and attention from their teachers. It was physically and emotionally draining. I understand why "new teachers" are subjected to this, but it is not in the best interest of teachers and the students. I wonder if this is another reason so many new teachers leave the field so quickly. In your first year you are trying to juggle all the paper work, student work, planning, classroom management, testing … A teacher needs to feel organized and a cart
does not lend itself to organization. You never feel like you are doing your job well.

(Ms. Nelson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

However, unlike the student teacher who has no moral career due to lack of experience, the second and third-year advanced beginner has undergone several rites of transition and now has a framework to judge oneself. In those first years in a new institution, the novice takes on a new level of responsibility, which often changes the way the teacher experiences oneself (i.e. moral career). In his first year at UHS, Mr. O’Donnell started to establish his own tendencies and abandoned some practices which belonged to his mentors more than himself. “I feel like I have a long way to go as an educator but I also feel quite confident in the work I have done and my progression” (Mr. O’Donnell, personal communication, June 2014). During her novice and advanced beginner years, Ms. Evans said she lost confidence when a lesson did not go as planned. “Eventually, I learned to give myself some slack because I am not perfect and I still have a lot of learning and growing to do in my profession” (Ms. Evans, personal communication July 2014). After more than a decade at UHS, Ms. Swanson said her identity has evolved tremendously since her first years teaching.

I feel really bad for the kids who had me in my first couple years. I really do because I didn’t know my identity as a teacher. I know what the university taught me about teaching PE and what that should look like from the time a bell rings to the time a bell has rung to dismiss them. I knew the steps to it. I know the science of it. I didn’t know the heart and soul of it though. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, Sept. 2015) Over the years, Ms. Swanson has seen dozens of novice teachers leave UHS after only a few years. She wondered if that had to do with a lack of development in their moral career as an urban high school teacher.
I think the sad thing is that teachers burn out a lot of times in the first 3-5 years and they never get to that point where they have become their authentic selves. That's sad because we probably lose a lot of teachers who could be super great teachers because they choose to go down another path. They're just not feeling it or whatever for lack of better term.

(Ms. Swanson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

As mentioned in chapter 1, attrition rates among new teachers are staggering. Researchers found between 10-20% of first year teachers leave the profession (the rate depended on support of administration, type of school, and student behavior). At urban schools like UHS, attrition rates tend to be on the higher side of that statistic. To better navigate these feelings of burnout – as a result of “testing experiences,” “firsts”, and other classroom management issues – the role of mentor is essential. At UHS, Ms. Paulson guides probationary teachers through their rites of separation, transition, and initiation. Ms. Evans said the role of mentor is crucial considering new teachers at UHS are only observed three times a year by an administrator. Ms. Evans wanted feedback from someone who could watch her classes consistently, which Ms. Paulson could provide. In this way, the mentor was better able to track growth and provide immediate feedback.

Even after the first year of teaching, the role of the mentor is still vital. In fact, attrition rates tend to increase as teachers approach the five-year mark (see chapter 1). Such an increase is due to the burnout that was mentioned above. When feeling overwhelmed, teachers often turn to colleagues for support. This is the case for second- and third-year teachers who still receive feedback from Ms. Paulson. However, once these advanced beginners have a year under their belt and realize Ms. Paulson is a safe resource, they seek her out to provide further guidance and advice. On many occasions, Ms. Paulson said she has taken on more of counseling role. Once
[probationary teachers] are convinced I'm not an administrator, they come and ask for guidance and advice. Sometimes there are tears. I've had some who have come back the second year in tears because something is not going well or they're worried about something. [UHS] has a population that requires a significant number of skills. We have very busy jobs because the kids have a lot of needs in terms of getting to know them. [For example], figuring out who has an IEP. What is really going on here with regards to classroom management? Then you have their academic needs. How do I bring them further along? Those things are all challenging. Plus new teachers often have a full load of students, in many cases they [arrive] and get at least three ninth-grade classes. It's hard. It's hard work. It's hard to finish what you need to finish in twenty-four hours, much less just a work day. So a lot of times I give them … I'm more counselor than I am mentor, honestly. (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

One of Ms. Paulson’s mentees felt the mentorship was instrumental in helping her blend the instruction with practice. “She provided me with a different perspective on classroom management, lesson planning, and dealing with the politics of a building. We also met as a large group in the building and this allowed us to discuss and problem solve various issues and share wins” (Ms. Nelson, personal communication, Nov. 2015).

**The Competent Teacher: Rites of Incorporation**

After several years of teaching and experiencing the rites of transition, the individual has enough prior knowledge to earn tenure and thus pass into Dreyfus’ competent stage. When an individual starts the fourth year at UHS, he or she experiences a formal acknowledgement of permanency. Symbolic rituals accompany the rites of incorporation like receiving tenure certificates and pins. For the competent teacher, the most important part of tenure involves the
yearly contract. While the novice and advanced beginner’s employment contracts have to be renewed on a daily basis, the newly tenured, competent teacher presumes continuous employment. Ms. Paulson, a mentor teacher at UHS, said receiving tenure has a psychological impact on teachers. She related the experience to Sally Fields response when she accepted her academy award in *Norma Rae*.

Don't you think tenure is also a bit like Sally Fields [saying] "You like me! You really like me!"? It's an official recognition that you're going to be supported, that you're liked and that you have some competence. I think all three of those things are helpful. To be confident, to feel you're liked, and to know that you can take risks. It's kind of nice that for competent teachers there is that rite of passage. For most jobs that does not exist. There's no particular place where you get a little plaque or a certificate or a letter that says "You like me, you really like me." (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

Ms. Nelson said receiving tenure – and thus being formally incorporated into the UHS community – helped validate her worth, both in the classroom and among colleagues in the social studies department.

Tenure helped increase my confidence in my teaching. I also feel more comfortable trying different strategies and lessons without having administration watching my every step. I feel it is important for all teachers to consistently be evaluated and push to improve their craft. But, tenure has provided security and relief. (Ms. Nelson, personal communication, Oct. 2015)

Confidence in the classroom also helps when dealing with management issues. Since the competent individual now has the experience and frame of reference needed to recognize the
relevance of a situation, complex situations are dealt with through deliberate analysis and planning. At this point, it is imperative to mention that teachers at any particular stage of Dreyfus’ skill acquisition model do not necessarily perform equally, nor do they exhibit the same type of thought process (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986). This idea makes sense, especially within the realm of classroom management where there is no magic ingredient or one-size-fits-all approach. However, due to the variation and complexity of the population at UHS, teachers might acquire skills faster than teachers at other high schools. Ms. Halverson believed her skills developed faster than her brother’s who works in a rural school district. Ms. Evans agreed and attributed the fast development to having more opportunities to practice, especially with a classroom full of 40 students – 10 on IEP’s, another 4 English Language students, and a few gifted students (Ms. Evans, personal communication, July 2014).

As a competent teacher at UHS, managing a classroom can be an exhausting and laborious process since there is “no objective procedure like the novice’s context-free feature recognition,” thus choosing a plan “crucially affects behavior in a way that one particular situational element rarely does” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 26). In choosing a plan, the competent teacher must envision actions in terms of long-range goals. Ms. Bates said she does not “sweat the small stuff” anymore because she realizes that worrying about the wrong plan can interfere with her ability to develop strong relationships with students. In order to cope with the newly developed ability to recognize context-free and situational elements present in a real-world circumstance, the competent individual creates a hierarchical procedure of decision making. First, the individual organizes the situation. Upon examination of the factors associated with the chosen plan, the competent teacher does not yet have the skill needed to pay attention to every factor. As a result, the competent individual – unlike the proficient one – might miss an
important element that leads to an unfortunate outcome. One of my journal entries alludes to such an experience:

By the time I had hit the competency stage, I definitely had dealt with many different classroom management situations. I knew how to handle most disruptions because I had already encountered something similar. However, I overlooked less obvious aspects. For example, during small group discussion one day, several girls were engaged in a heated debate about the media’s impact on body image. I heard a male student mumble something inappropriate and offensive. I pulled him aside and discussed his hurtful comments. At the time, I didn’t think about following up with the students sitting near him to make sure they had an opportunity to express their thoughts. Had I done so, I would have learned this was not the first time this boy had made inappropriate comments about females. (personal journal, June 2014)

Unlike the novice and advanced beginner who might blame an unfortunate outcome on inadequately specified elements or rules, the competent individual will “feel responsible for, and thus emotionally involved in, the product of his choice” (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 26). Competent teachers feel excited when they perform well and feel remorse when they are ineffective. When Ms. Stevenson first started at Cooper – after several years of teaching in another district – she would get discouraged when things would go wrong. She figured it was always reflective of her teaching (Ms. Stevenson, personal communication, June 2014).

The support of a mentor would be beneficial during times of discouragement and frustration. However, the formal mentorship process ends once the teacher has received tenure. After discussing her own experience as a newly tenured teacher, Ms. Nelson emphasized the
importance that all teachers – veterans included – have some sort of mentor or “adep’” to turn for advice and guidance.

It is important for all teachers to have mentors or guides because teaching can be very lonely. We are required to reach every student and help them grow as learners. This cannot be done individually; teamwork is necessary in this case. Without having observations, we will not grow or improve our craft. This type of observation should not be a critical critique, but rather it should be “what is going well?” and “what do we need to improve to better help our students succeed?” (Ms. Nelson, personal communication, Nov. 2015)

The Proficient Teacher: A Shift in Moral Career

Even though the proficient teacher has already experienced the formal assimilation into a stable teaching environment, the rites of incorporation do not suddenly end. According to Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), such rites are gradual rather than abrupt. Essentially, incorporation is carried out in stages, which can vary in length and intricacy. During the competent stage, teachers devote most of their energy to organizing and executing a plan. Generally speaking, they do not have enough energy left to establish themselves as building leaders. Because proficient teachers can intuitively respond to situations without decomposing them, these individuals have the energy needed to help lead and mentor colleagues. Once I reached the proficiency stage, I was asked to take on more of a leadership role in the building. My additional experience and skill had been publicly acknowledged, and I was respected as an example by other teachers and administrators.

I do not think I would have been ready nor would others have reached out to me. Only recently have I noticed that decision making, specifically when managing students, has
become more instinctual. As I have become aware of this, I have been more willing to take on leadership positions within the school.” (personal journal, June 2015)

Other leadership opportunities like hosting a student teacher also become possible during this point in the teacher’s career. At UHS, most of the coordinating teachers fall into the proficient stage. For myself, being asked to host a student teacher was akin to rites of incorporation. “Since I had not experienced any rite of passage since achieving tenure, and because I considered this an informal rite of incorporation, I was intrinsically motivated to accept the placement. I say “informal” because there is no formal recognition or financial incentive at UHS to be a cooperating teacher” (personal journal, Sept. 2015). In addition to being an informal rite of incorporation, hosting a student teacher provides the coordinating teacher with the benefits of a mentor-mentee relationship, which has been absent since achieving tenure. Through the mentoring process, the coordinating teacher is forced to reflect and assess one’s own practice.

Incorporation rites like leadership opportunities are not the only skill acquired in the proficient stage. According to Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), the proficient individual can intuitively size up the whole situation. Absent in the previous stages, considerable experience now exists in a certain area where various types of situations have been encountered many times. The proficient teacher has the enhanced ability to reflect on what has worked or not worked in the past. Ms. Swanson said additional experience and more frames of reference have made managing a classroom easier.

You know what to expect because you will have dealt with something before and if you deal with it wrong one time and you realize that didn’t work, the next time that same situation comes up, you would have already reflected and been like “ok, this didn’t work
so now I am going to try this with this kid,” and boom it worked. I am not saying it is going to work every time but this approach worked better. But this is something you can only know if you have been teaching for a while. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, June 2014)

In essence, the proficient teacher allows the situation to guide the response. Previous experience allows for “holistic discrimination and association” when assessing a situation (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986, p. 28). Ms. Swanson said her classroom management response depends on the situation, specifically the age of the students.

There's a difference in how you interact with each grade level. Ninth graders are brandnew babies to the high school. They don't even know how high school works let alone how each specific classroom works. They're seeing seven different sets of teachers a day with seven different sets of expectations, so you have to continuously [provide guidance].

Whatever it is that you expect of them, you have to let them know that continuously. Whereas seniors, most of them have been in the building four years, so they know the building expectations, and, for the most part, classroom expectations are pretty similar, so you don't have to constantly revisit that with them. And they're young adults. They're 17, 18 years old. Their brain is at a totally different space than the 14 year olds that I'm dealing with. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, June 2014)

Now in the proficient stage, the teacher learns how to orient differently in relation to the work. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Ms. Stevenson used to blame herself in most failed situations. Several years later, as a proficient teacher, Ms. Stevenson looked at the outcome through a different lens.
When things go right, I feel proud of my students and excited about the direction the class is heading. When things go wrong, I feel the need to step back and reflect on why, think about what I need to change next time, how I would approach the lesson differently and maybe even who I need to talk to for support outcome differently. (Ms. Stevenson, personal communication, June 2014)

Ms. Swanson said her moral career is an extension of her genuine, authentic self. She admitted, though, that it took almost a decade of teaching to feel comfortable in that role.

I think everything about what I do as a teacher now is my genuine, authentic self, but it took me a while to get there. Now, I think I'm 100% me. You can ask any one of my students. They know me. They know about my family. They know if I'm upset. They know if I'm sad. I think you have to show them that you're human. If you don't and you just try to a robot teacher, with our students specifically, you will never foster that relationship. Maybe you'll have success with little robots sitting in class or you'll have kids that are acting up and just trying to get out of your class. (Ms. Swanson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

As Goffman (1961) suggested, an individual’s conception of selves – most importantly his or her own – involves a standard sequence of changes, which Ms. Donaldson experienced as she progressed from the novice to proficient stage of Dreyfus’s skill acquisition model.

I think at this point now going into year 10, I don't think that I have those reactions very often any more. Oh, that lesson didn't go well. It must be because they hate me. Or it must be because they don't like this, that or the other thing. I think I can go back now, okay, now why didn't that work? Maybe I didn't explain this well enough. Or maybe it was just the wrong day because it was Homecoming and it was an activity schedule and
8th hour or whatever the case is. If it's a specific kid, I think that's a little bit easier to deal with if they're not succeeding, but I don't think I base my definition of success on factors I can't control necessarily, like how the kids are reacting to something. (Ms. Donaldson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

Ms. Paulson agreed that the veteran teacher’s moral career more accurately reflects one’s authentic self. This conception of selves comes from years of experience as well as the realization that even the most seasoned teachers deal with the “testing situations” brought upon by the students in the first weeks of school.

One of the great things about teaching is the sense of beginning and end. I think that no matter how many years that you've been teaching and no matter what your reputation is, we're all tested at the beginning. It's just part of the inter-relationships between grownups and teenagers. They were born to test us; it is how their brain works at that time in their lives. I think we're all tested. The beginning of every year is a test in every classroom. I don't think that ever goes away. (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

Such a perspective suggests that mentors are beneficial for all teachers, no matter their level of experience. In my journal, I commented on the necessity of having some sort of guide even in the latter years of one’s career:

I might not need someone to guide me in the same way … compared to a new teacher, but I could still benefit from the feedback of a skilled expert. There is a misconception that teaching gets easier as you progress into your career. That is not the case at all, especially at [UHS] where the socioeconomic dynamic is constantly changing. I am
lucky in that Ms. Paulson is in my department. Throughout my 10 years at [UHS], I have
depended on her for advice, mostly regarding stressful situations that I tend to worry about.

(personal journal, Sept. 2015)
Mentors like Ms. Paulson can be extremely helpful during times of frustration. Sometimes
another adult is needed to put things in perspective.

Well, that's where it's important that there is a mentor, someone you can go to say "Gee,
am I lowering my standards too much? Am I just not having fun? Is it me?" It's important
to have other people be there in the department or outside of the department who you can
go to if things go wrong or something dramatic happens with a kid. We all have those
events that kind of take the stuff out of you for a while. Everybody needs other adults to
be there for them. (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

The Expert Teacher: The Mentor and Educational Functionary

While it is often hard to distinguish between the proficient and expert, it is the expert
teacher’s intuitive, arational behavior that sets him or her apart. In other words, experts do not
consciously choose what to attend to and what to do. They do not see problems in some
detached way, nor do they worry about the future and devise plans. Like walking and talking,
teaching for the expert is instinctual. According to Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), most expert
performance “is ongoing and nonreflective;” however, during critical situations the expert will
reflect before acting. In doing so, though, the expert does not problem solve like competent and
proficient teachers might. Instead, the reflection is based on intuition. Teachers with decades of
experience have dealt with a plethora of situations. Proficient teachers might also have enough
experience in a variety of situations; however, they tend to group together situations sharing the
same decision or action. Expert teachers have the ability to discriminate situational knowledge.

Ms. Paulson – the only teacher designated as an expert in this study – related her own fluid
performance as a teacher to art: “The art is really hard to teach somebody and it takes confidence, it takes practice, it takes having gone through certain things. It takes having seen kids who react this way versus that way and that comes from practice and experience” (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015).

Another distinction between the proficient and expert teacher is the role of mentor and educational functionary. Experts are often recognized as excellent practitioners of their craft. Administrators often offer these teachers mentorship opportunities to share their valuable insight with their less experienced colleagues. As discussed throughout this chapter, Ms. Paulson’s role at UHS is vital in that she helps guide new teachers through the various rites of passage. In dealing with so many teachers and skill levels, Ms. Paulson said she can predict who will “make it” and continue in the profession. She labeled this “making it” as turning a corner in their professional lives.

They seem to turn a corner … where you learn to enjoy the kids. I think teachers don't last who don't enjoy them, who don't find them amusing and entertaining, although, of course, challenging. But there's something about having to like them and like being around kids, spending your day that way … that you have to turn that corner. Some people turn that corner, some people don't and they leave. Some people – and this is the hardest part – turn that corner and are great teachers and then they leave us anyway. I think a lot of times that's because of how challenging it is and they have other opportunities. We've lost a fair number of really good teachers. I don't know what we can do to retain them more. I think that having a mentor is important and helpful, and of course, necessary during times of frustration. (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)
Even when teachers at UHS turn that metaphorical corner, there are still daily challenges that are mentally draining. In her conversations with novices and veterans, Ms. Paulson said veterans have the advantage of knowing that sometimes things just have to slide.

I think veteran teachers have that more in hand; that you can't handle to the best of your ability everything that comes your way when you're new in a building or a new teacher. I think if you're a veteran teacher you have that experience of knowing that "I just have to leave school today even though there are still things on my list. I'm done. There's nothing else I can solve today." Veteran teachers have more confidence in that sort of situation. Maybe some things won't get done and it won't be perfect but things are still good. That's where I get a lot of emotional meetings with new teachers. "I didn't do this." "I didn't handle that right." "What do I do tomorrow because today this happened?" A veteran teacher knows sometimes you just put the day behind you. (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)

As an expert in her field, Ms. Paulson said she is in the final chapters of her moral career. “For me, I think I got to do what I was born to do. I just think there's a teacher in me. I think that I had a good fit when I chose a career to who I am and what I like to do.” Because she found her niche, Ms. Paulson said she was able to establish her identity and what she was going to be like in the classroom, specifically dealing with classroom management issues. In reference to moral career in general, she said it was important to “establish your identity and what you are going to believe about yourself versus what I'm going to doubt in yourself. I think those are things that you learn as you go. (Ms. Paulson, personal communication, Sept. 2015)
Chapter 6 Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions

This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations for future research. The purpose of this case study was to understand the complex phenomenon of classroom management. Applying theories from Goffman, van Gennep, Turner, and Dreyfus helped in the analysis of teachers’ perceptions of their own classroom management. The following is a summary of the research and a discussion of the major findings and conclusions drawn from this exploratory case study as well as recommendations for future research.

Conclusions Based on this Study

Through an analysis of the data collected throughout this study, I have determined that classroom management is too complex a phenomenon to assume that any university course can adequately prepare the teacher candidate for an urban high school classroom. As indicated through observations, field notes, and interviews, only the knowledge gained from years of experience – and dealing with a variety of scenarios – can be used as a tool to improve classroom management. While building this experience, the role of the educational functionary, or mentor, is vital in that consistent observations and feedback can help teachers grow and learn from an expert in the field. As teachers experience various rites of passage, it is the mentor who provides the guidance and support necessary to pass through these rites of separation, initiation, and incorporation. When the mentor’s role is absent – as found to be the case once teachers receive tenure – then the teacher is often left to his or her own devices. The fact that veteran teachers often turn to each other for advice proves the need for some sort of mentor, even in the latter part of one’s career. The following sub-sections summarize the conclusions of the data chapters.

Dramaturgical roles of a teacher in three stages. In chapter 4, I used Goffman’s theory to interpret teachers’ experiences. Generally speaking, student teachers and novices said they
had a more difficult time effectively managing a classroom due to their lack of experience. A lack of experience usually resulted in low self-efficacy and confidence when making management decisions. In order to combat the often negative student perceptions, student teachers and novices were compelled to fake it, or play the part of “teacher.” As suggested by new teachers often spending considerable time and energy managing the impression of the audience – sometimes altering appearance and manner in the process – dealing with management issues like student behavior was taxing.

When managing the impression of students, the participants said that their lack of belief as “classroom teacher” affected the authenticity and reality of the performance. In these cases, students were likely to take advantage of mistakes and flaws in the performance. New teachers then relied on the information provided in university classes to resurrect the situation. However, as suggested by several veteran teachers in this study, strategies learned in university classes are not effective in an urban setting like UHS. Thus the prescriptive nature of scripts – as well as teaching to the most difficult audiences – generally hindered the validity of the performance. Again, this negatively impacted the confidence level of new teachers.

After years of teaching experience, veterans said they had a better handle on managing a classroom. Unlike the student teachers and novices, veterans had the presence of mind to manage personal front. Rather than adjusting personal front after students conveyed their impressions, veterans took a more active role prior to even meeting the students. In this way, veterans were better able to anticipate impressions and potential management issues. Also, the veterans realized that manner can create more of a presence than appearance, or “dressing the part.” Specifically, using non-verbal techniques – learned after gaining a heightened awareness from years of experience – helped manipulate students’ impressions. Confident body language
was the result of veterans believing in their role as “teacher,” which then led to a more realistic performance (the audience was more likely to buy the performance because it had become second nature for the veteran).

Regarding scripts, veterans said they had the knowledge and experience necessary to adjust them according to setting and audience. In some cases, scripts needed to be tailored for individual students within the same class. Unlike novices who tended to abide by a prescribed, one-dimensional script, veterans knew that the time of day, age of the students, and skill level of the students often required multiple scripts. Veterans recognized the importance of “teaching to your audience.” In doing so, classroom management issues were less likely.

**From novice to expert: An incomplete passage of rites.** As introduced in chapter 1 and then applied in chapter 5, the theoretical concepts of Dreyfus’ skill acquisition model; van Gennep and Turner’s rites of passage; and Goffman’s moral career were used to explore how teachers navigate the mystifying phenomenon of classroom management. In chapter 5, the theories were analyzed concurrently to accommodate for the teacher’s level of experience. As the teacher progressed through Dreyfus’ model of skill acquisition, the individual also experienced the rites of separation, transition, and incorporation. Additional experience – and the responsibilities that follow – resulted in a change in moral career. Regardless of the teacher’s level of experience, the data suggest that the role of the mentor is both necessary and critical. However, as discussed in the following paragraphs, it is evident that the mentor’s guidance is most vital during those first years of teaching where the attrition rates are highest.

According to the participants’ responses in this study, the “novice” stage of Dreyfus’ model was overwhelming because of the lack of experience and skill. This lack of experience resulted in the reliance on context-free rules. Generally speaking, the situation itself was not
considered when making a decision. Instead, rules learned in university courses and books guided the novice. Such prescribed rules did not always work for the novice, mainly because similar situations – specifically relating to classroom management – often require different responses. In other words, context matters. Unique to the student teacher, the state of liminality produces a feeling of isolation. The ambiguous position is a result of being stuck between two worlds – the student teacher is not recognized fully as a student or as a teacher. Consequently, the individual has no moral career or framework to judge oneself. The novice must undergo several rites of passage before a moral career can develop. Unlike the first-year teacher, the student teacher has another adult in the room to provide guidance and support. This mentor, or the coordinating teacher, is an important part of the student teaching process in that he or she can offer advice based on prior experience.

Upon graduation, and thus separation from the university setting, the novice – now a first year teacher – has a more stable social environment. However, since the constant presence of the coordinating teacher is absent, the novice often questions his or her decisions. In reflecting on their own first year of teaching, participants in this study often indicated a feeling of self doubt when making decisions about classroom management. Additionally, their conception of self was often based on the perception of others. Without the presence of a mentor, the novice tends to judge his or her own performance in a way that hinders self confidence. Until rites of incorporation are actualized, others might doubt his or her ability to perform in such an environment. Prior to the first day of school, students are usually aware of the new teachers in the building. In such situations, students test the novice in order to identify weaknesses. During such rites of transition, the novice struggles to maintain an efficiently-run classroom. Once the teacher transitions into the advanced beginner stage, situational components are more
recognizable due to prior experience. As the individual gains experience, or transitions through many rites of passage, skills are honed and developed. Essentially, the rites of passage early in a teacher’s career – the novice and advanced beginner stages – form the individual’s foundation of knowledge. An effective mentor can help with the development of skill such that this foundation continues to grow and is used as a frame of reference later in the teacher’s career, particularly in the competent and proficient stages.

Rites of incorporation signal a jump to the next stage of Dreyfus’ model as well as a change in the way the teacher experiences oneself. Earning tenure, and thus gaining formal acceptance into the institution, has a major impact on this change in self image. A stable social environment brings comfort to the competent teacher. Becoming familiar with the complexities of the institution and its various intricacies, the competent teacher begins to mature and further develop a moral career. This maturation process is accompanied by the acquisition of a variety of skills and knowledge one must have in order to prosper over the long term. However, because attrition rates are highest in the first five years of teaching, the role of the mentor is still important during this competency stage. As indicated by several of the participants in this study, teaching remains difficult even for the veteran. However, unlike teachers early in their career, well-seasoned veterans have the frame of reference to help better navigate the situation.

Once in the proficient stage, teachers have the ability to examine all the factors associated with a chosen plan. Whereas the competent teacher is likely to feel responsible when unfortunate outcomes occur in the classroom, the proficient teacher is less likely to instinctively judge oneself. Because the proficient teacher allows the situation to guide responses to management issues, unfortunate outcomes are more likely to be viewed as changes in the perspective of the situation. Proficient teachers have the enhanced ability to read a situation, and
therefore, problem-solving is a more fluid and rapid process. As explained by Dreyfus and Dreyfus (1986), “certain features of the situation will stand out as salient and others will recede into the background and be ignored” (p. 28).

Finally, it must be noted that in analyzing the data, it was hard to distinguish proficient and expert. Like Berliner who studied nursing in terms of Dreyfus’ model, there was a desire to combine the proficient and expert stage. The biggest distinction between the two stages is the experts’ arational behavior; they do not consciously choose what to attend to and what to do. In other words, the expert’s behavior cannot be easily described as deductive or analytic. In this particular study, only one participant was deemed an expert as formally recognized by her title of “building mentor.” With more than 40 years of experience, Ms. Paulson has mentored dozens of new teachers at UHS. As indicated by her mentees in this study, her presence in the classroom was appreciated in that she was able to provide timely, practical advice. Her guidance and support was based on her own experience as a classroom teacher at UHS.

**Recommendations Based on this Study**

As a result of the findings, analysis, and conclusions drawn from this study, I offer recommendations to three separate audiences, including coordinators of university teacher education programs, administrators and district officials of K-12 schools, and teachers in K-12 schools. Despite the fact this study analyzed one case site, specifically an urban high school located in the Midwest, these recommendations figure to bear a fair level of relevance for the aforementioned audiences across a broad array of similar educational institutions.

**Coordinators of university teacher education programs.** As indicated by the participants in this study – regardless of their level of experience – teacher candidates need more hands-on experience prior to the student teaching placement. Many teacher education programs
require their students to conduct observations before student teaching; however, these observations are often brief (less than 20 hours) and non-participatory. In other words, there is no hands-on experience because of the limited number of hours in a particular setting. One participant in the study did engage in multiple hands-on opportunities prior to even enrolling formally in the teacher education program at a small liberal arts college in the Midwest. As a sophomore in college, this participant would observe twice a week at one of the K-12 schools in the area. More universities should offer the same opportunities to potential teacher candidates. In this way, students can observe various classrooms and teaching styles.

In conjunction with more hands-on experience in various K-12 classrooms, these students should have the opportunity to discuss classroom management strategies. However, unlike many courses in classroom management, this particular experience should involve the K-12 teachers where the teacher candidates frequently observe. Ideally, teacher candidates and their host teachers would reflect on occurrences pertaining to specific classroom management decisions. Such experiences would take the place of less authentic situations where teacher candidates discuss hypothetical classroom management issues within the context of a university course.

Administrators and district officials of K-12 schools. K-12 administrators and district officials play an integral role in maintaining job satisfaction among teaching staff. Attrition is less likely to occur where teachers feel appreciated and supported. Providing professional development opportunities in classroom management – specifically within the context of urban education – is one way to support teachers. However, rather than bring in outside resources, administrators should rely on their most seasoned teachers who have a reputation for being effective classroom managers. In this way, examples and strategies discussed are situated within the context of that particular school. While all teachers should be encouraged to participate, the
professional development should be geared toward novices who have less experience with a wide variety of management scenarios.

In addition to professional development, administrators need to provide opportunities for novices to observe veteran teachers. In fact, I recommend that building administrators should require all first-year teachers to observe at least four veteran teachers each semester. In doing so, novices would be encouraged to observe teachers in a variety of subject areas, including special education and English language. During new teacher meetings, novices would share their experiences with each other. Ideally, a formal mentor teacher like Ms. Paulson would guide the conversation. This is a non-threatening, less intimidating way for new teachers to discuss their own concerns and issues with managing a classroom.

Finally, district officials need to be willing to financially support these professional development opportunities. In the long-run, such experiences would result in better success at maintaining veteran teaching staff. Students are also likely to benefit from such experience. Parents of engaged, successful students are more likely to support referendums, which upon approval, provide funding for additional professional development opportunities.

**Teachers in K-12 schools.** In order for the aforementioned recommendations to work, teachers have to be willing to engage in professional development opportunities. They also have to be willing to support each other, specifically encouraging new teachers to observe in their classrooms. In the absence of formal mentors like Ms. Paulson, veteran teachers need to offer to help their younger colleagues. As indicated by several of the participants, new teachers are often hesitant to ask for help. Having experienced such feelings themselves, veteran teachers are aware of this and should go out of their way to provide guidance for the new generation of teachers.
Suggestions for Further Research

This dissertation can be used as a foundation for further research. As I conducted this study I found myself generating research questions best suited for future research studies. The remainder of the chapter is dedicated to these research suggestions.

Replicate study in a different geographical location. Replicating this study using case sites from a different geographical location may yield different results. I chose the Midwest for this study because of convenience. Perhaps urban high schools in different sections of the United States face different financial, social, or institutional limitations that cause teachers to perceive classroom management differently from the case site used within this study. Additionally, K-12 schools outside of the United States could also yield different results.

Replicate study in a rural or suburban high school. Replicating this study using case sites from rural or suburban high school would also be valuable in that the data might be considerably different than data collected from urban high schools like UHS. In such cases, the data accumulated could be used to help combat the attrition and classroom management issues at urban high schools. However, if the data collected from rural and suburban schools elicited similar data then legislators and educators need to treat the problem as a systemic issue.

Include student perceptions about the teachers’ management. Other researchers may want to include student perceptions about teachers’ management in order to collect data that is more inclusive of the school’s population. Even though approval is difficult to obtain when involving minors, the data could reveal information that adults would never consider. Student feedback may result in information teachers could use to better manage their classrooms.

Apply the study to a field outside education. Education is not the only field that has seen an increase in attrition among new employees. The field of nursing has struggled in recent years to
attract and retain employees. A study focusing on how other career fields, specifically requiring certification or licensure, react to their respective loss of new employees may result in initiatives that could be used to reduce attrition in the field of education.
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