

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
ALTERNATIVE CLASSROOM AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT  
STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IMPACTED BY  
PARENTAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE

by

Heidi M. Hickman

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how elementary (PreK-3) teachers in rural southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. The theories that guided this study were: (a) Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1938), (b) Family Stress Theory (Hill, 1958), (c) Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and (d) Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). The central question for this study was what are elementary teachers' perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse? A purposeful sampling of 15 teachers from 10 elementary schools in four counties in rural southern Ohio was used for the study. Data was collected by interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire. Data analysis procedures were conducted based on Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method.

*Keywords:* classroom management, behavioral support, parental substance abuse

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### **List of Abbreviations**

American Psychological Association (APA)

Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)

Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS)

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network (OSAM)

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Positive Behavior Support (PBS)

Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

The Public Children Service Association of Ohio (PCSAO)

Trauma Informed Care (TIC)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

This chapter presents the background of this study on elementary (PreK-3) teachers, from rural southern Ohio, and their perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Teachers from elementary schools in rural southern Ohio in counties where students' parents have low unemployment rates, low socioeconomic statuses, and high rates of substance abuse were selected for this study. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how elementary teachers in rural southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental drug abuse. This study's background, research questions, and research plan are described in this chapter, as well as my interest and motivation for the study.

### **Background**

Substance abuse in rural southern Ohio is and has been steadily on the rise (NSDUH, 2010). With substance abuse on the rise, there are bound to be victims of circumstance. Children are victims of this circumstance, because they are born into situations beyond their control. One in five children in the United States live in a home where parental substance abuse is taking place (Bergland, 2016). According to The Public Children Service Association of Ohio (2015):

A recent survey by PCSAO found that half of children taken into custody in 2015 had parental drug use identified at the time of removal, and 28 percent of children removed that year had parents who used opioids, including prescription opiates, heroin and fentanyl. (p. 2)

With such disheartening and alarming statistics, it is inevitable that more and more children are coming to school with very serious physical, mental, and emotional effects that stem from their parents' substance abuse. Moe, Johnson, and Wade (2008) found that children who have one or both parents that abuse substances are more likely to have attention deficit or attention hyperactivity disorder, have a low IQ, have poor school attendance, and exhibit behavior and academic problems. When children enter schools with these detrimental effects, teachers and administrators are the ones who must be able to identify and support these students. According to Rossan and Cowan (2013), "Schools are well-suited to offer an on-going presence of trained, caring, stable adults; a learning environment that can naturally support and develop resilience and coping skills"; and partnerships with families and community providers to help provide comprehensive support" (p. 1).

There have been numerous and comprehensive studies conducted on classroom management strategies, behavioral supports, and the effects of parental substance abuse individually, but there have been few studies on how all of them impact one another and teachers' perceptions of this phenomenon. The problem is that of describing elementary teachers' perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral supports to students impacted by parental substance abuse, which has not been previously explored. Information gained from this study adds to the current research surrounding behavior management and possibly creates a new body of knowledge for other researchers to expand upon. Schools have such a large influence on the lives of children; therefore, their responsibility for supporting students' social and emotional development should not be overlooked (Rossan & Cowan, 2013). Elementary administrators, teachers, and students impacted by parental substance

abuse can benefit from and use the proposed research to create positive changes to benefit all involved.

It is crucial for teachers to use research-based strategies in their classrooms. According to Killian (2013), “Research shows that evidence-based teaching strategies are likely to have the largest impact on student results” (p. 1). This study assists elementary teachers in rural areas, where substance abuse rates are high, to gain new insight and strategies on how to offer more successful and practical behavioral supports to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Administrators can use the research to provide professional development for their teachers on teaching and classroom management strategies for students impacted by substance abuse. Most importantly, this research can empower teachers and administrators, to make reflective and purposeful changes to their classroom and leadership management styles, as well as behavioral supports to ensure personal and academic success for these students. The educator Dewey stated, “There can be no true growth by mere experience alone, but only by reflecting on experience” (as cited in Lincoln, Stockhausen, & Maloney, 1997, p. 100).

The theories that develop the framework for this study are Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1938),

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), and Family Stress Theory (Hill, 1958). Skinner’s (1938) Operant Conditioning, Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning Theory, and Vygotsky’s (1978) Social Development Theory support the foundation of classroom management and behavioral support. Hill’s (1958) Family Stress Theory supports how parental substance abuse affects students and how students and their families cope from the effects that abuse causes. These theories are explained more thoroughly in Chapter Two.

### **Situation to Self**

For the past 11 years I have been an elementary teacher in rural southern Ohio in counties that have experienced and continue to experience low unemployment rates, economic hardships, and high rates of substance abuse. I have witnessed the detrimental effects that parental substance abuse has on students' personal and school lives. Knowingly and unknowingly, I have altered my teaching and classroom management strategies for students impacted by parental substance abuse to provide behavioral supports. Although it was difficult, I set aside my experiences and biases pertaining to this phenomenon to describe the essence of my participants' experiences.

Social constructivism is the worldview that guided this study. Creswell (2013) describes social constructivism as individuals seeking understanding of the world in which they live and work. Therefore, I explored the understanding of elementary teachers' perceptions of classroom management strategies. The goal of my research was to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the phenomenon and then to make sense of the meanings that the participants derived (Creswell, 2013).

According to Creswell (2013), ontology relates to the nature of reality and its characteristics. When researchers conduct qualitative research, they are embracing multiple realities (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, I used multiple forms of evidence such as interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire to collect evidence of themes from different individuals and different perspectives.

Epistemology means that researchers try to understand and learn as much as possible about the participants being studied (Creswell, 2013). Since I was the human instrument, I conducted the study in the "field" where the participants work and where some live. Through

interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire, I was able to familiarize myself with my participants and understand how they alter their classroom management strategies through their subjective experiences.

Axiology means that researchers bring values to a study, but in a qualitative study, researchers make their values known (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, I reported my values, experiences, and biases before the start of the study. Bracketing these out allowed me to consider another perspective toward the phenomenon under examination (Creswell, 2013).

### **Problem Statement**

This study addressed elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio and their perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. According to Sammaknejad and Marzban (2016), “Today the roles of teachers have changed as they are not a whole power of the class but the individuals who are expected to help students learn appropriately and productively in a democratic and peaceful context” (p. 84). Students impacted by parental substance abuse cannot often learn appropriately, productively, or peacefully. Children of substance abusers are at risk for a wide range of negative social-emotional outcomes (Conners-Burrow, McKelvey, Pemberton, Lagory, Messman, & Whiteside-Mansell, 2013). The problem selected for this study was describing elementary teachers’ perceptions of their classroom management strategies and behavioral supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse, which is a phenomenon that has not been previously explored. According to Davies (2011), “A conservative estimate is that one in six children in school today have a parent dependent on or addicted to alcohol or other drugs” (p. 62).

It is important for teachers to be aware of and to reflect on how they alter their classroom management strategies for students impacted by parental substance abuse for them to improve upon their skills, strategies, and techniques to provide successful and positive behavioral support to current and future students. Cavanaugh (2013) explains this by stating, “It is critical that teachers utilize classroom management strategies that effectively prevent problem behavior, improve prosocial behavior, and increase students’ engagement with learning tasks” (p. 112). Children from substance-abusing families need an opportunity to relate to and observe an adult who will listen, support, model behavior, and help students stay safe. According to MacSuga-Gage and Simonsen (2015), “As the field of education continues to embrace inclusive learning environments, the need to support every student with a core foundation of empirically supported academic and behavior support practices is acute” (p. 212).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how elementary teachers in rural southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental drug abuse. Classroom management was generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. The theories guiding this study were: (a) Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1938), (b) Family Stress Theory (Hill, 1958), (c) Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and (d) Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

### **Significance of the Study**

A practical significance of the study was that research on elementary teachers’ perceptions of their classroom management strategies and behavior support provided to students

impacted by substance abuse can provide successful classroom management strategies and behavioral support ideas for current and future elementary teachers for those students. These strategies and ideas can be replicated, expanded, and improved upon for future implementation. As a result of this study, elementary administration may offer more training and professional development surrounding classroom management and behavioral support for students impacted by parental substance. After participating or reading this study, elementary teachers may feel empowered to conduct their own research to investigate what they can do to assist these types of students. According to Painter (2015), “Teacher research can be a powerful form of professional development that can change a teacher's practice” (p.1).

Numerous quantitative and qualitative studies have been conducted on classroom management strategies, behavioral supports, and the effects of parental substance abuse individually, but there have been few studies on the dynamics of all three together. According to Mallett (2012), “Most researchers have looked at maltreatment as a distinct variable, whereas fewer researchers have investigated the impact that a specific type of abuse or neglect had on school performance and behavior” (p.14). Information gained from this study adds to the current research surrounding behavior management and creates a new body of knowledge for other researchers to expand upon. This study extended theories and new application of the theories that make up the theoretical framework of this study.

### **Research Questions**

In order to investigate elementary teachers’ lived experiences and perceptions of altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse, the central question is the following:

- What are the perceptions of rural southern Ohio elementary teachers regarding how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse?

According to Akin, Yildirim, and Goodwin (2015), “Classroom management is considered to be key to effective teaching” (p.772). Teachers are required to be effective in not only delivering instruction but also maintaining order (Rosas & West, 2009). In order for teachers to be effective, self-reflection and perceptions of their classroom management strategies and instruction are critical. John Dewey (as cited by Beard & Wilson, 2013) said, “We don’t learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience” (p.28).

Guiding questions are the following:

- What specific classroom management strategies do elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio alter to offer support to students impacted by parental substance abuse?

Classroom management is a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive (Hidden Curriculum, 2014). Research has supported the importance of effective classroom management. Brophy (1996) characterized effective classroom management as the process of establishing, maintaining, and restoring the classroom atmosphere where students can be highly engaged.

- What specific behavior supports are elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio providing to students impacted by parental substance abuse?

Wheatley, West, Charlton, Sanders, Smith, and Taylor (2009) believe that educators are in need of high-impact strategies for improving student behavior and that positive methods of supporting appropriate behavior are highly effective to accomplish this.

- What specific exhibited behaviors from students impacted by parental substance abuse, are elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio, targeting?

Children of substance abusing parents are at risk for a variety of negative outcomes, including emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment problems as well as challenges in cognitive and academic functioning (Solis, Shadur, Burns, & Hussong, 2012).

### **Definitions**

1. *Classroom management*- Classroom management is a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive (Hidden Curriculum, 2014).
2. *Behavior support*- is a set of research-based strategies used to increase quality of life and decrease problem behavior by teaching new skills and making changes in a person's environment (Carr, Dunlap, Horner, Koegel, Turnbull, Sailor, Anderson, Albin, Kogel, & Fox, 2002).
3. *Parental substance abuse*- parents who abuse alcohol or drugs (AAETS, 2014)

### **Summary**

This chapter presented the background of this study on elementary (PreK-3) teachers from rural southern Ohio and their perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. An overview of the literature on classroom management strategies, behavioral supports, and parental substance abuse was explored and revealed a lack of research on how all three impact one another, but there were many studies on each topic individually. This study's background,

research questions, research plan, as well as delimitations and limitations were described in this chapter, as well as my interest and motivation for the study.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

Chapter two provides a theoretical framework for the study and reviews current literature on: (a) the demographics and substance abuse statistics of the setting, (b) children of Appalachia, (c) the effects of parental substance abuse on students, (d) classroom and behavior management, (e) teachers' perceptions of their classroom and behavior management, (f) elementary students' behavior, behavioral support, (g) classroom and behavior management strategies and support, (h) classroom and behavior management strategies and support for students impacted by parental substance abuse, (i) teacher and student relationships, and (j) professional development for classroom management and behavioral support. The theories that make up the theoretical framework for the study are: (a) Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1938), (b) Family Stress Theory (Hill, 1958), (c) Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and (d) Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

### Theoretical Framework

Four theories are used as the framework for this study: (a) Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1938), (b) Family Stress Theory (Hill, 1958), (c) Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and (d) Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which are defined below.

#### **Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1938)**

B.F. Skinner (1938) coined the term operant conditioning; it means the changing of behavior using reinforcement which is given after the desired response. Reinforcement is a stimulus given after a behavior that increases the chance of the behavior occurring again. There are five basic processes in operant conditioning: positive and negative reinforcement which strengthens behavior and punishment, response cost, and extinction that weaken the behavior

(Skinner, 1938). Teachers use the principle of operant conditioning on an everyday basis when using rewards and praise. Little and Akin (2009) suggest that effective implementation of classroom management strategies based on positive reinforcement is effective and can be easily implemented by classroom teachers. When teachers are using classroom management strategies and behavioral supports with typical students or students impacted by parental substance abuse, most often they are using a form of operant conditioning. Macmillan (1973) believes that care should be used when choosing reinforcement with a particular group of students who may have more behavior difficulties.

### **Family Stress Theory (Hill, 1958)**

Family stress theory attempts to explain why some families struggle in response to stressors whereas other families thrive (Hill, 1958). Hill's (as cited by Sullivan, 2015) theory explains how two moderating variables could explain the differences in how family react to stressful events, the support they received, and the means they assign to the stressful event on whether a crisis will follow. Hill (1958) proposed the ABC-X model, which states: a precipitating event (A) interacting with family's crisis meeting resources (B) and the meaning the family assigns to the event (C) produces a crisis (X). Therefore, students, impacted by parental substance abuse, may display behaviors in school based on how their family reacted to a stressful event, such as a substance abusing parent. How the students' families assign meaning to the crisis of substance abuse and react in the aftermath will have lasting effects and consequences.

### **Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977)**

Albert Bandura (1977) agrees with behaviorists' theories of classical and operant conditioning, however, he believes that there are mediating processes between stimuli and

responses, and that behavior is learned through observation of one's own environment. Students will often imitate behavior that is modeled by their teachers and peers. The students' teachers or peers will respond to the behavior with either reinforcement or punishment. Bandura (1977) believes that humans are active information processors and think about the relationship between their behavior and its consequences.

Students will not just imitate a behavior without some consideration. This is called meditational processing (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, it is important for teachers to model appropriate behavior and to execute reinforcements and consequences proactively. This is especially important for students impacted by parental substance abuse, as they may have learned inappropriate behaviors through observation of their parents or other family members in their home environment.

### **Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978)**

Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory stresses that social interaction plays a very important role in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky (1978), "Learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function" (p. 90). Social factors such as the environment and social interactions contribute to cognitive development. Learning by students occurs through social interaction with what Vygotsky (1978) called "a skillful tutor". The "skillful tutor" will model behaviors and give verbal instructions. Vygotsky viewed children as apprentices who are guided by adults who will teach them how to be more socially competent (Huitt & Dawson, 2011). Students will then internalize the information and use it as a guide to their own behaviors.

Vygotsky (1978) used the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to explain how children learn in a systematic way as a result of their interaction with the "skillful tutor". The lower

boundaries of the ZPD are activities that children can do unassisted and without the support of teachers or adults. The upper boundaries of the ZPD being activities that children need assistance with from teachers or an adult.

Scaffolding is when the “skillful tutor” or teacher adjusts the level of assistance given to the learner as the learning needs change (Huit & Dawson, 2011). A teacher is involved and engaged with the learner during the initial instruction. As the learner gets closer to mastery the teacher begins to support the learner less and less. These both help the learner become more socially competent and independent.

Therefore, under Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory, students will learn how to behave and become social competent by observing their “skillful tutors”, or teachers, and then they will internalize the information and use it to guide their future behaviors. Students will be heavily engaged with their teachers and follow their instructions and behaviors until they become more competent in the social area that is being focused upon. Elementary teachers, or “skillful tutors”, are a necessary support for students, impacted by parental substance abuse, for appropriate behavior development. Huit and Dawson (2011) suggest that teachers develop targeted interventions for specific students based on what deficits that the students need to address.

## **Framework**

Operant Conditioning (Skinner,1938), Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and Social Development Theory (Vygotsky,1978) are a part of the foundation of classroom management strategies and student behavioral support in the classroom. Family Stress Theory (Hill,1958) sets the framework for how substance abusing parents cope and how it affects their children in school both academically and socially. Therefore, these theories form the framework

for this study. This study's framework consisted of researching how teachers perceive and experience how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral supports to students impacted by substance abuse. The framework also focused on teachers' personal perceptions of teaching, modeling, reinforcing, punishing, and rewarding certain behaviors pertaining to classroom management and substance abusing parents impact on students' behaviors at school.

### **Related Literature**

This section focuses on the existing literature and research concerning teachers' perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental support while also presenting an argument for the significance of the study. The information presented on the rural southern Ohio census and substance abuse information and statistics, as well as discussion on children living in Appalachia, specifically from the four counties focused on in the study are discussed first. A discussion of the general effects of parental substance abuse follows and presents the most recent research regarding the effects that parental substance abuse has on students and their behavior at school. Next, is a discussion of classroom and behavior management and teachers' perceptions of their classroom management strategies this study focused on. A discussion of students' behavior, specifically elementary students' behavior, follow the teacher perception focus. The last three sections discussed are classroom and behavioral support and strategies, the importance of teacher student relationships, and professional development for teachers on classroom management and behavioral support. The summary provides an argument for exploring the gap in literature and the importance of this study.

### **Southern Ohio Census Information**

The counties of Adams, Pike, Ross, and Scioto are in the most southern region of the state. These four rural counties are part of 32 counties that make up the Appalachian region of Ohio. According to the United States Census Bureau (2015), Adams County has a population of 28,024 with 97.3% of the population being Caucasian, African American 0.6%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.5%, Asian 0.2%, and Hispanic 0.9%. The average household income in Adams County is \$34, 733 with 24.8% of its citizens living in poverty and a 7% unemployment rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Pike County has a population of 28,217 with 96.1% of the population being Caucasian, African American 1.1%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.6%, Asian 0.3%, and Hispanic 0.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The average household income in Pike County is \$39, 989 with 21.9% of its citizens living in poverty and a 7.2% unemployment rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Ross County has a population of 77,170 with 90.7% of the population being Caucasian, African American 6.0%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.3%, 0.6% Asian, and 1.2% Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The average household income in Ross County is \$43, 450 with 19.2% of its citizens living in poverty and a 4.9% unemployment rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Finally, the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) reports that Scioto County has a population of 76,825 with 94.6% of the population being Caucasian, African American 2.6%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.5%, Asian 0.4%, and Hispanic 1.9%. The average household income in Scioto County is 36,945 with 27.2% of its citizens living in poverty and a 7.3% unemployment rate.

The Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network (OSAM) places Adams, Pike, Ross, and Scioto County in the Cincinnati region for its June 2015-January 2016 drug trend report. The Cincinnati region is also comprised of the following counties: Butler, Hamilton, Warren,

Clermont, Clinton, Brown, Highland, Fayette, and Lawrence. According to the NSDUH (2010), Adams county is a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The focus of the Ohio HIDTA is the investigation and dismantlement of drug trafficking. The HIDTA program provides agencies with coordination, equipment, technology, and other resources to combat drug trafficking (NSDUH, 2010).

### **Southern Ohio Substance Abuse Information**

According to the 2010 and most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), which provides national and state-level data on the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs, and mental health in the U.S., states that 7.87% of Ohio residents reported using illicit drugs in the past month, and the national average is 8.82%. In 2009-2010, Ohio was one of the top ten states for past-year non-medical use of pain relievers among people age 12-17 (NSDUH, 2010). Additionally, 3.48% of Ohio residents reported using an illicit drug other than marijuana in the past month, and the national average was 3.6% (NSDUH, 2010). In 2009, 1,340 people died as a result of drug use compared to the number of people who died from motor vehicle accidents (1,021) and firearms (991) (NSDUH, 2010). The federal government awards grants to help states in their efforts to reduce drug use and its harmful consequences. In the 2012 fiscal year, direct support was provided to state and local governments, schools, and law enforcement agencies. In 2012, the state of Ohio received \$551, 649, 175.00 in grant money to help reduce the availability and misuse of drugs (NSDUH).

According to the OSAM Drug Trend Report (2016), crack cocaine, heroin, and marijuana remain highly available in the Cincinnati region, as well as prescription stimulants. There has been an increased availability for heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, and Suboxone, while there has been a decrease availability for synthetic marijuana. Ohio has the one of the highest

rates of overdose deaths in the United States and the Appalachian areas of the state have been hit the hardest (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Adams, Pike, Ross, and Scioto County are considered to be part of the Appalachian region.

Drug poisoning is now the leading cause of injury death in the United States and 40% were caused by prescription painkiller overdose (Warner, Chen, Makuc, Anderson, & Minino, 2002). The rate of drug poisoning in Ohio increased 372% between 199 and 2010 and is now the leading cause of injury death in Ohio (Ohio Department of Health, Violence, & Injury Prevention Program, 2011). On average 4 Ohioans die of drug overdose every day (Ohio Department of Health, Violence, and Injury Program (2011). The Appalachian region of the state, including Scioto county has been the epicenter of the prescription drug epidemic in the state of Ohio (Winstanley, Gay, Roberts, Moseley, Hall, Beeghly, Winhusen, & Somoz, 2012).

Scioto County has been identified by the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) as having one of the highest volume of prescription pain medication prescribers in the entire country (U.S. DEA, 2011). 9.7 million doses of prescription painkillers were dispensed in Scioto County (U.S. DEA, 2011). According to Winstanley et al. (2012), Scioto County also has the highest rate of hepatitis because of the injection of heroin, as well as the highest rate of homicide in the state. 21% of newborns that are born in Scioto County are born addicted to drugs, specifically opioids (Winstanley et al., 2012).

### **Children of Appalachia**

There are 32 counties that make up part of Appalachia for the state of Ohio, included are the four counties for this study: Adams, Pike, Ross, and Scioto (Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, 2016). About 1 in 6 Ohio children live in Appalachia Ohio (Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, 2016). According to the Children's Defense Fund of Ohio (2001), despite the stereotypes, most

children living in Appalachia Ohio live with a working parent, have health insurance, and will graduate from high school. However, household income rates and poverty rates are higher for children living in Appalachia. Appalachian children are 25% more likely to be poor (Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, 2001). In 2016, the Children's Defense Fund of Ohio stated that high poverty counties are concentrated in the southern section state, which include the four counties in this study.

In the Appalachian region of Ohio, there are fewer child and health care programs to serve Appalachian children compared to the rest of the state. With a lack of quality health and child care programs, coupled with poverty, it puts Ohio's Appalachian children at risk. These risks include health, safety, and academic risks. If children are given quality health care, healthy children are sent to school to take full advantage of educational opportunities (Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, 2001). Resources provided in many Ohio school districts are not so easily available to students in Appalachia. Despite these overwhelming obstacles, Appalachia's achievement rates are about equal to statewide results (Children's Defense Fund-Ohio, 2001).

The major crisis plaguing Ohio's Appalachian children is the increase in the number of babies being born to opiate drugs, which is known as Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS). NAS is a set of symptoms associated with drug withdrawal, and these symptoms include low birthweight, seizures, excessive crying, breathing problems, and difficulty eating and sleeping (Ohio Department of Health, 2013). According to the Children's Defense Fund of Ohio (2016), the counties in Appalachian Ohio with the highest rates of NAS are Scioto (76.0), Lawrence (66.7), and Pike (57.7). These are more than six times the state rate, and two of the counties, Scioto and Pike, are counties included in this study. With such high rates of babies born exposed to opiate drugs, parental substance abuse rates are also high as discussed above. Unfortunately,

there are children in Appalachian Ohio who are having to deal with the effects of both NAS and parental substance abuse

### **Effects of Parental Substance Abuse on Students**

With high rates of substance abuse in the state of Ohio among users of all ages and races, there are bound to be effects on children. These effects have lasting and detrimental consequences for children during their lifetime in many aspects of their lives. Children of substance abusers are affected mentally, emotionally, socially, physically and a host of other ways. These children are the victims of their parents' substance abuse. According to Solis et al. (2012),

Substance involvement includes a spectrum of alcohol and drug using behaviors ranging from initiation and occasional use through addictive processes involving physiological dependence and consequences that severely impair life functioning. (p. 2)

According to the Child Welfare League of America (2004), 11% of children live in families where one or more parents abuse alcohol or other drugs. According to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, 5.1% of children under age 18 lived with a mother who met the criteria for past year substance abuse (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2009). There are many children who live in homes with parents who misuse substances but do not meet the criterion of abuse.

Akin, Book, and Lloyd (2015) state that a significant body of research now highlights the ways in which parental substance abuse interferes with family functioning and contributes to detrimental effects on children. Children with parents who are substance abusers are more likely to face economic hardship, family instability, poor parenting, and domestic violence (VanDeMark, Russell, O'Keefe, Finkelstein, Noether, & Gampel, 2005). Parental substance

abuse can affect parenting and family functioning. According to Dennis, Rodi, Robinson, DeCerchio, Young, Gardner, Stedt, and Corona (2014), substance abuse can influence parents' behavior directly because of mind and mood-altering effects of alcohol and drug use which can inhibit their capacity to deliver consistent and sensitive parenting.

Lewis, Holmes, Watkins, and Mathers (2015), found that parental substance abuse has a significant impact on family functioning which generates poor child outcomes and that parenting practices in these homes are inconsistent. Chaffin et al. (1996) link substance abuse with neglect and harsh parenting that can escalate to physical abuse. Physical abuse and neglect have been commonly reported in substance-abusing families (Chaffin, Kelleher, & Hoolenberg, 1996). Physical abuse can have lasting mental and emotional effects on children in addition to the physical effects as a result of the abuse.

In a study by Chaffin, Kelleher, and Hollenberg (1996), it was found that parents who abuse substances are more likely to experience parenting difficulties, be involved with child protective services, and have children removed from the home. More and more children are being placed in foster care or are living with grandparents or other relatives. Studies have estimated that 80% of families with a child in foster care have a parent with substance abuse (Testa & Smith, 2009). According to Whalen (2016), "In Ohio, opioids are the are the main cause of a 19% increase in the number of kids removed from parental custody and placed with relative or foster homes since 2010" (p.2). One county in Ohio is working to double its pool of foster families in order to deal with a 20% increase in the number of children removed from parental custody due to opioids (Whalen, 2016).

It is estimated that 50% to 80% of child welfare cases are related to parental substance abuse (Ungemack, Giovannucci, Moy, Ohrenberger, DeMatteo, & Smith. The U.S. Department

of Health and Human Services (1999) identified parental substance abuse as a contributing factor for up to two-thirds of child in out-of-home placements. Children of substance abuser, who are being placed in foster homes or are being raised by, are profoundly affected by the uprooting of their lives.

Children of substance abusers are at risk for a wide range of negative social-emotional outcomes (Conners-Burrow, McKelvey, Pemberton, Lagory, Mesman, & Whiteside-Mansell, 2013). Solis et al. (2012) agrees by stating that children of substance abusing parents are at risk for a wide variety of negative outcomes, including emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment problems as well as challenges in cognitive and academic functioning. Many children that are affected by parental substance abuse experience difficulties in school with both academic performance and behavior. Children of substance abusers generally have low scholastic achievement and verbal ability paired with erratic school attendance (Noll, Zucker, Fitzgerald, & Curtis, 1992).

Moe et al. (2008) found that children of substance abusing parents are more likely to exhibit hyperactivity, attention deficit disorder, low IQ, school absenteeism, and behavior problems. Hyperactivity and disruptive behavior are being seen more and more in students of substance abusers. In a study of preschool children by Fitzgerald, Sullivan, Ham, Bruckel, Schneider, and Noll (1993), teachers reported that hyperactivity and impulsiveness were common among students impacted by parental substance abuse. The cognitive levels of students of substance abusers is relatively similar to the normative population, however these students perceive their abilities as lower, resulting in lower achievement scores (Murray, 1989).

The National Association of School Psychologists (2015) have found that parental substance abuse can impact students' education. These impacts include delays in development,

high drop-out rates, lower academic achievement, high suspension and expulsion rates, high rates of special education referrals, and emotional symptoms that can impact students' concentration and memory. (NASP, 2015). Rossen and Cowen (2013) also found that students impacted by trauma, such as parental substance abuse, are more likely to drop out of school, have lower academic achievement, and have high rates of special education referrals. Students may display warning signs of the effects of parental substance in the classroom. The NASP (2015) lists the following warning signs that educators and administrators should look for: disruption, lack of interest, decline in achievement, avoidance of school, difficult concentrating, repetitive play of trauma, sleeping in class, irritability, and regression in behavior.

Children of substance abusers usually have depression, low self-esteem, feelings of insecurity, and anxiety. These feelings can be a result of their parents ever changing drug induced mood swings (Peleg-Oren, 2002). These ever-changing drug induced mood changes create an unstable and unsupportive environment for children impacted by parental substance abuse. According to Hawely and Brown (as cited in Peleg-Oren, 2002), "These children suffer from an absence of a stable and supportive environment, where they can learn to develop trust and a secure identity of their own, both of which are necessary to enable them to grow in mature persons with control over their own lives" (p. 404). Therefore, it can be inferred that children who experience the chaos of living in a home with a substance abusing parent are more likely to develop social-emotional problems later in life.

Children of substance abusing parents have an elevated risk for externalizing symptoms, which include attention problems, aggression, and antisocial and behavior problems (Barnow, Schuckit, Smith, Preuss, & Danko, 2002). Chassin, Pitts, Todd, and DeLucia (1999) also found that children of substance abusers have an elevated risk of externalizing traits. These

externalizing symptoms in children have been found to lead to substance abuse later in life. In an attempt to deal with these symptoms, children of substance abusers turn to alcohol and drugs to deal with underlying symptoms (Schukit, Smith, Barnow, Preuss, Luczak, & Radziminski, 2003).

Internalizing symptoms are also found in children of substance abusers. Many of these children have reported feelings of sadness, shame, guilt, stress, and confusion. According to Moe, Johnson, and Wade (2008), some children believe that they are at fault for their parents' substance abuse. These children feel like that it is their duty to make sure that their parents receive help to achieve sobriety. After failed attempts to get their parents help to no avail, children are left feeling guilty and helpless. Often children feel embarrassed by their parents' abuse and actions and will be so ashamed that they keep the secret of their parents' abuse (Moe, Johnson, & Wade, 2008). Keeping the secret of their parents' addiction can be overwhelming and damaging to children's social, emotional, and mental health. Black (1987) explained that children of substance abusers follow the "rules" of addiction, which are: don't talk, don't trust, and don't feel.

### **Classroom and Behavior Management**

Classroom management encompasses much more than just discipline and the management of student behavior. According to Wong, Wong, Rogers, and Brooks (2012), "One of the most commonly misunderstood terms in education is classroom management, which is often seen as a synonym for discipline" (p. 60). Classroom management is a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive (Hidden Curriculum, 2014). Lewis and Roache (2013) referred to

classroom management as all the actions taken by a teacher to create an effective atmosphere where students are highly engaged.

Wong et al. (2012) believe that classroom management is all the things an educator does to organize students, space, time, and materials so students can learn. Martin and Sugarman (1993) described classroom management as being related to teacher procedures that create an effective teaching and learning environment. Wang, Evertson, and Harris (1999) stated, “The meaning of the term classroom management has changed from describing discipline practices and behavioral interventions to serving as a more holistic descriptor of teachers’ actions in orchestrating supporting learning environments and building community” (p.60).

Akin and Akin-Little (2009) believe that effective classroom management can result in students being more engaged and successful in the classroom. Wang, Haertel, and Walberg, (1993) stated that, “Effective classroom management increases student engagement, decreases disruptive behaviors, and makes good use of instructional time” (p.76). Research supports the importance of classroom management for effective teaching, and studies demonstrate that more effective teachers generally have more organized classrooms and students with fewer behavior problems (Evertson, as cited by Akin &Yildirim, 2015). Wong et al. (2012) found that effective teachers have an organized classroom and are consistent with procedures. Sandford also (1984) found that effective classroom managers have clear and consistent classroom procedures and expectations. Kounin (1970) found that effective classroom management is based on teacher behavior and not student behavior.

Classroom management is a concern for most teachers. Rosas and West (2009) state that classroom management has been ranked as one of the major problems that teachers face. Jones and Jones (2004) agree stating that classroom management and management of misbehavior is

one of the most difficulty tasks for both new and veteran teachers. Bullock, Coplan, and Bosaki (2015) agree by stating that elementary school teachers have reported that dealing with students who misbehave is one of the most challenging and stressful aspects of teaching. Teacher burnout has been reported due to classroom management. Kokkinos (2007) states that managing classroom misbehaviors has been related to elementary school teachers experiencing burnout. Friedman (2006) found that poor classroom management becomes a major cause of stress for teachers and will often result in teacher burnout and job dissatisfaction.

In addition to veteran teacher burnout due to classroom management, teacher retention, especially beginning teacher retention, is being compromised because of teachers' lack of classroom management skills. New teachers are often most impacted when it comes to stress incurred by classroom management. According to Allen (2010), the research conducted over the past few decades has shown that new teachers feel unprepared when it comes to classroom management. Allen and Blackston (2003) found that new teachers are often unprepared to be effective classroom managers in today's classrooms.

### **Teachers' Perceptions of Classroom and Behavior Management**

How a teacher perceives his or her classroom management plays a large role in effective teaching, learning, and student behavior. Englehart (2012) believes that teachers' perceptions and beliefs about classroom management are fundamentally important. Teachers' perspectives, attitudes, and training can affect the way they manage classroom behavior (Bester, 2007). Martin and Baldwin (1992) believe that teachers' attitudes and beliefs about their classroom management are closely related to their classroom management practices and strategies. Additionally, teacher training, experience, and confidence can affect teachers' perceptions on classroom management (Borg & Falzon, 1990).

Almost all research pertaining to classroom management beliefs and perceptions has been conducted among elementary school teachers (Bullock et al., 2015). A study of Ohio elementary teachers conducted by Rosas and West (2009) indicated that both preservice and in-service teachers rate their perceptions regarding classroom management as positive. Another study by Akin and Yildirim (2015) found that elementary teachers had both positive and negative associations regarding classroom management. In this same study, teachers found classroom management not as a way of discipline, but providing students with responsibility, developing a sense of community, establishing rules together, communicating, and respecting students' needs, interests, and differences (Akin & Yildirim, 2015). The negative connotations concerning classroom management were related to problems and problem-solving skills (Akin & Yildirim, 2015).

Perceptions about classroom management have generally been more positive from experienced teachers rather than inexperienced teachers. Klassen and Chiu (2010) found that more experienced teachers tend to have higher teacher efficacy for classroom management than do less experienced teachers. Bullock et al. (2015) found that early childhood educators' years of teaching experience significantly predicted teachers' classroom management self-efficacy. According to Martin, Yin, and Mayall (2006), less experienced teachers have "naïve" beliefs about classroom management, and more experienced teachers have more realistic expectations about classroom management.

### **Elementary Students' Behavior**

According to Lane, Givner, and Pierson (2004), "When children enter the school system, they are expected to have certain skills and experiences that will enable them to negotiate the academic and social task demands of the school environment" (p.104). The study conducted by

Lane et al. (2004) found that most teachers identified seven social skills critical for success: follows direction, listens to instructions, controls temper with peers and adults, gets along with others with differences, responds appropriately when hit, and uses free time wisely and appropriately. Issues begin to arise when students lack certain behavior or social skills that lead to negative behaviors.

Student misbehavior is listed as the number one concern of elementary childhood educators (Conroy et al., 2002). According to Egger and Angold (2006), students often start to display emotional and behavioral problems in the earlier grades as they are learning to develop their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Elementary students exhibiting poor behavior has been found to be between 7 and 10% (Beaman et al., 2007). According to Murphy, Theodore, Aloiso, Alric-Edwards, and Hughes (2007), disruptive behavior is the most prevalent behavior problem exhibited by children.

Disruptive behavior refers to behavior that is not conducive to good classroom learning conditions (as cited in Robichaux & Gresham, 2014). According to Perle (2016), “Despite their best efforts, teachers quite frequently observe students become off task or exhibiting disruptive behavior” (p.250). Disruptive behavior negatively affects both the teacher and the students in the classroom. Students who display disruptive, antisocial, and noncompliant behavior are at a greater risk for academic and school failure (Walker, Ramsey, & Gresham, 2004). Students’ learning and teachers’ instructional time is interrupted when a student is disruptive. Allen (2010) believes that a disruptive interaction between teacher and student can sometimes trigger actions and reactions that can get out control. Teachers reacting to disruptive behavior take time to control the situation that takes time away from instructional time, but it can also create interpersonal conflicts between the teacher and the student causing the disruption.

Students who display disruptive or poor behavior are often referred for mental health or intervention services. According to Murphy, Theodore et al. (2007), disruptive behavior in the classroom results in one-half to two-thirds of referrals to child mental health settings. Lane, Mahdavi, and Borthwick-Duffy (2003) found that students whose behavioral skills deviate substantially from the norm are more likely to be referred to the prereferral intervention team for support services. However, there are times when referral for intervention services can be avoided if behavioral supports and strategies are implemented first by the classroom teacher.

### **Classroom and Behavior Management Strategies and Support**

There are proactive and reactive approaches to classroom management (Caldarella, Williams, & Hansen, 2015). Regardless of the approach, behavioral supports for students need to be evidence and research based. According to Caldarella et al. (2015), evidence-based interventions are needed to deal with elementary students with challenging behaviors. Popular and evidence-based strategies include: (a) positive behavior support (PBS), (b) praise, and (c) group contingencies.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Technical Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports defines PBS as a “broad range of systematic and individual strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behavior” (Lewis & Newcomer, 2003). Cohn (2001) acknowledges PBS as an evidence-based approach used to prevent or eliminate students’ challenging behaviors by having teachers modeling appropriate skills. Allen (2010) believes that PBS encourages teachers to be proactive rather than reactive and negative. Safran and Oswald (2003, p. 362) stated that “PBS represents a major departure from traditional reactive disciplinary practices.” School wide PBS has resulted

in overall decreases in student misbehavior among all students with school building and districts that implement PBS and have been studied (Lewis, Colvin, & Sugai, 2000).

Praise is another evidence-based strategy that teachers can use to support students that display misbehaviors. According to Simonsen et al. (2008), some researchers believe that praise is the strongest evidence-based practice to maintain positive classroom behavior. Cavanaugh (2013) refers to praise as the verbal acknowledgment of expected appropriate social or academic behavior displayed by students. According to Wheatley et al. (2009), “The delivery of contingent and specific praise is another evidence-based strategy for improving student behavior” (p. 555). In a study by Madsen, Becker, and Thomas (1968), praise was the key teacher behavior in achieving effective classroom management. Cavanaugh (2013) agrees by stating that, “Praise is one of the most effective school-based strategies to decrease problem behavior and increase positive behavior” (p. 113).

Praise needs to be immediate and specific, while also describing for the learner the exact nature of the rewarded behavior (Niesyn, 2009). If teachers use specific praise, student behavior can be improved (Kalis, Vannest, & Parker, 2007). If praise is vague then it will not inform the student of behaviors that the teachers wants to see more of. When teachers offer praise at the appropriate time a behavior is exhibited, it can yield positive results. According to Barbetta, Norona, and Bicard (2005), by providing immediate praise following students’ behavior, maximizes the impact of it. Students can then more easily associate their behaviors with the praise. Stormont, Lewis, and Smith (2005) found that early childhood teachers thought praise was an important and feasible behavior strategy.

Group contingencies are another evidence-based strategy for providing behavioral support to students who exhibit misbehaviors. Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, and Sugai

(2008) stated, “Group reinforcement contingencies are employed when a common expectation is set for a group of learners and a common positive outcome is earned by engaging in the expected behavior” (p. 362). Caldarella et al. (2015) described group contingencies as placing students in groups where they can work together to behave appropriately and earn points to exchange for a reward. Group contingencies involve presenting students with a series of instructions or requests with which they are to comply and then reinforcing their compliance before providing them with the desired request (Ritz et al., 2014). According to Simonsen et al. (2008), group contingencies have broad evidential support when used in classroom settings.

Reinforcement is another classroom management evidence-based strategy. In a study conducted by Ritz et al. (2013), the researchers were reminded of the importance of reinforcement and how positive reinforcement must be deliberately provided to students who display positive behavior following instances of misbehavior. Cipani (1993) believes that reinforcement must occur for students to replace their misbehaviors with positive behaviors. Vallett (1966) states that, “It is now well accepted that children can be taught appropriate responses through conditioning procedures which are sure to reinforce or reward the specific behavior that is desired” (p.185).

In order for reinforcement to be an effective strategy, the teacher should develop a strategy that compliments the desired appropriate behaviors. A common language to communicate behavioral expectations through direct teaching should be conducted (Wheatley, West, Charlton, Sanders, Smith, & Taylor, 2009). According to Vallett (1966), the reinforcement must be immediate and should not only encourage single students but the entire classroom when necessary. Reinforcers can be praise, tokens/points, or tangible rewards. Wheatley et al. (2009) found success with student behavior when multiple types of reinforcers were used.

Alberto and Troutman (2003) defined token reinforcers as symbolic representations exchangeable for some reinforcer of value to students. Token reinforcers are also known as token economies. Simonsen et al. (2008) defined token economies as when students earn tokens (e.g., points, chips, etc.) contingent upon a desired behavior that can be traded in for a back-up reinforcer (e.g., toys, activities, etc.) There are many forms of token systems used in classrooms today. Token reinforcers should be used immediately following the occurrence of a positive behavior. Once tokens or points are accumulated students can exchange them for back-up reinforcers, such as candy and small toys (O' Leary, Becker, Evans, & Saudargas, 1969).

Establishing and communicating clear rules, expectations, procedures, and routines is another classroom management strategy that can help support student behavior. According to Wheatley et al. (2009), "Providing clear expectations for students is an essential part of a behavior support program" (p.554). Barbetta et al. (2005) believes rules should be limited, simple, clear, and measurable and created with student input. Rules, expectations, procedures, and routines need to be understood by all students (Englehart, 2012). Englehart (2012) also recommends that the consequences should be established if the rules and expectations are not followed. Rules should be posted, taught, and reviewed (Niesyn, 2009). Gunter, Countinho, and Cade (2002) believe that modeling and practicing classroom procedures increase positive behaviors.

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is another strategy that can help support students' behavior. Elias et al. (1997) defines SEL as the process through which we learn to recognize and control our emotions, care about others, make good decisions, behave appropriately, and develop relationships. According to Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, (2004), social and emotional learning play an important role in enhancing nonacademic outcomes, it also plays an

important role in improving children's academic performance and lifelong learning. Teachers are important role models in developing social and emotional learning for students. Denham, Bassett, and Zinsler (2012) believe that teachers are likely to engage in many social and emotional behaviors, and therefore are important socializers of emotion.

### **Classroom and Behavior Management Strategies and Support for Students Impacted by Parental Substance Abuse**

There were no studies found that directly address classroom and behavior management strategies and support for students impacted by parental substance abuse. Even more disturbing is the lack of studies regarding programs, services, and treatment for children affected by parental substance abuse. Kimberley (2009),

As parenting capacity is increasingly compromised by parental addiction and/or related life style and as developmental risks increase, addictions and children's services, as well as the justice, education and mental health systems are faced with the growing reality of parents defaulting on care and parenting responsibilities. (p.16)

Itapuisto (2014) suggests that in the future, practice and tools specifically designed to help children in the substance abuse context should be implemented.

Lynch and Simpson (2010) address how to assist children who have experienced trauma and neglect, such as parental substance abuse. They urge teachers to collaborate with specialists when children who have experienced trauma or neglect, such as parental substance abuse, are in their classrooms (Lynch & Simpson, 2010). Stein and Kendall (2004) have an intervention model that is specifically designed for children who have experienced trauma or neglect. This model consists of three components: safety and stabilization, symptom reduction and memory work, and teaching developmental skills. (Stein & Kendall, 2004). Children need a safe and

nurturing classroom with rules, procedures, and routines in place. Lahey (2013) explains that clear routines and expectations are particularly important for students who live in chaotic households, such as student impacted by parental substance abuse. Students can feel safe and secure in the classroom when clear routines and procedures are established and followed through.

To reduce symptoms, teachers can teach children ways to calm down (Stein & Kendall, 2004). The NASP (2015) suggests providing children with opportunities to redirect the negative behaviors. Soothing techniques such as drawing, breathing, and exercising can help redirect negative behaviors while also teaching students how to manage their emotions (NASP, 2015). Teachers should teach social skills and problem-solving skills directly. Learning social skills for children affected by trauma is essential and will allow children to succeed at home, school, and in the community (Stein & Kendall, 2004). Other strategies school-based professionals can implement to help students impacted by parental substance abuse are: modify or shorten assignments, offer peer or individual tutoring, give more time for assignments, help students with organization and schedule of assignments, and try to get family members to provide academic support at home (NASP, 2015).

The NASP (2015) suggests that educators and administrators need to help students impacted by parental substance abuse feel secure and stable at school and in the classroom. Lahey (2014) agrees stating that, “Teachers who suspect their students may be dealing with violence or other traumatic situation at home can be an essential source of stability and support” (p. 3). Students who have teachers who are reliable, honest, and dependable can offer a sense of security and stability that they have been lacking (Lahey, 2014). They suggest that educators first need to learn to recognize and be sensitive to the behaviors that may occur due to the trauma

from substance abuse (NASP, 2015). If these behaviors occur, teachers should respond calmly and with care, but also model appropriate responses (NASP, 2015). Educators should encourage and support these students while also verbalizing and showing them how much they care for them. This will help nurture security and stability.

The NASP (2015) also suggests that educators let students share their story so that they can release their emotions in a safe place while letting educators answer any questions they may have using honest and developmentally appropriate language. Lahey (2014) stresses that listening can make a world of difference to a student affected by parental substance abuse. By listening, students' feelings and emotions can be validated. Lahey (2014) suggests that teachers listen, state back to the student what they have said, validate the feelings, and then thank the student for sharing.

According to the NASP (2015), "Effective trauma prevention and interventions need to be closely connected to supportive mental health services" (p. 4). Rossen and Cowan (2013) agree and believe that students affected by trauma, such as parental substance abuse, need to be supported through a multitiered system of supports (MTSS). A MTSS should have Tier 1, 2, and 3 services. These services include learning, social and emotional functioning, physical health, and intensive and individual interventions that meet the learning and mental health needs of all students (Rossen & Cowan, 2013).

### **Teacher and Student Relationships**

When a positive, meaningful, and personal relationship is formed between a teacher and a student, it can create a very powerful and impactful support that can successfully aid in positive classroom and behavior management. Teacher-student relationships can influence children's social-emotional development and behavior (Hughes, Bullock, & Coplan, 2014).

Alderman and Green (2011) agree stating that teacher-student relationships have a huge impact on student success in many areas. Pianta, Stuhlman, and Hamre (2002) believe that relationships between teachers and students play a prominent role in the development of competencies in elementary students to high school students.

Positive teacher-student relationships result in more positive outcomes. The teacher-student relationship can be one of the most important and valuable gifts educators can offer to students impacted by parental substance abuse, because these students have not had many other positive relationships with adults (Lahey, 2014). According to Hughes et al. (2014), students who have close relationships with their teachers are more likely to seek out support, respond to teachers' requests, and be cooperative. When teacher-student relationships are built on respect and care, there is less defiance and more cooperation from the student (Englehart, 2012). According to Buyse, Verschueren, Verachtert, and Van Damme (2009), being warm and having open communication between and teacher and a student can facilitate positive feelings about school, as well as allow for the student to feel comfortable enough to share his or her feelings and experiences. Additionally, a positive teacher-student relationship can motivate children to become more engaged in learning which can result in academic success (Buyse et al., 2009).

Negative and conflict-ridden teacher-student relationships can have devastating consequences. Negative relationships are characterized by hostile or argumentative interactions between teacher and student (Birch & Ladd, 1998). Negative teacher-student relationships can risk students' success in school (Pianta, 1999). Spilt, Hughes, Wu, and Kwok (2012) found that conflict and negative relationships with teachers can impact students sense of belonging, academic competence, and motivation. These negative relationships have been associated with less participation, cooperation, and engagement (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Ladd, Birch, and Buhs

(1999) found that students with lower academic competence and lower levels of socioeconomic status are more likely to have negative relationships with their teachers. Pianta et al. (2002) found that low socioeconomic status students are more likely to be placed in classrooms that are more teacher-directed and less positive. Such placements can lead to poor teacher-student relationships (Pianta et al. 2002).

Teachers must foster and develop positive relationships with their students. Teachers can foster and develop relationships with their students in many ways. Teachers can share personal stories about their lives, learn about their students' interests, invite students to help make decisions about class activities and listen to their concerns (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). Roache and Lewis (2009) found that meaningful praise can assist in the development and fostering of teacher-student relationships, while also resulting in have positive affect on students' academic success and behavior. Interventions that promote emotionally supportive classrooms and learner center practices have also been found to foster positive teacher-student relationships (Boyce, Obradoci, Bush, Stamperdahl, Kim & Adler, 2007).

### **Professional Development for Behavior and Classroom Management Strategies and Support**

In 2006, the American Psychological Association (APA) gave a nationwide survey to learn about teachers' classroom management strategies. The teachers ranked classroom management as one of the highest ranked professional development needs, particularly among first year teachers and elementary teachers (Ritz, Noltemeyer, Davis, & Green, 2014). In a survey of elementary school teachers in the United States, conducted by Jones and Jones (2004), 90% reported they needed more training in classroom management. Many elementary teachers reported feeling that they are not prepared to provide effective classroom management strategies

(Reinke et al., 2011). Classroom management is a critical skill for teachers to acquire in order for effective teaching and learning to take place. (Simonsen et al., 2008). Simonsen et al. (2008) believe that teachers should be trained and supported in successful, evidence-based practices. Organizational support needs to be maximized for classroom management strategies to be adopted, adapted, and implemented with fidelity.

Having the ability to prevent and effectively manage students' behavior is a critical skill for teachers to have, and thus pre-service teachers should be trained to employ different classroom management strategies (Ormrod, 2003). Rosas and West (2009) agree that teacher preparation programs need to train pre-service teachers how to create a safe learning environment that promotes academic success while also versing them in their content area. Sugai and Horner (2002) believe that pre-service teacher training on classroom management should include three central components: time for instruction, arrangement of instructional activities to maximize engagement, and behavior management strategies. Simonsen et al. (2009) believe pre-service teachers should be taught evidence-based practices on classroom management that include strategies on the physical environment, structure of the classroom, instructional management, and procedures and routines to increase appropriate behavior and decrease inappropriate behavior.

Teacher preparation programs must ensure that pre-service teachers are having the opportunity to observe and student teach in veteran teachers' classrooms that are highly effective in classroom management. Allen (2010) believes that the impact of this learning is determined by the quality of what students are observing. If a pre-service teacher is observing poor quality classroom management skills, these pre-service teachers may have a limited amount of skills themselves (Allen, 2010). In a study conducted by Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler, and Shaver

(2005), they found that these experiences along with pre-service teachers' own perceptions on classroom management can persist into their early years of teaching. Pre-service teachers' training and classroom management beliefs and the cause of student misbehavior may have influence on their classroom management practices (Little, Sterling, & Farrell, 1997).

In-service teachers are also in need of continuing professional development and training on evidence-based practices of classroom management and behavioral support. In a study by Johansen, Little, and Akin-Little (2011), 81% of the participants responded that they have received professional development specific to classroom management since their college or university teacher program, however this professional development is rarely offered and steps around real classroom issues. According to Allen (2010), in-service teachers should attend professional development workshops or initiate their own learning dealing with management and behavior issues. Professional development training should cover areas such as positive behavior support, conflict resolution, mediation, discipline, and child development (Shah, 2012). Martino, Hernandez, Paneda, Campo Mon, and Gonzalez De Mesa (2016) stated, "Education systems must provide teachers with opportunities to maintain and further develop their professional skills so that the system retains a high level of teaching quality" (p. 178).

Peer coaching and mentoring are ways that can help support teachers to learn about classroom management and behavioral support practices to create a community of reflective learners (Allen, 2010). Administrators and leaders need to foster the development of classroom management practices, therefore creating a community of reflective learners (Allen, 2010). Leaders can further support their teachers in the area of classroom management by involving strategies such as personal development sessions, reading empirical literature, and the use of staff meetings (Arbuckle & Little, 2004).

Deliberate practice is another strategy that would be beneficial for in-service teachers regarding classroom management strategies and behavioral support. According to Marzano (2011), “Deliberate practice involves more than just repetition; it requires activities that are designed to improve performance, challenge the learner, and provide feedback” (p.82).

Deliberate practice involves a common language practice, focusing on specific practices, tracking progress, and opportunities to observe and discuss expertise (Marzano, 2011). Teachers could deliberately practice classroom management strategies, with the support of leaders and administrators, following Marzano’s steps that would help teachers gain expertise and skills.

### **Summary**

This chapter identified the theoretical framework for this study. Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1938), Social Learning Theory (1977), and Social Development Theory (1978) address theories on classroom management strategies and student behavioral support in the classroom. Family Stress Theory (1958) addresses how students impacted by parent substance abuse cope and how it affects them academically and socially in school. Research on the effects of parental substance abuse, classroom and behavior management, teachers’ perceptions, elementary students’ behavior, strategies and support, teacher and student relationships, and professional development were examined. There appears to be a gap in the literature. The literature review indicated that although there are comprehensive qualitative and quantitative studies on classroom management, behavioral support, and parental substance abuse individually, there have been few if any studies intertwining all three and teachers’ perceptions of this phenomenon. This study addressed the problem of the lack of literature and research describing elementary teachers’ perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral supports to those students impacted by parental substance abuse. Teachers’ perceptions of how they alter

their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse will be valuable towards future implementation of classroom management strategies and support for these students. Chapter three describes the methodology that was used for this study.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how elementary teachers in rural, southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. This chapter focuses on the qualitative, transcendental phenomenological design, research questions, and research setting that were for this study. Next, the reader is introduced to how the participants were selected, participation procedures, and the researcher's role. Data collection methods met triangulation by these three ways: (a) interviews, (b) a focus group, and (c) a questionnaire. Last, the data analysis process is described, along with trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

### **Design**

A qualitative, transcendental phenomenological approach was used for this study. Data was collected through interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire. The transcendental phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study, because it is used to describe the essence of elementary teachers' experiences with altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. The essence of "what" and "how" the teachers have experienced the phenomenon is described (Creswell, 2013). Husserl (1931) stated, "Essence provides on the one side of knowledge of the essential nature on the Real, and on the other, in respect of the domain left over, knowledge of the essential nature on the non-real (irreal)" (p.45). The transcendental phenomenological approach focuses less on the interpretations of the researcher and more on descriptions of the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

When a researcher follows the transcendental phenomenological approach, he or she sets aside any prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated, also known as *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994). It was important to use the *epoche* process when conducting my research. *Epoche* is when researchers make the study as free as possible from preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of the phenomenon being investigated (Moustakas, 1994). When this is achieved, researchers can be completely open, receptive, and naïve when listening to their participants describe their experience of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore, I had to contemplate my experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon that I investigated. I intentionally cleared my mind of my preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of altering my own classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse.

### **Research Questions**

Central Question:

- What are the perceptions of rural southern Ohio elementary teachers regarding how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse?

Guiding Questions:

- What specific classroom management strategies do elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio alter to offer support to students impacted by parental substance abuse?
- What specific behavior supports are elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio providing to students impacted by parental substance abuse?
- What specific exhibited behaviors from students impacted by parental substance abuse are elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio targeting?

## Setting

The setting of the study took place in four counties and 10 different elementary schools in rural, southern Ohio. Adams, Pike, Ross, and Scioto were the four counties chosen for the study. The elementary schools were in convenient locations in these four counties where low unemployment, low socioeconomic status, and drug abuse rates are high. According to the United States Census Bureau (2015), Adams County has a population of 28,024 with 97.3% of the population being Caucasian, African American 0.6%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.5%, Asian 0.2%, and Hispanic 0.9%. The average household income in Adams County is \$34,733 with 24.8% of its citizens living in poverty and a 7% unemployment rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Pike County has a population of 28,217 with 96.1% of the population being Caucasian, African American 1.1%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.6%, Asian 0.3%, and Hispanic 0.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The average household income in Pike County is \$39,989 with 21.9% of its citizens living in poverty and a 7.2% unemployment rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Ross County has a population of 77,170 with 90.7% of the population being Caucasian, African American 6.0%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.3%, 0.6% Asian, and 1.2% Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The average household income in Ross County is \$43,450 with 19.2% of its citizens living in poverty and a 4.9% unemployment rate (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Finally, the U.S. Census Bureau (2015) reports that Scioto County has a population of 76,825 with 94.6% of the population being Caucasian, African American 2.6%, American Indian or Alaskan Native 0.5%, Asian 0.4%, and Hispanic 1.9%. The average household income in Scioto County is 36,945 with 27.2% of its citizens living in poverty and a 7.3% unemployment rate. According to the 2010 and most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), which provides national and state-level data on the use of tobacco,

alcohol, illicit drugs, and mental health in the U.S., 7.87% of Ohio residents reported using illicit drugs in the past month, and the national average is 8.82%. In 2009-2010, Ohio was one of the top ten states for past-year non-medical use of pain relievers among people age 12-17 (NSDUH, 2010). Additionally, 3.48% of Ohio residents reported using an illicit drug other than marijuana in the past month, and the national average was 3.6% (NSDUH, 2010).

The elementary schools were selected based on criterion and convenience sampling. The school district superintendents followed by the elementary school principals of the participating elementary schools were contacted via telephone or email and with a follow-up letter that described the study's purpose, significance, and methods while also requesting written consent. Participating principals and teachers were only contacted after securing permission from the district superintendent.

### **Participants**

A convenient sampling of 15 elementary teachers, who teach general education in grades Prek-3, were the participants for this study. Criterion sampling was used because this type of sampling works well when all individuals represent people who have experienced a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). In the case of this study, all the participants have experienced altering their classroom management strategies for students impacted by parental substance abuse. The participants were contacted via telephone or email and with a follow-up invitation that described the study's purpose, significance, and methods. After the participants accepted the invitation to participate in the study, written consent from the participants was secured. According to Creswell (2013), in a phenomenological study it is important to obtain participants' written permission to be studied.

## **Procedures**

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval from Liberty University, I contacted the school district superintendents followed by the elementary principals, from the schools that met the criteria to be included in the study, via telephone or email and with a follow-up letter to obtain written consent. Once consent was granted by administration, I contacted elementary teachers, which were chosen by the principals, via telephone or email and with a follow-up invitation that described the study's purpose, significance, and methods. After the participants accepted the invitation to participate in the study, written consent from the participants was secured. Triangulation was achieved by collecting data from interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire. Data analysis procedures were conducted based on Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method.

## **The Researcher's Role**

According to Creswell (2013), one characteristic of qualitative research is that the researcher is the key instrument. I was the human instrument for this study because I collected data through interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire. The instruments used to collect the data were designed by myself using open-ended questions and were not developed by other researchers (Creswell, 2013). As I am an elementary teacher in an impoverished, rural school district with high rates of substance abuse, I used *epoche*, in which I set aside my personal classroom management experiences with students impacted by parental substance abuse in order to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon (Husserl, as cited by Creswell, 2013). I work at one of the participating schools, and I have preexisting professional relationships with teachers from this school. I did not have any preexisting relationships with any other teacher participants in the other participating elementary schools.

## **Data Collection**

Data collection for phenomenological studies are from individuals who have experienced a certain phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Data was collected from elementary teachers in rural southern Ohio who have experienced altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Data collection and triangulation was achieved by way of interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire. According to Creswell (2013), “Triangulation is when researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence” (p. 251). The order of implementation of the data being collected was interviews, the focus group, and then the questionnaire. Interviews were conducted first in order for participants to get to know and feel comfortable with me before speaking in front of their peers in the focus group. By conducting the focus group after the interviews, participants were more confident and were encouraged by the other participants to take part in the discussion. With the focus group being second, participants had more time to reflect on the questions and discussion from the individual interviews that provoked more thought and discussion during the focus group. Last was the questionnaire. This was last, because after participating in both the interview and the focus group, the participants were better able to put into words what they wanted to convey in the interview or focus group.

### **Interviews**

Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted after written consent had been granted by the participants. Semi-structured interviews are a qualitative data collection strategy and therefore were appropriate for this transcendental phenomenological study. According to Brenner (2006), “A semi-structured protocol has the advantage of asking all informants the same

core questions with the freedom to ask follow-up questions that build on the responses received” (p. 362). Interviews were conducted first in order for participants to get to know and feel comfortable with me before the focus group. Participants were interviewed face-to-face at a location and time that was convenient for them but also free of distractions and that lent itself to audio and video taping (Creswell, 2013). Interviews were recorded using audio and visual equipment and confined to 20 minutes. I used an interview guide with 10 open-ended questions. To address validity, the interview questions were grounded in literature, peer reviewed, and piloted beforehand. Sampson (as cited by Creswell, 2013) recommends the use of a pilot test to develop research instruments, assess the degree of observer bias, frame questions, collect background information, and adapt procedures. The interview questions addressed the central and guiding questions of the study.

### **Open-Ended Interview Questions**

1. What grade do you teach, and how long have you taught? What degrees do you hold?
2. Do you have students in your classroom impacted by parental substance abuse? If so, about how many? Has the number grown, and if it has why do you think this is occurring?
3. What impact does parental substance abuse have on students? Academically? Behaviorally? Socially? Emotionally?
4. For this study, classroom management will be generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. However, what is your definition of classroom management?
5. Describe your classroom management style, strategies, and techniques.

6. Explain to me whether you alter your classroom management strategies to offer behavioral supports to students impacted by parental substance abuse? If so how do you, and if not, why?
7. What specific behavioral supports, if any, do you use for students impacted by parental substance abuse and why?
8. How do you feel families of students impacted by parental substance abuse support students?
9. What specific training have you had on classroom management and has it helped you?
10. What specific training have you had on classroom management strategies specifically targeted for students impacted by parental substance abuse? If you haven't had any, would professional development would be helpful?

Question one was a warm-up question to get the participant comfortable and ready to answer more in-depth and thoughtful questions, as well as to develop rapport with the participant and myself (Patton, 2015). Questions two and three address parental substance abuse and its effects on students. According to Sandu-Beckler, Devall, and De la Rosa (2002), it is estimated that 8.3 million children live in substance-affected families. Questions four, five, and six were designed to solicit elementary teachers' perceptions and thoughts about their own classroom management strategies. Teacher perception represents a future-oriented belief about the level of competence a teacher believes he or she has with a teaching task (Bullock & Coplan, 2015). These questions related to the central question; however, responses helped with the guiding questions as well.

Question seven was designed to understand how elementary teachers provide behavior supports to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Schools are successful when they integrate efforts to promote children's academic, social, and emotional learning (Elias et al., 1997). This question related to the guiding question about what specific behavior strategies elementary teachers provide to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Question eight was designed to provide more evidence for the theoretical framework of the study and specifically addressed Family Stress Theory.

Questions nine and ten were designed to understand what professional development or training teachers have had on classroom management or would like to have, specifically for students impacted by parental substance abuse. These questions were geared towards the central question and guiding question about what specific classroom management strategies teachers use for these students. According to Ormrod (2003), teachers with sound classroom management strategies are better able to support the educational needs of their students.

### **Focus Group**

A focus group is another qualitative data collection strategy that was employed during this study. Morgan (1997) broadly defines focus groups as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher. Ten participants who were previously interviewed were invited to participate in the focus group. Only five participants attended the focus group. The focus group was purposely conducted after the interviews because it gave the participants a chance to get to know and get comfortable with me. The participants had more confidence to speak up due to being encouraged and prompted by their peers. According to Creswell (2013), focus groups are advantageous when interviewees are similar, cooperative with each other, and when individuals, when interviewed one-on-one, may be

hesitant to provide information. The focus group took place at a public library after school hours and at a time when it was convenient for the participants but also free of distractions and was a place that lent itself to audio and video taping (Creswell, 2013). The focus group was recorded using audio and visual equipment and confined to an hour. I had a guide with more discussion prompts than was needed. The focus group questions were developed after the interviews had been conducted. To address validity, the prompts were grounded in literature, peer reviewed, and piloted beforehand. The focus group discussion topics addressed the central and guiding questions of the study.

### **Focus Group Discussion Topics**

1. Please introduce yourself and tell the group what grade you teach and how long you have taught?
2. Do you all have students in your classroom who have been affected by parental substance abuse? If so, about how many?
3. What effects, if any, does parental substance abuse have on these students' academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally?
4. For this study, classroom management will be generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. Describe to me your classroom management strategies and techniques.
5. Do you alter your classroom management strategies and techniques for students impacted by parental substance abuse? If so, would you please explain how?

6. Explain to me how you think your classroom management strategies and techniques, for student impacted by parental abuse work? Is there a positive or negative outcome? Are your strategies and techniques helpful?
7. What types of behavior do you specifically target when working to support students impacted by parental substance abuse and why?
8. Do family members or caregivers of students impacted by parental substance abuse support and assist you? If so, in what way? If not, please explain why you think this is so.
9. What classroom management education, training, or professional development have you had? Have you found any of these to be helpful? Why or why not? Any specific training for students impacted by parental substance abuse?
10. If offered, do you feel like training on classroom management, specifically targeted for students impacted by parental substance abuse, would be beneficial? Why or why not?

Question one was designed to develop rapport and familiarity with me and the other members of the focus group and to provide comfort for the participants to speak openly and freely in front of their peers. According to Kitzinger (1995), group discussion helps researchers tap into different forms of communication including jokes, anecdotes, teasing, and arguing. Questions two and three addressed the effects of parental substance abuse on elementary students. These questions focused around the central question. Questions four, five, and six are about elementary teachers' classroom management strategies, and these questions relate to the central question, as well as the guiding question about what specific classroom management strategies teachers use for students impacted by parental substance abuse. According to Lewis,

Roache, and Romi, (2010), “Classroom management skills are a significant aspect of professional practice, with implications for student learning and welfare” (p.53).

Question seven is directly related to the guiding question about specific behavior supports teachers provide to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Question eight relates to the theoretical framework of the study in relation to Family Stress Theory. A review on Family Stress Theory by McCubbin, Joy, Cauble, Comeau, Patterson, and Needle (1980), indicates that kinship systems are alive and well and play a major role in supporting families under stress. Questions nine and ten are designed to understand the professional development or lack of that elementary teachers have had on classroom management, specifically for students impacted by parental substance abuse. These questions relate to the guiding question about classroom management.

### **Questionnaire**

Questionnaires are another form of data collection for qualitative research and will be used during this study. According to (McClure, 2002), “Questionnaires generally consist of open- or closed-ended questions or items that measure facts, attitudes, or values” (p.6). Using a questionnaire can help reduce researcher bias because there are no visual or verbal clues that could influence participants. All 15 participants were given a questionnaire near the end of the study and asked to complete it. The questionnaire was emailed and was able to be completed online. The participants also had the option of having the questionnaires to be hand delivered to them, and then picked up once completed. Thirteen of the fifteen participants completed the questionnaire online. Two participants did not complete a questionnaire after multiple attempts to have them do so. The questionnaire had 10 open-ended questions. The questionnaire questions were developed after the focus group had been conducted. To address validity, the questions on

the questionnaire were grounded in literature, peer reviewed, and piloted beforehand. The questionnaire addressed the central and guiding questions of the study.

### **Questionnaire**

1. Have you seen a rise in the number of students who have been impacted by parental substance abuse? If so, how has this impacted your classroom management?
2. For this study, classroom management will be generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. Describe to me your classroom management style, strategies, and techniques.
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your classroom management skills and behavioral support with typical children and why?
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your classroom management skills and behavioral support with students impacted by parental substance abuse and why?
5. What type of support do you or does your school provide to students impacted by parental substance abuse?
6. How do you ensure that all students in your classroom feel supported?
7. Do you feel like you lack training or education to support these students? If so, what kind of training would you like to have? If you feel like you have had adequate training, what kind of training have you had?

8. With drug abuse in your area on the rise, do you think your classroom management will change or continue to change over the next several years and how? Do you think your administration and school district will respond? Why or why not?
9. What else do you think would be important for me to know about students impacted by parental substance abuse?
10. Other than the area of classroom management and behavioral support, is there another educational area that needs to be studied in regard to students impacted by parental substance abuse and why?

Questions one, two, three, and four were designed to understand elementary teachers' classroom management strategies and behavior supports and their perceptions of these. These questions relate to both the central question and the guiding questions about their specific classroom management strategies and behavior supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse. Teachers use a variety of techniques and strategies to maintain classroom management, and each strategy has an impact on children (Traynor, 2003). Questions five and six were designed to understand behavioral supports teachers provide to students in their classrooms. This question focuses on the guiding questions about what specific behavioral supports teachers use.

Question seven was designed to understand professional development on classroom management. Question eight was designed to understand how teachers in rural southern Ohio may change their classroom management strategies as the rise of drug abuse continues in rural, southern Ohio. Questions nine and ten were designed to provide the participants an opportunity to provide me with any more pertinent information that could be useful for my study or future studies about elementary students impacted by parental substance abuse.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures were conducted based on Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Moustakas' (1994) modification of this method allows the researcher to obtain a full description of the experience of the phenomenon from participants' verbatim transcripts and a description of my own experience of the phenomenon. First, I described my personal experiences with the phenomenon of altering classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse and put it into written form. This is called bracketing. When the researcher brackets himself or herself out of the study by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon, this is called bracketing (Creswell, 2013). I then examined the text while writing notes and memos in the margins of the transcripts and forming initial codes. Memoing is the process of writing short phrases, ideas, or key concepts (Creswell, 2013). The process of coding involves aggregating the text into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code, and then assigning a label to the code (Creswell, 2013). Next, I developed a list of significant statements from my experience. Then, I took those significant statements and related and clustered them into themes. Significant statements are statements about how individuals are experiencing the topic that are non-repetitive and non-overlapping (Creswell, 2013). After this step, I reflected on my own textural description and construct a textural-structural description of the meaning and essence of my experience. Textural descriptions are written descriptions of "what" the participants in a study have experienced with the phenomenon and includes verbatim samples (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013) described textural-structural descriptions as a written description of "how" the experience happened. Then, I repeated the steps from above on the participants' verbatim interviews, focus group, and questionnaires. Last, from the textural-structural descriptions of all the participants'

experiences, I constructed a universal composite description that represents the entire group. Composite descriptions incorporate both the textural and textural-structural descriptions of the participants and is the “essence” of the experience and represents the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013).

**Bracketing.** A written experience of the phenomenon of altering classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse was completed by the researcher. When one brackets themselves out of the study, he or she describes his or her own personal experiences with the phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

**Analyzing transcripts.** Interviews and the focus group were recorded and transcribed verbatim. All transcripts were read several times to obtain an overall feeling (Creswell, 2013).

**Memoing.** Notes or memos were written in the margins of the transcripts. When memoing, the researcher writes down ideas about the evolving theory throughout the process of coding and transcribing (Creswell, 2013).

**Open coding.** Aggregating the text into small categories and assigning labels was completed. Open coding is concerned with identifying naming, categorizing, and describing phenomena (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

**Significant statements.** A list of significant statements were developed from the interviews, focus group, and questionnaire. The list was evaluated to develop nonrepetitive and nonoverlapping themes (Moustakas, 1994).

**Textural and textural-structural descriptions.** A textural description of what and a textural-structural description of how the experiences happened was developed. Textural descriptions will provide the reader with the nature of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Textural-structural descriptions require imaginative variation, reflection, and analysis to bring about a better description of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

**Essence.** A composite description (Moustakas, 1994), or essence of the study, was created.

### **Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) adhere more to naturalistic research and use alternative terms for validation and reliability, and these are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (as cited in Creswell, 2013). Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings accurately describe reality. Credibility depends on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher. Prolonged engagement in the field and triangulation of data collection can be used to establish credibility (Lincoln & Guba, as cited by Creswell, 2013). Transferability refers to the possibility that what was found in one context is applicable to another context. To ensure transferability thick description is necessary. Dependability deals with consistency, which is addressed through the provision of rich detail about the context and setting of the study. Dependability seeks that the results will be subject to change, and researchers look for confirmability rather than objectivity in establishing the value of data.

### **Credibility**

**Triangulation.** This process involves corroborating evidence from different methods to shed light on a theme (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation was achieved by collecting data from interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire.

**Member checks and peer review.** Member checking was achieved by having participants review copies of the transcriptions of their interviews and the focus group as well as a copy of their completed questionnaires. The member checking technique was used to

understand the participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations (Creswell, 2013). This is important to the study because it provides validity. This technique is considered by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to be the most critical technique for establishing credibility (as cited in Creswell, 2013). Peer reviews of the interview questions, focus group prompts, and questionnaire were conducted. Peer reviews provide an external check of the research process (Creswell, 2013). The peers and myself will keep written records of the "peer debriefing sessions".

### **Transferability**

**Rich and thick descriptions.** Rich and thick descriptions of the setting and the participants were provided. These descriptions allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability (Lincoln & Guba, as cited by Creswell, 2013). Textural descriptions of what and structural descriptions of how the participants experienced the phenomenon were used.

### **Dependability**

**Member checks and peer review.** Participants reviewed copies of the transcriptions of their interviews and focus groups, and they received a copy of their completed questionnaires. This helped achieve member checking by understanding the participants' views of the credibility of the research findings. Ultimately, this provided validity. Peer reviews of the interview questions, focus group discussion prompts, and questionnaire were completed. External checks of the research were completed. Written records of the peer debriefing sessions were kept.

### **Confirmability**

**Member checks and peer review.** To achieve member checking, participants received copies of the transcriptions of their interviews, focus group discussions, and questionnaires. When participants are given a chance to review these, it allows the researcher to understand the participants' opinions and ideas on the credibility of study. Member checking provided validity

for the study. Peer reviews were completed on the interview questions, focus group discussions, and questionnaire. These provide an external check of the research process (Creswell, 2013).

Peer debriefing sessions were kept by a written record from the peers and myself.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to Creswell (2013), regardless of the qualitative approach, researchers face many ethical issues that surface during data collection and analysis. The first ethical issue is to determine if the benefits of the research for the participants outweigh the risks (Creswell, 2013). The benefits of this research provide current and future elementary teachers, who serve students impacted by parental substance abuse, practical classroom management strategies and behavioral supports for students. There are no known risks for this study. Ethical safeguards for the study are provided below.

**Consent.** Consent forms from the participants were obtained. The study's purpose, significance, and methods were reiterated on the consent forms. Participants were informed that the study was voluntary, and that they may withdraw at any time.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity.** Pseudonyms were used to protect teacher and school identity. Participants were informed that their identities will remain anonymous.

**Data security.** All computer data is stored in a password protected computer. Transcript responses were coded with pseudonyms, and printed data is locked in a filing cabinet.

### **Summary**

A transcendental phenomenological study was used to understand how elementary teachers in rural, southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental drug abuse. The research design, research setting, and participants were identified and explained. Triangulation was achieved, and data was collected

by interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire. Data analysis procedures were conducted based on Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. The chapter is concluded by identifying how credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability techniques strengthened the trustworthiness of the study along with the ethical considerations of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how elementary teachers in rural southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental drug abuse. Classroom management is generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. The theories guiding this study are: (a) Operant Conditioning (Skinner, 1938), (b) Family Stress Theory (Hill, 1958), (c) Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), and (d) Social Development Theory (Vygotsky, 1978). Fifteen elementary teachers, who teach general education in grades Prek-3 in rural southern Ohio were the participants for this study. Contained in this chapter are brief participant descriptions, themes that were developed through data analysis, and a summary. Results are presented in relation to the identified themes generated from the data collected from interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire. The central research and guiding questions are answered following the discussion of themes.

### **Participants**

A convenient sampling of 15 elementary teachers from ten different school districts in Adams, Pike, Ross, and Scioto counties who teach general education in grades Prek-3 were the participants for this study. Of the 15 elementary teachers: two were from one school district in Adams County, six were from four different school districts in Pike County, four were from three different school districts in Ross County, and three were from two different school districts in Scioto County. Participants included 14 females and one male that were all Caucasian. Criterion sampling was used because all the individuals represented people who have

experienced the phenomenon of altering their classroom management strategies for students impacted by parental substance abuse. Once permission was granted from the school districts' superintendents and building principals, the participants were contacted via telephone and email and with a follow-up invitation that described the study's purpose, significance, and methods. After the participants accepted the invitation to participate in the study, written consent was secured from all of the participants. Presented below in greater detail are the descriptions of each participant regarding their personal experiences with the phenomenon studied and their educational backgrounds. All the participants were given pseudonyms that will be used throughout to protect their anonymity.

### **Allison**

Allison is a first-grade teacher, and she has taught for 28 years. Previously she has taught second grade, third grade, and eighth grade math. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education (1-8). She recalled only briefly learning about classroom management strategies in her bachelor's degree program. Other than that, she has had no formal education, professional development, or training in classroom management. Most of her classroom management supports and strategies have been learned from experience and practice. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had three students who have been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Beth**

Beth is a first-grade teacher, and she has taught for 13 years. Previously she taught kindergarten. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3), a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, and she has a reading certificate in children's literature. She

did not have specific classes on classroom management during her undergraduate and graduate programs. Classroom experience has been the most valuable way for her to learn classroom management strategies and techniques. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had five students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Beverly**

Beverly is a kindergarten teacher, and she has taught for 12 years. Previously she taught first and second grade. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3), a master's degree in educational leadership with principal licensure for grades PreK-6. She does not recall having any formal training on classroom management and credits her knowledge to reading and researching on her own. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had six students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Candace**

Candace is a second-grade teacher, and she has taught for 10 years. Previously she taught kindergarten. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (Prek-3) and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction. She believes classroom management strategies were integrated into her undergraduate education courses but not as a stand-alone course. She has learned classroom management strategies from experience, research articles, and books. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by

parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had five students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Carmen**

Carmen is a third-grade teacher, and she has taught for eight years. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3). She had a class on classroom management in her undergraduate program. She has learned most of her classroom management strategies and supports from experience and observing her veteran colleagues. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had five students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Deborah**

Deborah is a preschool teacher, and she has taught for 21 years. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education (1-8), and she has a master's degree in early education of handicap children. She believes that classroom management strategies were briefly discussed in her undergraduate program and never in her graduate program. She has learned classroom management supports and techniques from experience and reading articles and books. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had two students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Evelyn**

Evelyn is a third-grade teacher, and she has taught for five years. Previously she taught fourth grade math and science. She has an associate's degree in early childhood development, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3), and a master's degree in education. She

also has a reading endorsement. She did not have any classroom management courses in her undergraduate or graduate programs. She learned classroom management strategies, ideas, and supports from experience and substitute teaching. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had one student who had been impacted by parental substance in her classroom this past school year.

### **Faith**

Faith is a kindergarten teacher, and she has taught for 15 years. She is a licensed management cosmetologist, has an associate degree in plastics and chemical engineering, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3), and a master's degree in fine arts and education. She believes that classroom management strategies and supports were integrated into her undergraduate program, but she did not have a specific classroom management course. Experience has been how she has learned what classroom management strategies work best. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had one student who had been impacted by parental substance in her classroom this past school year.

### **Gabby**

Gabby is a first-grade teacher, and she has taught for 10 years. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3) and a master's degree in teacher leadership curriculum and instruction. She did not have any courses on classroom management in her undergraduate or graduate programs. She did have PAX, or the good behavior game, training at a professional development at her school. She has learned the most about classroom management by just being in the classroom. She has not had any classroom management training specifically

targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had one student who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Helen**

Helen is a second-grade teacher, and she has taught for 17 years. Previously she was a Title I reading teacher. She has an associate degree in human services, a bachelor's degree in elementary education (1-8), and a master's degree in classroom teaching. She does not remember classroom management courses in her undergraduate program and knows there were none in her graduate program. She has had the "Leader in Me" training through a professional development opportunity at her school. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had one student who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Irene**

Irene is a kindergarten teacher, and she has taught for 17 years. She has an associate degree in human services, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3), and a master's degree in classroom teaching with a concentration in multiple intelligences. She recalls having one course on classroom management in her undergraduate program and feels that 17 years of just "handling it on her own" has been the best learning experience. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had two students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Jack**

Jack is a third-grade teacher, and he has taught for five years. Previously he taught preschool. He has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3) and is currently

working on his master's degree in intervention grades K-12. He did not have any courses specifically targeted towards classroom management in his undergraduate program, however in an upcoming semester of his graduate program there will be a course on classroom management. He believes that experience and learning from his mentors have been what has been most helpful. He has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. He estimates that he had 12 students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in his classroom this past year.

### **Kelly**

Kelly is a third-grade teacher, and she has taught for 13 years. She has an associate's degree in early childhood development, a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3), a master's degree in curriculum and instruction, a reading endorsement, and a media specialist certificate. She has not any training or courses in classroom management, and she has learned on her own through trial and error. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had 10 students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Lillian**

Lillian is a third-grade teacher, and she has taught for 26 years. Previously she has taught first, second, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade. She has a bachelor's degree in elementary education (1-8). She does not recall any courses or information taught about classroom management in her undergraduate program. She feels that observing and learning from her mentors and experience has been how she has learned best. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse. She estimates that she had

nine students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

### **Melissa**

Melissa is a kindergarten teacher, and she has taught for 10 years. Previously she taught preschool. She has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education (PreK-3), a master's degree in curriculum design and instruction (K-12), and a fourth and fifth grade endorsement. She did not have any courses on classroom management in her undergraduate or graduate programs. She has not had any classroom management training specifically targeted to students impacted by parental substance abuse; however, she had Trauma Informed Care (TIC) training recently. She estimates that she had three students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse in her classroom this past school year.

## **Results**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how elementary teachers in rural southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Data collected from interviews, a focus group, and a questionnaire was analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Moustakas' (1994) modification of this method allows the researcher to obtain a full description of the experience of the phenomenon from participants' verbatim transcripts and a description of the researcher's own experience of the phenomenon. The results section will discuss steps for data analysis which generated a list of themes followed by a discussion of the central and guiding research questions.

## Theme Development

Data collected from interviews, a focus group, and questionnaires were analyzed. Themes were generated to describe how the participants experienced altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavior supports to students impacted by parental substance abuse. The following information presented discusses the steps of the analyzation process and the themes that emerged are presented.

**Epoche.** When a researcher follows the transcendental phenomenological approach, he or she sets aside any prejudgments regarding the phenomenon being investigated, also known as *epoche* (Moustakas, 1994). It was important to use the *epoche* process when conducting my research. *Epoche* is important, because researchers can be completely open, receptive, and naïve when listening to their participants describe their experience of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Before conducting my research, I took time to contemplate my experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon that I was investigating. I intentionally did my best to minimize my preconceptions, beliefs, and knowledge of altering my own classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. I answered the interview, focus group, and questionnaire questions before asking them of my participants. This enabled me to describe my personal experience with the phenomenon. I took steps to avoid any conflict between my opinions and my analysis and interpretation.

**Interviews.** Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted after written consent was granted by the participants. Participants were interviewed face-to-face at a location and time that was convenient for them. Interviews were recorded using audio and visual equipment, therefore there was back-up if the technology failed. All efforts were made to confine the interviews to 20 minutes, however the participants were very passionate and descriptive when answering

questions, therefore most of the interviews went over the 20 minutes. I used an interview guide with 10 open-ended questions. The interview questions addressed the central and guiding questions of the study.

**Focus Group.** Ten participants who were previously interviewed were invited to participate in the focus group. Of the ten participants who were invited to participate, only five attended the focus group. The focus group was purposely conducted after the interviews because it allowed the participants and a to build rapport. The focus group took place in a public library after school hours and free of distractions. The focus group was recorded using audio and visual equipment. I tried to confine it to 45 minutes to an hour. It took a little under an hour to complete. I had a guide with more discussion prompts than was needed. The focus group discussion topics addressed the central and guiding questions of the study.

**Questionnaire.** All 15 participants were given a questionnaire towards the end of the study and asked to complete it. The questionnaire was emailed to all the participants as a Microsoft Word attachment, and they were able to type directly into the document or print and fill out by hand. I gave the participants two weeks to complete it. The questionnaire had 10 open-ended questions. Of the 15 questionnaires that were given out and 13 responded and completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire addressed the central and guiding questions of the study.

**Theme Development.** After I described and set aside my personal experiences with the phenomenon of altering classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse, I scanned through the text while writing notes and memos in the margins of the transcripts and forming initial codes. Then I developed a list of significant statements from my experience. Next, I took those significant statements and related and

clustered them into themes. Then, I repeated the steps from above on the participants' verbatim interviews, focus group, and questionnaires to develop a list of themes.

**Themes.** After forming initial codes, significant statements and related statements from each participant were clustered together. Once these were clustered together, themes were developed that answered the central and guiding research questions of the study. A total of 8 themes emerged. Themes along with codes are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Open-Codes	Enumeration of open-code appearances across data set	Themes
Modifications	19	Differentiation
Accommodations	7	
1-to-1 Instruction and Support	22	
Flexibility	9	
Safety	24	Environment
Security	26	
Understanding	18	
Positive	31	
Routines	18	Expectations
Procedures	20	
Rules	16	
Schedule	17	
Consistency	7	
Student Ownership	11	
Teacher and Parent	16	Communication
Teacher and Student	28	
Open Communication	12	
Rapport	39	Teacher-Student Relationship
Student Interests	19	
Love	34	
Mutual Respect	21	
Safety	24	
Security	26	
Praise	27	Positive Behavior Support
Encouragement	25	
Opportunity	8	
Choices	13	
Positive Reinforcement	26	Social and Emotional Behavior and Support
Emotional Outbursts	7	
Fear	13	
Anxiety	9	
Depression	11	
Loneliness	5	
Social Skills	9	
Need for Attention	7	
ADD/ADHD	13	
Hyperactivity	10	
Lack of Focus	11	
Attention	12	
Trauma	27	

Mental Health	24	
Organization	6	Executive Functioning and Academic Skills
Task Completion	5	
Planning	7	

*Differentiation.* This was an important theme that many teachers discussed repeatedly in relationship to altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Differentiation is a necessary and critical skill for all teachers to have and be able to utilize for all students regarding classroom management. Lillian echoed this sentiment by saying, “Each one of my kids who comes through that door is unique and different, and you have to look at their situation and decide how to handle it”. Lillian understands that all children have differing needs that have to be addressed appropriately for them to succeed and even more so for students impacted by parental substance abuse. Beth agreed stating that, “I am willing to adapt to my strategies to meet my students’ needs.”

Allison wants students impacted by parental substance abuse to be proud and successful, “I use differentiated small group activities and one-on-one learning to ensure that these students receive the time and support needed to feel successful and proud of their achievements”. Many of the teachers explained their unique ways of offering differentiated support. Allison explained, “These students need that differentiation, so we’ll start out small with maybe some games, hands-on activities, or modeling of behavior”. Beverly also mentioned differentiation behavior goals for extra support by saying, “A lot of these students have behavior goals, individual to them and what suits them best”. Candace agreed stating, “I have individual and specific behavior plans for many students impacted by parental substance abuse”. Lillian, a veteran teacher described how differentiation has evolved:

And back when, I’ve been teaching long enough that when we were in school fair is not equal is the furthest philosophy that was on everybody’s mind, we were all equal because we were all sitting in a chair. No matter what the outside circumstances may be, so we, I think, have moved past that. And I think

everybody understands that for the most part in education now that you can't treat every child exactly the same when they're not coming to you with the same skills, the same backgrounds, the same abilities, and so forth. So, fair is not equal.

***Environment.*** A loving and supporting environment was a theme that many of the teachers described as being important, especially when helping students impacted by parental substance abuse to feel safe and secure. Lillian explained the importance of this, "These children sometimes have trouble, they don't feel secure with us sometimes because their home life is so unstable, that they have a hard time, first getting used to us. After they get use to us, this becomes their safe place". Creating a classroom community and family is something that many of the teachers explained was a priority that needed to be established for students. Beverly agreed by stating, "I like for my room to be a community, and we're all a team and we're all a family. Gabby agreed saying, "The biggest thing that I like to do is just set up that community to where no matter what they have at home. Whether they have the good home or the bad home, they always feel like it's a safe place. Carmen echoed their thoughts, "We're like a little mini community within itself. They have to be able to know how to function with other people in the real world no matter what home deals with".

Students impacted by parental substance abuse may or may not live in a home where they feel safe, but according to the teachers interviewed, they have found that these students typically do not feel safe or loved at home, and these teachers discussed the importance of setting up an environment that is safe, secure, and loving. Helen explained this, "I try to focus on, from the beginning of the year, that the classroom is a safe environment, and one that I know they can feel secure and trust when they walk in that nobody is going to be ridiculed or feel less than anybody else". Melissa works very hard to achieve an environment like that as well,

It's basically the same. I just want to provide a safe, fun, learning environment for my students where they can feel comfortable and feel at home and feel that they can express themselves the way that they need to express themselves.

Beth understands the importance of students being able to be themselves as well by saying, "I create a loving environment where students can feel free to be themselves without judgement".

**Expectations.** Another theme that emerged was expectations. All 15 teachers that were interviewed, completed a questionnaire, or participated in the focus group talked about the importance of having expectations regarding routines, procedures, rules, and schedules. They found that most students who have been impacted by parental substance abuse crave a structured environment with all these things in place with high expectations. Helen discussed how she uses expectations, "I have a structured style that is based on consistency and well taught routines. I put a lot of emphasis on the students having an active role in the classroom. I want them to know what to expect. I have high expectations and hold them accountable for those". Evelyn agreed stating, "Students also need to understand what is expected of them. I see the most behavior problems on days where students are out of routine, or do not have well defined expectations". She also believes, "Having clear rules and expectations is key to making students feel supported". Irene believes expectations should be the same for all students regardless of their home life, "You have the same expectations for everybody regardless of their home life, because they have to understand right from wrong".

The participants explained that having high expectations of students can be supported by providing these students with a predictable schedule. Unfortunately, the teachers believe that most students impacted by parental substance abuse may live in unpredictable home environments and having clearly defined and communicated schedule enables these students to

be feel supported. Faith starts her day off with the schedule, “So beginning every day, I let them know I’m going to do this for this long, this for this long, so then they just know the routine, and the structure is huge for us”. Jack has found with these students that, “I think the more predictable the daily schedule is, the better students will be able to perform”. Beth has found picture schedules helpful for students impacted by parental substance abuse, “I think just keeping a consistent schedule and having picture schedules, especially for these kids, is important because there is unpredictability at home”.

The teacher participants described how rules, routines, and procedures, coupled with high expectations, helps support students impacted by parental substance abuse. Kelly has found that all students benefit from practicing and having modeled rules, routines, and procedures, “And, you drill, as you know from teaching yourself, you drill those procedures that first couple of months of school. Practice the rules, the routines, and procedures, so that it’s effective and they know what is expected of them”. Candace explained the importance of modeling, “We use modeling for everything! We model the rules, routines, and procedures like how to walk in the hallway, what to do after you are finished completing an assignment, how to pack up, and so on and so on”. Lillian establishes rules and routines right away with all of her students, “I think that the first thing that needs to be established is the classroom rules. The list of rules needs to be short and easy to understand and designed to keep students safe while also providing them with what is expected of them”.

**Communication.** The teacher participants overwhelmingly agreed that communication is crucial when working with students impacted by parental substance abuse and their parents or caregivers. Candace uses communication with these students to learn more about them, “On a daily basis, I’m trying to help, and I just talk to them, so I can learn more about them and their

families”. Melissa tries to support these students by talking to them daily too, “So, I mean, I try to talk to these kids every day. I try to talk, you know, just to make sure I’m making the contact with them, even, you know, and trying more during the class if there is time”. Evelyn has tried using the 2x10 strategy to communicate daily with students impacted by parental substance abuse, “Kids that are at risk, the goal is to just spend two minutes per day for 10 days in a row talking with them about anything that they want to talk about. If just want to sit there and let them tell you some kind of story or something, you just attentively listen to them”. Deborah uses communication to be more aware of her students’ moods and behavior, “I attempt to talk to each student throughout the day to help me notice any changes in their mood or behaviors”. Gabby has found that this helps her be more understanding and supportive, “After talking to students, I sometimes find that maybe I need to spend a little more time, talk to them a little bit. Maybe there’s something else going on that they need to talk to me about or maybe they need a little extra attention”.

Although communication with parents who are substance abusers have proven to be difficult, it is important to the teachers to try their best to communicate with them or caregivers. Jack has found that communication with parents, who are substance abusers, is hard but beneficial, “I have a difficult time communicating with parents, however communicating with them about what works and what doesn’t work with their child is huge. It gives me the upper hand when it comes to knowing how to handle certain situations with their child”. Irene feels that her communication is a three-way system, “And I tell parents from the get-go that it’s myself, it’s your child, and it’s you all involved”.

***Teacher-student relationship.*** The teacher-student relationship is a powerful one, and this was apparent when speaking to the participants. All fifteen participants overwhelmingly

described the power and importance of developing relationships with students, especially those who are most at risk, like students impacted by parental substance abuse. Jack described how important forming relationships with students can be, “Building a strong relationship is key in a child having a successful school year”. Candace does her best to form these relationships very early on to foster success throughout the rest of the year,

I try my best to establish good rapport with my students at the beginning of the year.

Over the course of our school year, I make sure to let them know that I am here for them whenever they need me. I show them this as well, when the opportunity is presented. On a daily basis, I’m trying to learn more about them and their families.

By learning more about students and their families, teachers are better able to make real connections with their students. To do this, many of the teachers interviewed described getting to know their students’ interests and supporting students outside of the classroom. Helen explained, “I get to know my students and their families. I attend their after-school activities to let them know I care about them”. Carmen agreed stating, “Learning about student’s personal interests helps me support them. I try to stay involved with their lives outside of school too”.

Creating meaningful, honest, and successful relationships with these students requires that teachers let students know that the relationship is built upon mutual love, respect, and trust as indicated by the teacher participants. When asked how she ensures that all her students feel supported, Melissa answered, “Through trust by building positive relationships”. Faith answered, “By explaining to the students that we are a family, that I love them and that my first job is to keep them safe”. Lillian discussed supporting her students through mutual respect, “I think as long as I respect them they respect me”. Irene explained how she ensured her students felt supported with much emotion,

Luckily, I work with very young students who still show a lot of love and trust. They still like to get hugs and want you to talk to them, and they, in return, will share their emotions with you. When a student becomes guarded, I just keep reminding that child that I love them, and I continue to reach out to them. We talk a lot in my class and share a lot of stories. We cheer for each other and sometimes we cry with each other. Showing your emotions in front of your class allows them to see that everyone has feelings, and it is perfectly normal. I feel that it makes us closer as a class when we treat each other like family.

***Positive behavior support.*** Positive Behavior Support (PBS) was another theme that came forth. Most of the teacher participants described how PBS strategies such as rewards, praise, positive reinforcement, and encouragement proved successful when working with students impacted by the trauma of parental substance abuse. Kelly described how she used PBS, “I use the PBS system, the positive behavior intervention support. What I like to do is look at the positive, reward the positive, don’t make a fuss about the negative, because if I make a fuss about the negative, in some instances it just makes it worse”. Gabby concurred, “I always, always focus on the positive”.

Several teachers explained how they use rewards in conjunction with PBS. Candace explained her reward system, “Students are rewarded on a weekly basis for good behavior. I also have a whole class reward system that we use where the class is able to earn brownie points for compliments they receive during specials and traveling throughout the building”. Deborah uses small treats to encourage positive behavior, “Students are rewarded with small treats, candies, gold coins, and verbal rewards to encourage appropriate behaviors”. Faith rewards her students

when goals are met, or positive behavior is displayed, “I reward them when they meet goals and display positive behavior throughout the week”.

Positive praise and encouragement appeared to be a very strong go-to strategy for PBS. Gabby explained, “I use lots of praise and positive encouragement”. Jack uses a praise note system, “So I use a praise not system where I’m constantly giving these praise notes to these kids that don’t always get that at home”. Beverly describes how she uses positive praise with students impacted by parental substance abuse, “I do my best to say something positive and encouraging to these kids, even on days when maybe they have had a difficult day. Sometimes that positive encouragement and praise changes their behavior and attitude quickly”. Allison agreed, “Many of these kids don’t get talked to at all at home, and if they do, it is usually not in a positive manner. Therefore, I try very hard to use a lot of praise and encouragement throughout the day”. Carmen explained the impact praise and encouragement has on herself and students, “I just know that for myself, I like when someone tells me I did a great job or says something positive about me, so I know it has to mean the absolute world to a lot of these kids”.

***Social and emotional behavior and support.*** Another strong theme that emerged was the social, emotional, and mental behavior of students impacted by parental substance abuse. All 15 of the teachers that participated described how these students usually need support in social, emotional, and mental behavior and health, and that they must provide intense strategies and support for these students. Allison explained:

I believe there has been an increase in the number of students that are living in homes with parental substance abuse. These students are at greater risk of having social, emotional, and mental health issues. It takes more of my time and effort to prepare and

carry out management techniques to equip these students with effective strategies to be successful in the classroom environment.

Socially, these students have trouble forming positive and sustainable relationships with their peers and teachers. Evelyn has found that students impacted by parental substance abuse do not know how or can not interact with peers, “Socially, sometimes I don’t think they know how to interact with their peers, let alone form relationships with them”. Deborah feels that these students do not come to school equipped with social skills due to the lack of relationships formed in the home with their parents who abuse substances, “I mean socially, they’re taking care of themselves and don’t get any social experiences until they come to school or unless they have a sibling”. Beverly explained how these students need more support socially, “I have had to work a lot on social skills with these students. I use social stories and model social situations as much as I can to support their efforts to make friends and form relationships”.

The teachers talked at length about how they feel that parental substance abuse has created many emotional issues with students, and how they do their best to attend to and support these students in the classroom despite a lack of training in this area. Helen described the challenge of providing support for emotional issues, “These students have emotional issues. They often act out for attention. Have trust issues. Low self-esteem. All this leads to many challenges with their behavior and how to manage it”. Carmen described how hard emotional challenges are on the students, “Students are suffering emotionally and don’t know what emotions they are feeling or how to deal with them”. Lillian described how she tries to assist these students when emotional issues arise, “I try to be aware of emotional mood changes and adjust to a more nurturing mode along with the classroom techniques already in place”.

Teachers discussed the need for training in understanding the emotional needs of these students. Carmen explained, “I can’t say that I understand the exact emotional needs of those students affected by parental substance abuse, and knowledge and support in this area would be helpful”. Melissa described the desperate need for training and for her district to respond, “These students are struggling emotionally, behaviorally, and academically. It requires more work from my end with no support from my district in the area of substance abuse. It leaves such an emotional scar on these children”. Candace echoed her sentiments, “I feel like I’m not qualified to effectively help them deal with their emotions. I want to help them the best I can, but training and experience hasn’t prepared me to help these students with the issues they face”. Irene described the need for training:

I do feel there is a need to have special training for these students, because they are harboring a great deal of emotions: sadness, resentment, loss, and so on. Even with years of teaching experience, knowing how to handle it with greater knowledge and compassion would be beneficial.

***Executive functioning and academic skills.*** A final theme that emerged was executive functioning skills and academic skills of students impacted by parental substance abuse. Most teachers that were interviewed, participated in the focus group, or completed a questionnaire reported that students impacted by parental substance abuse need serious support and interventions in the areas of executive functioning and academic skills. They felt that the two set of skills supported one another. Evelyn reported that she spends a great deal of time focusing her efforts on executive functioning skills, “I have found that I spend more time on executive functioning skills such as organization, time management, attention. I try to be patient and understanding with these students to provide tools to develop their executive functioning skills”.

Jack explained, “I find these students have a more challenging time with organization and completing tasks. Therefore, I model and provide resources and tools to help support them in this area”. Gabby too has noticed that these students need extra support with executive functioning skills, “I feel like these kids lack skills such as organization and attention which allows them to be productive and successful. I spend a great deal of time working on this with all of my students but even more so with students impacted by parental substance abuse”. Beth described how the trauma of parental substance abuse can affect the brain and subsequently executive functioning skills, “I think a lot of these kids struggle with those executive functioning skills like attention, focus, and planning which are frontal lobe skills. I think it is kind of sad to see how their parents’ choices affect an innocent kid with their progress in this area too”.

Unfortunately, the teachers that participated reported that many of the students that they have that are impacted by parental substance abuse do not perform well academically due to a lack of support at home and having to deal with other issues because of parental substance abuse. Carmen explained, “Academically, they always want to do well, but then they always have so many other worries that that’s the least important thing to them”. Deborah has found that these students really struggle, “Academically, I see a major impact academically. It seems that these students struggle more”. Melissa agreed, “Academically, what I find in my classroom, is that they tend to be behind when they come to my room or fall behind quickly”. Faith described how these students need more support academically, “Academically, these students require more intervention, not only from me, but the intervention specialist. They require more accommodations, modifications, and differentiation”.

## **Textural and Textural-Structural Description**

**Textural description.** Textural descriptions are written descriptions of “what” the participants in a study have experienced with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). All of the participants have had students in their classroom impacted by parental substance abuse. Each participant has experienced altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse in unique and personal ways. Faith, Helen, and Jack explained that they do alter their classroom management strategies for students impacted by parental substance abuse because they recognize that these students have unique and sensitive social, emotional, and academic deficits. Faith explained, “I do have to alter my strategies for these students, because their home lives have created deficits in how these students perform academically or respond emotionally.” Beverly and Carmen have found that many of these students are being raised by relatives or foster families and not the substance abusing parents. Carmen described how these students are supported at home, “Unfortunately, these students receive very little support at home from their parents. Often these kids are being raised by grandparents, aunts, and uncles or are being brought up in foster homes. This often results in me being their only source of true love and support”.

Candace, Evelyn, and Lillian have all seen an increase in the number of students impacted by parental substance abuse and how it has affected their classroom management. Evelyn explained this concerning trend, “Each year I have more and more students coming into my classroom who have parents who are substance abusers, and each year I am having to change what I do in order to support the varying needs of these kids”. With high rates of drug abuse in the area, Deborah, Allison, and Kelly believe that their classroom management will continue to change over the next several years. Allison answered, “With the drug epidemic continuing to

rage in our area, I know that I will have to respond to the effects it has on my students. I hope I can keep up”. Melissa, Gabby, and Beth can only hope that their district will respond to the demands and challenges of supporting these students. Beth responded, “I can only hope that my district will respond and support these students and support the teachers in their efforts”. All the participants in the study answered that they have not had any type of classroom management training specific to students impacted by substance abuse but would like to receive some and know that it would be very beneficial. Irene spoke for all, “I have had zero training. I am doing the best I can on my own, but know that if this epidemic continues, that I will become even more overwhelmed than I already am. I need, we need, training to better support and serve these kids”.

**Textural-structural description.** Creswell (2013) described textural-structural descriptions as a written description of “how” the experienced happened. The following is a description of how the participants experienced altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Candace, Beth, and Irene explained that even though they alter their strategies to offer support to these students that they still have the same high expectations for these students as they do all their students. Irene explained, “Although I may differentiate my practices and strategies for these students, I still explain to them that they will be held to the same expectations as the others”. Jack and Kelly said they do alter their strategies; however, they do not always consciously prepare to do that. Kelly described this, “I differentiate lessons, activities, strategies, and support for all of my students throughout the day. Sometimes it is intentional and other times it just happens”.

Helen, Gabby, and Allison explained that altering their classroom management strategies for students impacted by parental substance abuse takes more time and effort. Gabby described this, “I plan more when it comes to how I am going to change this or that regarding my

classroom management strategies or how I am going to offer support to these students. I think about what they might need or what I might need to do different. It definitely takes more time and more planning”. Lillian and Melissa agreed that working with students impacted by parental substance abuse takes more planning and time, but they also agreed that they have found that they need to be flexible in their support and strategies. Melissa explained, “I have found that I have to be a lot more flexible and understanding. I think as teachers we get the importance of being flexible, however, with these students, being flexible and being able to adapt quickly is essential to working with these kids”.

Beverly and Deborah, along with most of the participants, explained how being positive and forming relationships with these students has proven to be successful. “I do my best to form positive, loving relationships with all of my students, but I have found that these students need that the most. They need an adult that they can trust who loves and supports them”. Deborah added, “Focusing on the positive is one way I offer support to these students. They often get attention due to the negative aspects of their behavior and lives, so I try to find something positive and to comment and focus on that each day”. Carmen, Faith, and Evelyn described how important it is for these students to feel love from teachers. Faith described the challenge, “I love all of my students, and sometimes, to be honest, these students are the hardest to like, but at the end of the day I love them, and I make sure they know that and when they finally know and understand that, it makes our relationship a little easier”.

## **Research Questions**

**Central research question.** What are the perceptions of rural southern Ohio elementary teachers regarding how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse? Data collected from interviews, a

focus group, and questionnaires indicated that all the teachers do alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. However, some teachers perceive that they alter strategies knowingly while others do unknowingly. The teachers who knowingly alter their classroom management strategies were found to be more reflective on how they implement and differentiate strategies and techniques. Most of the teachers responded that differentiation was essential when working with these kids. Classroom management skills and techniques are differentiated to meet the needs of students. Differentiation is provided for these students to help them be organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive.

**Guiding question one.** What specific classroom management strategies do elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio alter to offer support to students impacted by parental substance abuse? Overall, it was found that elementary teachers use a wide variety of classroom management strategies and techniques, unique to them and their experience, to offer support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Some strategies and supports include creating a loving and supportive environment, clear and consistent expectations, positive and open communication, forming positive and trusting relationships, positive behavior support, social and emotional behavior and support, executive functioning skills support, and academic support.

**Guiding question two.** What specific behavior supports are elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio providing to students impacted by parental substance abuse? Teachers are using a wide variety of behavior supports for these students. However, none of the participants have received training on high impact or researched based strategies that can be used to alter their classroom management strategies to support these students. Teachers are using trial and error and experience when working with these students. Most teachers responded that they

research behavioral support interventions and strategies in their free time but have never had any certified training or professional development to assist them.

**Guiding question three.** What specific exhibited behaviors from students impacted by parental substance abuse are elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio targeting? Overall, it was found that teachers are targeting social and emotional behaviors from students impacted by parental substance abuse. Trauma, hyperactivity, depression, loneliness, attention deficits, fear, and anxiety were some of the social and emotional behaviors that teachers are targeting when working with these students.

### **Composite Description**

According to Creswell (2013), the final stage of data analysis is writing a composite description, that presents the “essence” of the phenomenon in one to two long paragraphs that leave the reader with a deeper understanding of the experience. In essence, the phenomenon of elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance can be captured best by three of the identified themes: differentiation, teacher- student relationship, and social and emotional behavior and support.

**Differentiation.** A very strong theme that emerged during the study was differentiation. All participants that were interviewed, completed a questionnaire, or participated in the focus group mentioned or discussed differentiation, and how important it is especially when offering behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. The teacher participants firmly supported differentiating their classroom management strategies and behavioral supports to best meet the needs of each one of their students. They emphasized that these students need differentiation in order to become more successful, productive, responsible students.

**Teacher-student relationship.** The strongest theme that emerged from the interviews, focus group, and questionnaires were teacher-student relationships. It was evident that the participants believed that forming relationships with students, especially students impacted by parental substance abuse, was important and impactful. All 15 participants described how powerful and important it is to develop meaningful relationships with students, especially those who are most at risk, like students by impacted parental substance abuse. Many provided rich, authentic, and meaningful narratives that described how forming relationships with these students can change these students' lives both at school and home. Throughout the study it was clear that these teachers found that when build relationship with students helps them to break down many barriers and obstacles to be better able support students academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally.

**Social and emotional behavior and support.** All 15 of the teachers in the study explained that students impacted by parental substance abuse most often need support in social, emotional, and mental behavior and health, and that they are the ones that provide intense strategies and support for these students. Each participant also described their lack of training, education, and professional development opportunities to support these students and the social and emotional behavioral support that they desperately need. None of the educators that participated in the study has had any training of any kind specific to the needs of students impacted by parental substance abuse even though every single participant answered that they want and need this training.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided descriptions of the participants in the study, the development of eight significant themes, a textural and textural-structural description, the results of the research

questions, and a composite description or “essence” of the phenomenon of the study. The eight themes that were developed included the following: differentiation, environment, expectations, communication, teacher-student relationship, positive behavior support, social and emotional behavior and support, and executive functioning skill and academic skills. It was found that three of the eight identified themes best captured the phenomenon of elementary teachers, from rural, southern Ohio altering their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance. These three themes included the following: differentiation, teacher-student relationship, and social and emotional behavior and support.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION**

### **Overview**

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how elementary teachers in rural southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental drug abuse. This chapter summarizes the findings of this study, discusses the findings and the implications of this study in light of the relevant literature and theories, addresses methodological and practical implications, explains the delimitations and limitations of the study, and provides recommendations for future research.

### **Summary of Findings**

This study explored elementary (PreK-3) teachers from rural southern Ohio and their perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. The central research question was: What are the perceptions of rural southern Ohio elementary teachers regarding how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse? Based on the data collected through questionnaires, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group interview, the participants in this study perceived that they do alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. However, teachers perceive strategies are altered with specific intention and thought, while others do so without thought or effort because it is engrained in them to help support all students.

In addition to the central research question, this study also explored three guiding questions. The first guiding question was: What specific classroom management strategies do elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio alter to offer support to students impacted by

parental substance abuse? It was found that elementary teachers use many unique and different classroom management strategies and techniques to support students impacted by parental substance abuse. The techniques and strategies that are used are unique and personal due to them based on their experiences, education, and training. Strategies and supports included creating a loving and supportive environment, clear and consistent expectations, positive and open communication, forming positive and trusting relationships, positive behavior support, social and emotional behavior and support, executive functioning skills support, and academic support.

The second guiding question was: What specific behavior supports are elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio providing to students impacted by parental substance abuse? A wide variety of behavioral strategies and supports were found to be used by the participants. Alarming, it was found that none of the participants have received training on high impact, researched-based, or evidence-based strategies to support students impacted by parental substance abuse. Teachers are using what they have learned from their own research, trial and error, and personal experience when working with these students.

The third guiding question was: What specific exhibited behaviors from students impacted by parental substance abuse are elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio targeting? When working with students impacted by parental substance abuse, it was found that teachers are most often targeting social and emotional behaviors. Trauma, hyperactivity, depression, loneliness, attention deficits, fear, and anxiety were some of the social and emotional behaviors that teachers are targeting when working with these students.

### **Discussion**

The results from this study provide information that supports and extends existing research discussed in the literature review. This section will discuss the results of this study in

relationship to Operant Conditioning Theory, Family Stress Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Social Development Theory, classroom and behavior management strategies and supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse, teacher and student relationships, and professional development for classroom and behavior management strategies and supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse. More research should be conducted in these areas to add to the literature to provide more research-based and evidence-based practices for teachers to become more successful when supporting these students.

### **Operant Conditioning Theory**

This study confirms Skinner's (1938) Operant Conditioning Theory. Operant conditioning is a term Skinner (1938) coined that means changing a behavior by use of reinforcement which is given after a desired response. All of the teachers that participated in the study discussed how the use of positive reinforcement helped support students who had been impacted by parental substance abuse. Several teachers explained how rewards or incentives helped support students, especially when forming individualized behavior plans, and all teachers reported how praise was an excellent use of positive reinforcement and was successful when working with these students. This study does not diverge from previous research but does extend research that suggests that effective implementation of classroom management strategies such as positive reinforcement is effective and easily implemented in the classroom (Little & Akin, 2009).

### **Family Stress Theory**

Family Stress Theory helps explain why some families struggle in response to stressors whereas other families thrive (Hill, 1958). This study confirms Hill's (1958) study. All 15 of the teachers who participated in this study described the challenges that students impacted by

parental substance abuse endure and the family dynamics and struggles that substance abuse has created. The participants described how parental substance abuse has affected students' mental, social, emotional, and behavioral health and how challenging behaviors manifest at school.

This study extends on Sullivan's (2015) research that explains how two moderating variables can explain the differences in how families react to stressful events, the support they receive, and the meaning they assign to the stressful event, and on whether a crisis will follow. The elementary teachers in this study described how students impacted by parental substance abuse were found to display varied behaviors at school based on how their families reacted to a stressor, such as substance abuse. The teachers then assigned meaning to the crisis and reacted in the aftermath. The teachers in this study believe that this trauma will have lasting effects and consequences that will manifest into students' behaviors at school.

### **Social Learning Theory**

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explained that there are mediating processes between stimuli and response, and that behavior is learned through observation of one's personal environment. This study confirms and extends on that theory. Several teachers described how students impacted by parental substance abuse have witnessed violence and inappropriate behavior, and that many of these students have learned this behavior from their substance abusing parents. They shared that it is important for them to model positive and appropriate behaviors for students to learn and implement. Bandura (1977) explained that humans use meditational processing, which is considering and processing the relationship between their behavior and consequences. Teachers described that modeling appropriate behavior is not enough, and that it is also crucial for them to be proactive about executing positive reinforcements and consequences.

## **Social Development Theory**

This study confirms Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory. Vygotsky (1978) explained that social interaction plays a very important role in cognitive development, and that social factors such as the environment and social interactions contribute to that development. Vygotsky (1978) described "skillful tutors" as modeling behaviors and giving verbal instructions. Teachers in this study corroborated Vygotsky's theory by describing how they do their best to model appropriate behavior and model specific social interactions, especially for students impacted by parental substance abuse. Most likely these students do not have "skillful tutors" at home; therefore, teachers are the ones that these students are learning to be more socially competent from.

This study confirms Huitt and Dawson's (2001) study on the use of Vygotsky's (1978) scaffolding. Scaffolding is when the "skillful tutor" or teacher adjusts the level of assistance given to a learner. At first, a teacher is involved and engaged in instruction, but as the learner reaches mastery the teacher's support is less and less. The elementary teachers in this study described how they are "skillful tutors" and that they are a necessary support for students impacted by parental substance abuse, especially when learning appropriate behavior development. Huitt and Dawson (2011) suggested that teachers develop targeted interventions for specific students based on what the student needs to address. Each teacher that participated in the study described various interventions targeted specifically for students impacted by parental substance abuse.

## **Classroom and Behavior Management Strategies and Supports for Students Impacted by Parental Substance Abuse**

There were no studies found that directly and specifically address classroom and behavior management strategies and supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse.

However, this study does confirm Lynch and Simpson's (2010) study that addresses how to assist children who have experienced neglect and trauma. After their study was conducted, they urged teachers to collaborate with specialists when they have children who have experienced trauma in their classrooms. The participants of this study shared the overwhelming need of needing mental health specialists and trauma informed counselors' support for students impacted by parental substance abuse. Rossen and Cowan's (2013) study was confirmed by this study as well. Rossen and Cowan (2013) found that students affected by trauma need to be closely connected to supportive mental health services as well as a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). The services provided include learning, social and emotional functioning, physical health, and intensive and individual interventions that meet the learning and mental health needs of all students (Rossen & Cowan, 2013).

Lahey's (2013) study explained that clear routines and expectations are important for students who live in chaotic homes, especially those students impacted by parental substance abuse. The participants in this study confirmed that these students need consistent and clear routines, procedures, and expectations and when implemented students will feel safe and secure. The NASP (2015) study suggests that teachers create a safe, positive, and loving environment for students impacted by trauma. Participants of this study confirmed that notion by describing how important it is to create safe, loving, and nurturing classroom environments for these students to thrive and become successful in.

There were no studies found that directly and specifically address classroom and behavior management strategies and support for students impacted by parental substance abuse, even though Itapuisto (2014) explained that practices and tools should be implemented and specifically designed to help children impacted by parental substance abuse. This study will begin research and a much a needed conversation that educators, administrators, and the community needs to have about supporting students impacted by parental substance abuse, especially in rural southern Ohio and Appalachia, where the opioid epidemic is still raging.

### **Teacher and Student Relationships**

This study confirms the many studies that suggest that when teachers create positive, meaningful, and personal relationships with their students, especially those impacted by trauma like parental substance abuse, that these relationships can aide in positive classroom and behavior management. Hughes et al. (2014) found that students who form close and personal relationships with their teachers are more likely to seek support, respond to their teacher, and are more cooperative. All the teacher participants in this study described how important, impactful, and powerful it is when they form positive, loving, and personal relationships with all of their students, especially for those students impacted by parental substance abuse. Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke (2003) explained that teachers can foster and develop relationships with their students by sharing personal stories about their lives, learning about their students' interests, and listening to their concerns. The participants of this study confirmed that these were excellent ways of fostering relationships with students, especially learning about their students' interests. Many of the teachers that were interviewed described how learning about their students' interests was an effective classroom and behavior management tool and could be used in many ways.

Roache and Lewis (2009) found that praise can help teachers form positive relationships with their students, as well as having a positive effect on their academic success and behavior. This study confirmed this causality. Teachers reported that praise that was meaningful and positive had positive effects on their students' behavior, and that it seemed to be more impactful towards students impacted by parental substance abuse as these students are not accustomed to hearing positive praise at home. Buyse, Verschueren, Verachtert, and Van Damme (2009) found that when teachers are warm and have open communication with their students, that this can facilitate positive feelings that increase the students' level of comfort, and when students feel adjusted, they are more likely to share their feeling and experiences. The teachers in this study agreed. The teachers explained that students responded positively when the teachers encouraged open, honest, and positive communication.

### **Professional Development for Behavior and Classroom Management Strategies and Support for Students Impacted by Parental Substance Abuse**

Although no studies were found that specifically addressed professional development for behavior and classroom management strategies and support for students impacted by parental substance abuse, there were numerous studies on professional development for behavior and classroom management strategies and support that were confirmed by this study. In 2006, the American Psychological Association (APA) found that teachers ranked classroom management as one of the highest ranked professional development needs for first year and elementary teachers. A study by Jones and Jones (2004), found that 90% of the elementary teachers that participated reported needing more training in classroom management. Reinke et al. (2011) found that elementary teachers feel that they are not prepared to provide effective classroom management strategies. The elementary teachers who participated in this study confirmed these

studies. All 15 elementary teacher participants explained their lack of training in this area. Almost all explained that they have received no classroom management training except for possibly one class or a portion of a class devoted to classroom management in their undergraduate studies and zero professional development or training in this area specific to students impacted by parental substance abuse.

Ormrod (2003) believed that pre-service teachers should be trained to employ different classroom management strategies. Sugai and Horner (2002) explained the need for pre-service teacher training on classroom management and how it should include time for instruction, arrangement of instructional activities, and behavior management strategies. This study confirms these ideas. The participants explained that they had only received classroom management training in a stand-alone class or a portion of a class in their undergraduate studies. None has received any other training in this area or specifically to students impacted by parental substance abuse, despite each teacher explaining the overwhelming need. Johansen, Little, and Akin-Little (2011) found that 81% of teacher participants reported that any professional development specific to classroom management since their college or university teacher program is rarely offered and steps around real classroom issues.

Allen (2010) suggested that in-service teachers should attend professional development workshops or initiate their own learning dealing with management and behavior issues. This study confirms that notion. Each participant expressed their desire to attend professional development in this area; however, they have found a shortage of training that addresses these topics specifically. The elementary teachers who participated in this study explained that they have taken on the task of learning how to support these students by reading journal articles, watching teacher videos, listening to podcasts, and learning from their colleagues.

## **Implications**

The result of examining elementary (PreK-3) teachers from rural southern Ohio and their perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse provides stakeholders a better understanding and knowledge on how they can better support teachers, students, and families. These stakeholders may include district administration, teachers, and the community. The findings of this study demonstrate the value and importance of providing teachers training and professional development on how they can best offer behavioral support to these students. This knowledge is valuable for current and future administration, teachers, and the community, the opioid epidemic in rural southern Ohio shows no sign of stopping anytime soon. More and more students are going to be coming to school with trauma ensued by parental substance abuse. More and more teachers are going to have to be prepared to offer behavioral support and strategies for these students.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Skinner's (1938) Operant Conditioning Theory was evident in the teachers' classroom management strategies and supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse. The use of positive reinforcement is a helpful and useful strategy of support for all students, especially those impacted by parental substance abuse. Rewards, incentives, and praise are also effective classroom management strategies and are all driven by Skinner's (1938) Operant Conditioning Theory.

Hill's (1958) Family Stress Theory was evident and supported by the elementary teachers that participated in this study. Students impacted by parental substance abuse face many challenges and obstacles that manifest themselves in students' mental, social, emotional, and

behavioral health while at school. Hill's theory explains the difference that variables can have on how families react to stressful events such as parental substance abuse. Students will then react to these stressful events based on how their families handle the events. Teachers will then respond to these reactions. Teachers understand this cycle, but are not always adequately prepared to do, but use what limited knowledge and resources they have to best serve these students. This study implies that Hill's theory does apply and indicates the need to better prepare teachers for the impact that this theory has on students, whose families do not proactively nor positively respond to parental substance abuse.

Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory explains how behavior is learned through observation of one's personal environment and is evident in this study. Teachers must understand that students impacted by parental substance abuse have more than likely observed inappropriate behavior from their substance abusing parents; therefore, it is important for teachers to model and practice appropriate behavior with these students. Once students become accustomed to observing positive and appropriate behavior, students may begin to display and model appropriate behavior with the support of positive reinforcement from their teachers.

Vygotsky's (1978) Social Development Theory explains how social interaction and environment plays an important role in cognitive development. This theory was evident in this study. Teachers need to model appropriate behavior and positive social interactions for students impacted by parental substance abuse, as they do not always have parents who model how to be socially competent. Teachers can create targeted and strategic behavioral and social interventions for these students that will help them create positive relationships that will lead to better cognitive development.

### **Empirical Implications**

Although not directly stated, many of the teacher participants implied that there is a lack of funding being devoted to providing support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. The teachers that participated vehemently described a lack of training and professional development in classroom and behavior management strategies and specifically for students impacted by parental substance abuse, which could be a direct result of a lack of funding in this area. Policy makers and stakeholders need to see the need that is developing and will continue to develop as the opioid epidemic rages on in Appalachia. Funding is going to become necessary to provide school districts and their administrators and teachers with training to help support these students. The need for behavioral and mental health specialists will more than likely become a necessity as the impact of trauma, and in this case parental substance abuse, begins to rage war on our students' mental, emotional, and social health that directly associates with their success and behavior at school.

### **Practical Implications**

A practical implication is that the research and results from this study can provide teachers with successful classroom management strategies and behavioral support ideas for students impacted by parental substance abuse. The strategies and ideas that the participants described can be replicated, expanded, and improved upon for future implementation. Elementary administrators can learn from this study that training and professional development in classroom management and behavioral support for students impacted by parental substance abuse is valuable and much needed. Trauma Informed Care (TIC) training, as well as training in the areas of mental and emotional health may also be considered. Elementary administration who may lack the funding for such training, may consider book studies in these areas as they are more

affordable. Teacher education preparation programs, especially in the areas related to this study, may see the overwhelming need to provide strong instruction and preparation for their teacher candidates in classroom and behavior management especially for students impacted by parental substance abuse. After participating in or reading this study, elementary teachers may feel empowered to conduct their own research to investigate what they can do to assist these types of students.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Delimitations were made to limit and define the boundaries of the study. The first delimitation was the setting of the study involved teachers from only four counties and 10 different elementary schools in rural southern Ohio. Adams, Pike, Ross, and Scioto were the four counties chosen for the study. The decision was made to limit the counties and elementary schools because the elementary schools were in convenient locations to the researcher, these four counties had low unemployment, low socioeconomic status, and drug abuse rates that were and still are high. The second delimitation was that a convenient sampling of 15 elementary teachers who teach general education in grades Prek-3 were the participants for this study. Criterion sampling was used because the participants had all experienced the phenomenon of altering their classroom management strategies to provide support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. This is a delimitation, because only a small number of elementary teachers, who taught general education in grades PreK-3 were examined and not special education teachers or teachers above grade three who also teach students who have been impacted by parental substance abuse. The third delimitation to the study was just to examine elementary teachers and not other school personnel such as counselors, administrators, classified staff, and other certified staff as they work with students impacted by parental substance abuse.

There were limitations in this study that could potentially be a weakness but could not be controlled by the researcher. The first limitation to this study is that the teacher participants were primarily female. There were 14 females and one male that participated in the study. This could not be controlled as the principals of the elementary buildings provided me with teachers to ask to participate in the study, and overall there is a limited number of male teachers in the elementary setting. Having more males in the study could have provided a wider variation in teachers' perceptions.

A second limitation to the study was the lack of ethnic diversity among the participants. All the participants were Caucasian. The ethnic majority in this area and most of Appalachia is Caucasian. A diverse participant population may have offered different and unique perceptions and perspectives on how they alter their classroom management strategies. A third and final limitation to the study was that only five participants took part in the focus group discussion. My goal was to secure 10 participants, but due to scheduling conflicts from the participants, I was only able to secure five participants. Ten participants may have provided a more rich and in-depth discussion concerning classroom management strategies and supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

A recommendation for further study on teachers' perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse is to conduct another study in more than just four counties and 10 elementary schools in Appalachia. Rural southern Ohio is not the only place in Appalachia where the opioid epidemic is occurring, therefore future studies can study a wider range of the region where there are low unemployment rates and high drug abuse rates. Another recommendation would be to

have a larger sample size that should include all general and special education teachers, as well as other school personnel such as counselors, administrators, and classified staff members in grades PreK-12. A larger population and more diverse educational background could provide more unique and diverse strategies and supports to be implemented by current and future educators who teach students impacted by parental substance abuse.

Future studies could incorporate more men to increase the representation of male participants in the study. The male perspective could provide a different perspective on how teachers can better support students impacted by parental substance abuse. More ethnic diversity among participants is another recommendation for future research. This could be achieved by exploring more urban settings in Appalachia or outside of Appalachia. Exploring urban settings outside of Appalachia is also a recommendation for further research. It could provide teachers in rural school districts different perceptions and perspectives that could result in practical implications by teachers.

It is recommended that more qualitative research be conducted to explore and understand how and what classroom management strategies teachers alter to provide behavior support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. A case study of a highly effective veteran teacher who has experienced working with and has had success with students impacted by parental substance abuse could be powerful. This could be helpful to current teachers and future teachers by providing successful strategies and supports to be used with these students. Future research on teachers' perceptions of altering their classroom management strategies could also be explored through grounded theory. Creswell (2007) explains that grounded theory is used to discover a theory that could explain certain practices or experiences. The results of a study of this type could develop a new theory that could explain why and how teachers alter their classroom

management strategies to provide support to students impacted by parental substance abuse which could later help teachers work more effectively with students struggling with backgrounds of parental substance abuse.

### **Summary**

This study examined 15 elementary teachers from rural southern Ohio and their perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. Data collected through one-on-one interviews, a focus group, and questionnaires provided information that the participants perceived that they do indeed alter their classroom management strategies to provide support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. After talking with the 15 elementary teachers, I was inspired to see how dedicated these teachers were to ensure that all their students succeed, especially those impacted by parental substance abuse despite a lack of training or professional development to do so. These teachers were dedicated to finding new and innovative ways to alter their classroom management strategies to support these students; however, they are more passionate about investing in these students' lives by creating positive, loving, and trusting relationships with them. This has inspired me to cultivate relationships with my students and in the future, I teach and train future educators to do the same.

This study revealed to me the importance of sharing with teachers that despite a lack of training or professional development, that they need to seek out the wisdom and advice of their colleagues. They need watch, listen, and observe them to replicate, expand, and improve upon their classroom management strategies to help better support your students especially the most vulnerable ones. It also revealed to me how proactive, innovative, and creative teachers are. Despite the lack of training and professional development, teachers are being proactive and

researching strategies, best practices, and supports to help students impacted by parental substance abuse. They are true innovators and creators.

This study also revealed to me the need for the advocacy from all policy makers and stakeholders to direct funding and support to enable school districts that have been profoundly affected by the effects of the opioid epidemic in Appalachia, to provide training, professional development, resources, and behavioral and mental health support and specialists. The teachers in this study overwhelmingly and vehemently described a lack of training and professional development in classroom and behavior management strategies and specifically for students impacted by parental substance abuse, which could be a direct result of a lack of funding in this area. The opioid epidemic is showing no signs of stopping. Funding must become a priority to help support school districts, administration, and teachers which will ultimately support our students for a lifetime.

This study revealed an overwhelming need for teacher education preparation programs in Appalachia to provide strong instruction and preparation for their teacher candidates in classroom and behavior management, especially for students impacted by trauma like parental substance abuse. Future teachers must be prepared to serve these students and without adequate instruction and support they will not be. In addition to classroom and behavior management strategies, pre-service teachers must be taught the value and importance of creating positive, meaningful, loving, and trusting relationships with their students as this will be their biggest ally in supporting their students.

Lastly, this study has revealed to me that despite the overwhelming challenges that have arisen and will continue to do so as the opioid epidemic rages on, that the majority of teachers

have and will always fight for their students' best interests and well-being, and they will do so with a missionary heart.

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**APPENDIX A: PERMISSION FORM**

Date:

Recipient

Title

Company

Address 1

Address

Address 3

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University. I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The title of my research project is: A Phenomenology of Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Alternative Classroom and Behavior Management Strategies to Supports Students Impacted by Parental Substance Abuse. The purpose of my research is to understand how elementary teachers in rural, southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental drug abuse.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in/at school district/school name.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview, participate in a focus group, and complete a questionnaire. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on approved letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,

Heidi Hickman, M.Ed, Ed.S  
Doctoral Student, Liberty University  
hirvine2@liberty.edu  
(740) 970-0759

**APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT FORM**

Date:

Recipient

Title

Company

Address 1

Address 2

Address 3

Dear Recipient:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a doctorate degree. The purpose of my research is to understand how elementary teachers in rural, southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental drug abuse, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are an elementary teacher (PK-3) in rural, Southern Ohio teaching in Adams, Pike, Ross, or Scioto county, teach students impacted by parental substance abuse, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview, participate in a focus group, and complete a questionnaire. It should take approximately 20 minutes to complete the interview, approximately 45 minutes to an hour to complete the focus group, and approximately 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Your name and/or other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, please provide me with your contact information so that we can schedule a time to complete the interview and the questionnaire, and I can send you information on the focus group date and time.

A consent document is attached to this letter. The consent document contains additional information about my research, please sign the consent document and return it to me prior to the interview.

Sincerely,

Heidi Hickman, M.Ed, Ed.S  
Doctoral Student, Liberty University  
hirvine2@liberty.edu  
(740) 970-0759

## APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

### CONSENT FORM

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
ALTERNATIVE CLASSROOM AND BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT  
STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IMPACTED BY  
PARENTAL SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Heidi M. Hickman  
Liberty University  
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of how elementary teachers alter their classroom management strategies to offer support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. You were selected as a possible participant because you teach in a county in rural, southern Ohio that has high rates of parental substance abuse. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Heidi M. Hickman, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

**Background Information:** The purpose of this study is to understand how elementary teachers in rural, southern Ohio alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental drug abuse.

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in one interview that will be recorded using audio and visual equipment. The interview will last approximately 20 minutes.
2. Participate in one focus group that will be recorded using audio and visual equipment. The focus group will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour.
3. Complete one questionnaire that can be emailed and completed online or can be completed on a hard copy. The questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:** The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. However, if I become privy to information that triggers the mandatory reporting requirements for child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse, or intent to harm self or others I will need to report that to a school official.

A possible direct benefit that participants may expect to receive from taking part in this study is that teachers will have an opportunity to improve their classroom management strategies to offer support to students impacted by parent substance abuse by participating in the focus group. However, this benefit cannot be guaranteed. The teachers will also get to hear from other teachers in similar districts during the focus group. Teachers will be considered co-researchers in this study. The participating schools will benefit from the study by receiving the results from the study. By exploring classroom management strategies and behavioral support for students

impacted by parental substance abuse, society may benefit by being more compassionate and understanding.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study. Focus group participants will receive snacks.

**Confidentiality:** The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Pseudonyms will be assigned for school districts, school buildings, and teachers. During the focus group, teachers will be given a card with their pseudonym on it and will be asked to place that card in front of them for all to see. Teachers will be asked to protect confidentiality by referring to each other by their pseudonym and to refrain from naming their school. I cannot assure privacy and confidentiality because participants will be in focus groups together. In the focus group script, I will request that teachers do not mention names or discuss the information that others are talking about outside of the group.
- I will conduct the interviews and focus group in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Electronic data (such as audio and visual recordings and transcripts) will be stored in a password-protected computer. All hard copies of data collection will be stored in locked file cabinets. As required, data will be stored and locked for three years. After the three-year time period, written work will be shredded, and computer data will be deleted.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:** Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty or your school district. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **How to Withdraw from the Study:**

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, **apart from focus group data**, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. **Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.**

**Contacts and Questions:** The researcher conducting this study is Heidi M. Hickman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at (740) 970-0759 or [hirvine2@liberty.edu](mailto:hirvine2@liberty.edu). You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Mark Lamport, at [malamport@liberty.edu](mailto:malamport@liberty.edu).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

*Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.*

**Statement of Consent:** I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

---

Signature of Participant

Date

---

Signature of Investigator

## APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Individual Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Description: This interview is being used to provide data for the study of elementary teachers' perceptions of how they alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse.

Script:

“I will be recording this interview with both audio and visual equipment. I will be using pseudonyms for your name and school name. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. If you don't want to answer or comment, you don't have to. Please think about the questions a few moments before responding. I will be trying to clarify your statements along the way. I may also ask follow up questions once you have answered. Your answers are confidential. Before I begin asking questions, do you have any questions for me?”

“Now, I would like you to take a few moments to think about your experiences, in regards to classroom management strategies and behavioral supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse. Thank you. Let's begin.”

Open-Ended Interview Questions

1. What grade do you teach, and how long have you taught? What degrees do you hold?
2. Do you have students in your classroom impacted by parental substance abuse? If so, about how many? Has the number grown, and if it has, why do you think this is occurring?
3. What impacts does parental substance abuse have on students? Academically? Behaviorally? Socially? Emotionally?

4. For this study, classroom management will be generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. However, what is your definition of classroom management?
5. Describe your classroom management style, strategies, and techniques.
6. Explain to me whether you alter your classroom management strategies to offer behavioral supports to students impacted by parental substance abuse? If so how do you, and if not, why?
7. What specific behavioral supports, if any, do you use for students impacted by parental substance abuse and why?
8. How do you feel families of students impacted by parental substance abuse support students?
9. What specific training have you had on classroom management and has it helped you?
10. What specific training have you had on classroom management strategies specifically targeted for students impacted by parental substance abuse? If you haven't had any, would professional development would be helpful?

End of Script: "Thank you for participating in this interview. I greatly appreciate you helping me conduct my research"

Format adapted from Creswell (2013, p.165)

**APPENDIX E: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TOPICS**

Focus Group Protocol:

Date:

Place:

Participants:

Facilitator:

Position of Participants:

Script:

“Thank you for meeting with me today and helping me conduct this research. You are all considered co-researchers in this study. Even though we have all met individually, let me introduce myself again. I am Heidi Hickman, and I am a first-grade teacher in a rural, southern Ohio school district similar to your school districts. I am a doctoral student at Liberty University. I am conducting research on how elementary teachers, in rural, southern Ohio, alter their classroom management strategies to offer behavioral support to students impacted by parental substance abuse. For the purpose of this study, classroom management will be generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. I will be asking you some questions about this topic, and I ask that you please be honest in your answers and our discussion. I want you to really think about your experience in this area, and do not worry about what you think I may want to hear or that your opinion differs from somebody else.”

“At this point, all of you have signed the consent forms, but I wanted to you give you a chance to ask me any questions you may about the study or the focus group. I also want to make sure that all of you are still willing to take part in this study. Do you have any questions about the study? Is everyone still interested in taking part in this study? If at any time you wish to no longer take part, you can let me know.”

“I will be recording this both with audio and visual equipment. These cards have your pseudonym on them. Please take them and place them in front of you. I ask that you please protect confidentiality of others by referring to each other by their pseudonym on the cards and to also refrain from naming your school or another school. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. If you don’t want to answer or comment, you don’t have to. Please think about the questions a few moments before responding. I will be trying to clarify your statements along the way. I may also ask follow up questions once you have answered. Your answers are confidential. Before I begin asking questions, do you have any questions for me?”

“Now, I would like you to take a few moments to think about your experiences, in regards to classroom management strategies and behavioral supports for students impacted by parental substance abuse. Thank you. Let’s begin.”

#### Focus Group Discussion Topics

1. Please introduce yourself and tell the group what grade you teach and how long you have taught?
2. Do you all have students in your classroom who have been affected by parental substance abuse? If so, about how many?
3. What effects, if any, does parental substance abuse have on these students’ academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally?
4. For this study, classroom management will be generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. Describe to me your classroom management strategies and techniques.
5. Do you alter your classroom management strategies and techniques for students impacted by parental substance abuse? If so, would you please explain how?
6. Explain to me how you think your classroom management strategies and techniques, for student impacted by parental abuse work? Is there a positive or negative outcome? Are your strategies and techniques helpful?
7. What types of behavior do you specifically target when working to support students impacted by parental substance abuse and why?
8. Do family members or caregivers of students impacted by parental substance abuse support and assist you? If so, in what way? If not, please explain why you think this is so.

9. What classroom management education, training, or professional development have you had? Have you found any of these to be helpful? Why or why not? Any specific training for students impacted by parental substance abuse?
10. If offered, do you feel like training on classroom management, specifically targeted for students impacted by parental substance abuse, would be beneficial? Why or why not?

End of Focus Group Script:

“That is all of the questions I have. Thank you again for participating and helping me conduct the research. I look forward to your responses on the questionnaire.”

**APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE**

Date:

Email:

Dear Participant,

Thank you very much for participating in the interview and/or focus group for my study. I am now asking you to complete a questionnaire. This will be the final instrument that I use for my study, and I would appreciate your time and response. Attached to this email, you will find the questionnaire. It is only 10 questions. You may choose to print out the questionnaire and respond in pen or pencil on a separate sheet of paper or type in your responses electronically. If you hand write your responses, please let me know once you have completed it by contacting me via email or phone. I can either pick up your questionnaire or you can mail it to me. If you complete it electronically, please just email me back the completed questionnaire. Your responses do not have to be a certain length. All that I ask is that you try to be thoughtful and thorough with your responses. Please do not answer with what you think I want to hear. I want your honest responses. As always, your responses will remain confidential and will be protected. Thank you again for participating in my study. I appreciate your time and effort, and I look forward to sharing the results of my study with you.

Sincerely,

Heidi Hickman, M.Ed., Ed.S.  
Doctoral Student, Liberty University  
[hirvine2@liberty.edu](mailto:hirvine2@liberty.edu)  
(740) 970-0759

## Questionnaire

1. Have you seen a rise in the number of students who have been impacted by parental substance abuse? If so, how has this impacted your classroom management?
2. For this study, classroom management will be generally defined as a variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep students organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive. Describe to me your classroom management style, strategies, and techniques.
3. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your classroom management skills and behavioral support with typical children and why?
4. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest and 1 being the lowest, how would you rate your classroom management skills and behavioral support with students impacted by parental substance abuse and why?
5. What type of support do you or does your school provide to students impacted by parental substance abuse?
6. How do you ensure that all students in your classroom feel supported?
7. Do you feel like you lack training or education to support these students? If so, what kind of training would you like to have? If you feel like you have had adequate training, what kind of training have you had?
8. With drug abuse in your area on the rise, do you think your classroom management will change or continue to change over the next several years and how? Do you think your administration and school district will respond? Why or why not?

9. What else do you think would be important for me to know about students impacted by parental substance abuse?
10. Other than the area of classroom management and behavioral support, is there another educational area that needs to be studied in regards to students impacted by parental substance abuse and why?