CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY SAN MARCOS

THESIS SIGNATURE PAGE

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

EDUCATION

THESIS TITLE: Teacher Candidate Perception of Preparedness for Ethical Student-Teacher Interactions

AUTHOR: Rebecca J. McQuestion

DATE OF SUCCESSFUL DEFENSE: March 25, 2009

THE THESIS HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EDUCATION

Jacqueline Thousand
THESIS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Jeanette Aboonour
THESIS COMMITTEE MEMBER

3-25-09

3-25-09
Teacher Candidate Perception of Preparedness for Ethical Student-Teacher Interactions

by

Rebecca J. McQuestion

In partial fulfillment of the Master of Arts in Education

California State University San Marcos
College of Education

April 2009
Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my two amazing sons, Shea and Landon, who taught me more about child development than any textbook and to my best friend and husband, Jim, who unwaveringly supports my dreams, no matter how crazy they are.
Acknowledgements

I want to extend my appreciation to Dr. Jacqueline Thousand, my advisor, who beautifully models treating students with respect and dignity.

To Jeanette Aboonour M.Ed. I offer heartfelt thanks for being such a great listener and always offering much needed encouragement.

I want to express my gratitude to the administration and faculty of the College of Education at California State University San Marcos for their openness and support in making my research possible.

I am indebted to Dr. Fred Rose at Palomar College for his expert instruction in the area of research.

Special thanks to Dr. John Perna for helping me realize my full potential.

Finally, the inspiration of this research goes to an insightful 7th grader who asked me why I only wrote Behavioral Support Plans for students when teachers needed them more!
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ABSTRACT

To determine whether teacher candidates perceived they were prepared to engage in ethical student teacher interactions, the author developed a survey to be administered to candidates in the College of Education at California State University San Marcos. In addition, any variances among the different credential programs in regards to perceived preparedness was examined. Considering the impact student-teacher relationships have on the development of students, increased knowledge on how to improve student-teacher communication is a vital part of improving education. Three hundred and seventeen individuals (51 men, 262 women, 4 unreported) participated in the current study. The central findings of the present study suggest that teacher candidates are uncertain in regards to their perception of being prepared to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions. A significant difference was identified between the special education and multiple subject programs in the area of prevention. The results suggest a need for expanded education regarding ethical student-teacher interactions within the credential programs. Teacher preparation programs play a vital role in preparing teachers for the multifaceted role of educators. Teachers can positively contribute to a student's educational experience through the development of ethical student-teacher interactions.

Key Words: Ethics, student maltreatment, student-teacher interactions, teacher credential programs
Daily, across the nation, parents send their children to school, having faith the professionals who are teaching their children will treat them in a respectful manner. Infrequently, stories about sexual abuse between teacher and student will make front page news, but little is mentioned of the emotional abuse that can be a common occurrence in classrooms. Child abuse is not often thought of as occurring in the educational setting. Unfortunately, the extent to which student maltreatment occurs is difficult to determine (Aluede, 2004). Unlike physical abuse, emotional abuse does not leave noticeable bruises to demonstrate its presence. Yet, the unseen bruises caused by emotional abuse on the child’s spirit are just as damaging, if not more so than their physical counterparts (Nesbit & Karagianis, 1987; Nesbit & Philpott, 2002; Shumba, 2004).

As early as 1988, Hyman, Zelikoff, and Clarke (1988) examined the consequences of emotional trauma on children and found children to be more vulnerable to stressors than adults. Hyman and Snook (1999) later coined the term, “student alienation syndrome” to describe students who are forced to attend a toxic school environment on a daily basis. Understanding the various factors that can contribute to student maltreatment is essential in developing prevention supports. Past and current research demonstrates certain student populations to be at high-risk (Khoury-Kassabri, 2006; McEachern et al., 2008; Melton & Corson, 1987). Students
from low socio-economic families are particularly at risk, along with students with special needs. In addition, boys are more likely to experience maltreatment from teachers. Students from these demographics are typically in need of higher levels of classroom support from teachers who are already overburdened with the day-to-day responsibilities of being an educator. Research has shown that positive relationships with adults are crucial in the emotional and physical development of children (Aluede, 2004; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). The world of education is a perfect opportunity for children to develop healthy relationships with adults and develop lifelong communication skills.

Research suggests school counselors can play a vital role in identification and prevention of emotional abuse in the classroom (McEachern et al., 2008). Studies have shown educators to be unaware of their actions and the effects thereof and respond well to behavioral interventions. In addition, changes in school operation that favor a supportive environment are paramount in addressing this serious issue (Kovess-Masfety, Rios-Seidel, & Sevilla-Dedieu, 2006). Credential programs play a vital role in the prevention of student maltreatment through educating teachers and administrators about the dangers of student abuse and ways to cope with the many stressors related to the teaching profession.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the present evaluation study is to examine teacher candidate perception of preparedness in regards to student-teacher ethical interactions through the administration of teacher candidate surveys. A secondary purpose of the study is
to examine any variance among multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated credential programs regarding teacher candidate perception of preparedness concerning ethical issues.

The findings of the present research will assist teacher credential programs at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) to better prepare teacher candidates for the ethically complex job of teaching. Through analysis of collected data, the present study will suggest if what defines ethical student-teacher interactions is being addressed in the various credential programs available. In addition, the present study will hopefully encourage other teacher preparation programs to examine the ethical focus of their training.

Research Questions

The present study was designed to evaluate the perceived preparedness teacher credential students had regarding ethical student-teacher interactions. The overarching research question is, “Do teacher candidates perceive they are prepared for ethical student-teacher interactions?” In addition, sub-questions relating to the larger question were:

Research question one. Do teacher candidates perceive the teacher credential program as providing them with adequate stress management strategies, which help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom?

Research question two. Do teacher candidates perceive that ethics has been adequately addressed within course content?
Research question three. How many courses do teacher candidates recognize as addressing ethical teacher conduct?

Research question four. Do teacher candidates perceive they have received adequate education regarding the prevention of unethical teacher behaviors?

Research question five. Does a variance exist between the perceived preparedness in regards to teacher ethical conduct among multiple subject, single subject, and special education credential programs?

Rationale for the Study

In America, few researchers have been able to examine the extent to which verbal and emotional abuse occurs in schools due to the complexity of the issue. Teacher stress does seem to be a contributing factor to the occurrence of student maltreatment (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2006). The multifaceted role of educators and their various loyalties to students, colleagues, teacher unions, administration, and districts complicates decision-making, which, in turn, increases stress levels (Campbell, 2000). Considering the important role educators play in children’s lives, there is a vital need to examine teacher preparation programs to ascertain if they are sufficiently preparing future teachers for the complex responsibilities of the job.

In addition, it is possible that special educators receive more education regarding the importance of effective communication with students and the need to treat each child as a valuable asset to society. The additional training education specialists receive in differentiated instruction encourages educators to individualize instruction and assure equity in the classroom (Thousand, Villa, & Nevin, 2007).
Special educators may have an advantage over general education teachers whose emphasis lays more in academics. If this is found to be true, than it would be beneficial for credential programs to broaden the education of general education teachers to address the many challenges of teaching a diverse classroom and to develop programs that specifically address teacher behaviors which include ethical treatment of students.

*Limitations/Delimitations*

The present study will be limited to students enrolled in the teacher credential program at California State University San Marcos. It will focus on those students enrolled in classes to obtain their preliminary credential in multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated programs. The study will be limited to the perceptions of credential students as to the ethical training they have received from credential classes. The present study is only a beginning of the examination needed regarding this important topic, but will begin to address the perception candidates have regarding their education in ethical conduct.

*Definition of Terms*

*Bullying*. Bullying is a form of harassment committed by an abuser who possesses more physical and/or social power and dominance than the victim.

*Credential candidates*. Credential candidate are adult students attending graduate classes to obtain teaching credentials in the state of California.

*Credential programs*. Credential programs are graduate programs offered by universities to educate candidates to be teachers.
Depersonalization. Individuals who experience depersonalization feel divorced from both the world and from their own physicality by acting as a completely different identity. They feel as though they have no control over their environment.

Dissociative identity. Dissociative Identity Disorder is a psychiatric descriptor of an individual who has multiple identities or personalities.

Emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is identified as excessive screaming, degrading comments, name-calling, threatening comments, using homework as punishment, harsh criticism, and excessive demands on students, or withholding of a developmental nurturing relationship.

Epistemic. Epistemic is learning pertaining to knowledge.

Ethics. Ethics is a set of principals regarding right and moral conduct.

In loco-parentis. In place of parent.

Internal/external locus of control. Locus of control is an individual's belief system regarding the causes of his or her experiences and the factors to which that person attributes success or failure. Internal locus of control posits individuals have control of life’s outcomes and external locus of control posits circumstances are in control of outcomes.

Psychological or emotional maltreatment. Emotional maltreatment consists of any behavior that affects a student’s self-image and results in a decrease in the student’s feeling of self-worth.

Post-traumatic stress disorder. Post-traumatic stress disorder is an anxiety disorder occurring after exposure to an emotional trauma.
School climate. School climate refers to the atmosphere of the school, especially regarding negative versus positive atmospheres.

Self-identity. Self-identity refers to an individual’s perception of themselves, such as an awareness of one’s abilities.

Student alienation syndrome. Student alienation syndrome is a condition where students have no feeling of belongingness at school and develop hostile and angry feelings toward school staff.

Verbal abuse. Verbal abuse includes excessive screaming, degrading comments, name-calling, threatening comments, harsh criticism, and labeling.

Victimization. The act of making an individual a victim through behaviors that adversely affects them.

Summary

The present research examined the perception teacher candidates at California State University San Marcos had regarding preparedness in ethical student-teacher interactions. In addition, the extent to which the perception of ethical preparedness differs between credential candidates in the various programs was also examined. Considering the impact student-teacher relationships have on the development of students, increased knowledge on how to improve student-teacher communication is a vital part of improving education (Cherubini, 2008). Though research is sparse regarding the ethical student-teacher interactions in America, research in Zimbabwe and Israel has demonstrated a severe need for prevention measures to be established (Benbenishty, Zeira, & Aster, 2002, Shumba, 2004). In the next chapter, literature,
both past and present, will be reviewed to support the importance of teacher awareness regarding the impact of their behaviors on students' lives.
The proverbial *skeleton in the closet* for the American education system is the extent to which emotional and verbal abuse occurs in K-12 classrooms (Brendgen, Wanner, & Vitaro, 2006; Hyman & Snook, 2000). While physical or sexual abuse receives widespread attention, verbal and emotional abuse receives limited consideration, partly due to the difficulty in detection (Aluede, 2004). Notably, Aluede found that psychological maltreatment, though acknowledged clinically, was not considered a specific area of interest until the mid 1980’s, especially in education. Since then, few researchers have been able to examine the prevalence of this serious issue in American schools (Brendgen et al.; McEachern et al., 2008). It is possible that school districts as well as school administrators have been hesitant to cooperate in research concerning this topic due to its controversial nature. School systems may be reluctant to provide data on this sensitive topic due to potential legal ramifications if maltreatment were ascertained (McEachern et al.; Melton & Corson, 1987). Most research on this topic was completed in a retrospective manner, which involved interviewing adults about past experiences or included using unscientific anecdotal evidence (Brendgen et al.; Shumba, 2004). The focus of prior research was been to define what abuse in the classroom looks like, yet agreement between researchers remained lacking (Brendgen et al.; Hyman, 1995).
Defining Abuse

Though many researchers have attempted to reach a consensus as to the definition of emotional maltreatment or abuse, an agreement is difficult due to the subtle aspect of the victimization (Aluede, 2004). McEachern et al. (1987) identified abuse as excessive screaming at students, degrading comments, name-calling, threatening comments, using homework as punishment, harsh criticism, and excessive demands on student performance. Any or all of these actions can cause emotional trauma to the student (Brendgen et al., 2006). The Manitoba Working Group on the Emotional Abuse of Children (1981) chose to define emotional abuse as:

Emotional child abuse is the damaging, by whatever means, of a child’s self-image by an adult responsible for the child’s nurturing or learning, resulting in a decrease in the child’s feeling of personal worth and therein his ability to love, to trust, and to feel at one with the human race. (p. 4)

Building on the previous definition, Nesbit (1991) defined emotional abuse as a withholding of a developmental nurturing relationship. Hyman (1995) suggested activities that put high value on productivity can be inductive of emotional maltreatment. Educators or coaches who put importance on productivity and perfectionism can place undue stress on students and create symptoms similar to those documented in children who have experienced severe emotional abuse (Hyman et al., 1988).
Results of Abuse

McEachern et al. (2008) demonstrated that students who experienced emotional abuse in the classroom may have low self-esteem, anxiety, fear of teachers and school, depression, headaches, stomachaches, sleep disturbances, excessive crying, and overall withdrawal from community. Depending on the child, they may demonstrate behavioral problems such as aggression, rebelliousness, or disrespect towards adults. Aluede (2004) suggested these symptoms of abuse are long-term and life altering for the student. Children who experience such distress have difficulty with low self-worth and are at high-risk for becoming seriously maladapted. In contrast, Coopersmith (1967) described children who had a high self-esteem and self-worth as happier and more adept at meeting the various demands of life. Their counterparts with low self-esteem displayed withdrawal from society and endured constant feelings of distress.

Brendgen et al. (2006) studied teacher verbal abuse and student adjustment and found a strong correlation between repeated verbal abuse and subsequent delinquent behavior during adolescence. One theory in support of this consequence contends teachers play an important role in modeling acceptable social behaviors. If accurate this would imply that a student’s delinquent behaviors are simply modeling teacher antisocial behaviors. Interestingly, Brown (1984) found no such correlation between juvenile delinquency and physical abuse. Glaser and Prior (1997) determined that “emotional abuse refers to a relationship rather than an event” (p. 315). Many researchers agree that emotional abuse can be just as dangerous, if not more so than
physical abuse, in destroying a child’s spirit and emotional wellbeing (Nesbit & Karagianis, 1987; Nesbit & Philpott, 2002; Shumba, 2004).

Hyman & Snook (2001) coined the term “student alienation syndrome” to describe the symptoms students suffer when exposed to a school climate that either consciously or unconsciously allows such victimization. Aluede (2004) found that children who experienced emotional maltreatment had a negative self-identity and some exhibited dissociative identity disorder. These conditions may manifest themselves in self-destructive behavior which society identifies as juvenile delinquency. In contrast, teachers can positively contribute to a student’s ability to make good choices regarding anti-social behaviors (Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Crosby, Leichliter, & Brackbill (2000) demonstrated a close positive adult relationship can assists students in overcoming various adversities they may encounter while growing up.

Hyman et al. (1988) explored the link between emotional abuse in the classroom and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in children. In adults, PTSD is usually brought on by severe traumatizing events. Research has suggested that children may develop PTSD from less extreme stressors. It is quite feasible that the emotional abuse incurred from a trusted authority figure, such as a teacher, could cause PTSD in children. Each developmental stage experiences differences in coping styles when exposed to maltreatment, with younger children being at higher-risk for permanent emotional damage (Brendgen et al., 2006). Jaffe, Wolfe, Wilson, and Zak (1986) demonstrated that students who witnessed family violence were at higher-risk
of developing adjustment problems. The study suggested that children only need to be indirectly exposed to violence to suffer similar effects as their counterparts who suffer violence directly. This finding provides evidence to support that students who witness maltreatment in the classroom are also at risk for experiencing traumatic aftereffects.

Bolshakov, Carlezon, Kandel, and Teicher (2000) found four types of abnormalities in brain function in children who have suffered various forms of abuse, linking permanent damage to the brain from emotional abuse. Permanent brain damage led to limited functioning in behavioral, cognitive, affective, social, and physiological regions of the brain. Similarly, Brendgen et al. (2008) found that students who experience verbal abuse in the classroom are more likely to display subsequent developmental difficulties. Unlike physical or sexual abuse, verbal and emotional abuse is harder to identify, but has devastating effects just the same (Shumba, 2004). In considering the destructive effects of emotional abuse, it is important to examine its frequency and develop preventive measures for schools to put into practice (Aluede, 2004; McEachern et al, 2008).

**Demographic Connections**

McEachern et al. (2008) demonstrated that students most represented as victims come from low socioeconomic and low education families. Parents lack needed support to advocate for students in the schools or help them overcome the trauma of the abuse. Moreover, boys and students with special needs are especially at risk to experience teacher abuse in the school setting. The aforementioned population is also at high risk for school dropout. Khouri-Kassabri (2006) suggests similar
results when examining the occurrence of emotional and physical abuse occurring in Israeli public schools. Khoury-Kassabri provided evidence that almost one third of all students reported experiencing some form of abuse from school staff. The findings also suggest students who were socio-economically disadvantaged and male were more likely to suffer maltreatment of some form.

Similarly, Shumba (2004), when examining abuse in Zimbabwean schools, found 69.5% of students reported male teachers as being verbally abusive through labeling and name-calling and 56.5% of students reported female teachers to be verbally aggressive through shouting. Over 50% of all students reported experiencing some sort of verbal or emotional maltreatment by school staff. While American schools cannot be certain to obtain similar results, the findings in other countries gives rise to concern for those in the educational community. Two decades of research revealed that the United States led the way as the most culturally punitive Western democracy. This alludes to the fact that the problem is much more serious than the occasional incidence, but reflects a socio-cultural foundational belief system (Benbenishty et al., 2002).

Teachers as Abusers

After analyzing the data, Shumba (2004) concluded that the majority of teachers and teacher candidates in Zimbabwe believed emotional abuse to be a form of discipline and an encouragement of good work habits and behavior. Culture seemed to play a large role in the type of relationship between student and teacher. The lack of awareness of teachers and teacher candidates concerning emotional abuse
indicated a social acceptance of this behavior as a means of discipline. Benbenishty et al. (2002) described the roots of cultural belief to be deeply embedded within child discipline attitudes. Cultures with religious beliefs that supported corporal punishment tended to be more accepting of abusive environments. Hyman (1995) reported that parents or teachers who experienced victimization themselves were more likely to be punitive with children. Though research shows reward systems to be effective at inducing behavioral changes, cultural demands encourage individuals to believe punitive action is morally superior.

Shumba (2004) reported that some cultures accept teachers as in loco-parentis, which means they act in place of the parents within the school setting. Nesbit and Philpott (2002) suggested that teachers share the all-important developmental bonding experience with parents. Attachment in childhood is primarily the bond that is created between the child and the primary caregiver. Attachment studies and the theories they have brought to us show a distinguishable link between a child’s sociability and emotional health and the secure bond the child has made with his mother or caregiver (Greenberg, 1999). Looking at teacher-student relationship from this context creates an even greater need for students to feel safe and nurtured in their school environment (Brendgen et al., 2006). Positive relationships with caring adults are crucial to human development and productivity (Aluede, 2004; Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Through the identification of the characteristics of student maltreatment, educators can better recognize its occurrence in the classroom and work toward preventive measures (Aluede, 2004; McEachern et al., 2008).
Interestingly, Brendgen et al. (2006) provided evidence that the same students will experience emotional maltreatment from year-to-year. Brendgen et al. proposed that the likelihood of this pattern of abuse to be preconceived notions about the student being passed on from school year to school year. When teachers talk to fellow colleagues about students, they may be inadvertently encouraging a negative attitude toward already high-risk students.

Brendegen et al. also suggested that a student’s behavior has a strong correlation with teacher maltreatment. Antisocial behavior and inattention predicted a higher chance of experiencing verbal abuse in the classroom. The behavior correlation with verbal abuse would help explain Nesbit and Philpott’s (2002) findings that students receiving special needs services are especially vulnerable for teacher maltreatment. With the increasing practice of inclusion, Nesbit and Philpott reiterate the importance of supporting and educating teachers with the skills needed to teach this exceptional population.

Hyman and Snook (1999) found that 50% to 60% of people responded positively when asked if they had suffered verbal or emotional abuse in their academic career. Whitted and Dupper (2007) provided evidence that students reported being bullied by teachers twice as much as being bullied by their peers. McEachern et al. (2008) found few of the incidences are reported when they occurred. Similarly, Shumba (2004) concluded that an underreporting of emotional maltreatment was responsible for the low number of occurrences recorded. Hyman (1995) suggested several factors which inhibit the frequency of reporting. One factor
referred to a fear of retaliation from school authorities. Previous findings (Khoury-Kassabri, 2006) postulate that children from economically disadvantaged and low education families are more likely to experience maltreatment. Considering this fact, it is possible these parents are more intimidated by school authority and less likely to trust advocacy regarding victimization (Hyman).

It is commonly agreed that school staff do not intentionally inflict emotional harm on their students (Benbenishty et al., 2002; Hyman, 1995; Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). As previously mentioned, some teachers believe they are guiding and molding their students to be obedient members of society, “spare the rod, spoil the child”, as the old adage states (Hyman, 1995). Others are unaware of the power of their words on student socioemotional affect (Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). Nesbit and Philpott put forth the thought that teachers are reacting out of fear; fear of a feeling of inadequacy and loss of control. In an attempt to gain power, the educator may resort to bullying techniques to gain the needed control of the situation, instead of using strategies to encourage a positive classroom climate (Whitted & Dupper, 2008). Similarly, Nesbit and Philpott (2002) found teachers under stress are more likely to become abusive and display behaviors that would be considered bullying if observed on the playground.

Teacher Preparation

The lack of teacher preparedness for the pressures of the job also can contribute to the increase of stress levels on the part of educators. Benbenishty et al. (2002) concluded that many teachers simply lack the needed skills to manage a
Ethics and Teacher Credentialing

classroom. When teacher preparation programs focus on epistemic goals they many
times lacked the moral education needed for teachers to ethically fulfill their job
responsibilities (Sockett, 2008). Gomez, Allen, and Clinton (2004) suggest the central
theme to teaching is caring about students and understanding their social and
emotional development as well as their cognitive development. Educators cannot
focus on one aspect without addressing all three developmental domains to deliver
effective instruction. The lack of awareness of all the nuances of teaching can become
overwhelming to educators without a caring support system (Kovess-Masfety et aI.,
2006).

Stressors for Teachers

In addition, various stressors, such as high-stake testing, poor match of teacher
and grade level, and a non-supportive school environment increased the incidences of
maltreatment of students. Previous research (Kovess-Masfety et aI., 2006) has
included teaching among other high-risk professions. The teaching profession is
associated with high levels of stress due to working conditions and pressures put upon
teachers for student success. Kovess-Masfety et al. reported that prior examination of
stress and teaching demonstrated a higher level of teachers experiencing mental
fatigue, psychological distress, and burnout.

Kovess-Masfety et al. (2006) examined the effect of grade level, teacher
stress, and how teacher gender may increase levels of stress dependent on the grade
level taught. The researchers identified three types of psychological stress a teacher
may experience, the first being psychiatric disorders, which would include precise
diagnoses of mental health problems, the second being psychological distress, which would include poor mental health that does not correspond with the previous definition, and lastly teacher burnout, which has the descriptors of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishments. The study also found a strong correlation between teacher gender and grade level being taught. Male teachers had higher levels of distress when teaching in preschool, elementary, or special education settings, while women showed increased stress levels when teaching in secondary level classrooms. Special educators and counselors were at significant risk of becoming depressed, which was shown by both genders. Contributors to burnout were role conflicts, work overload, classroom climate, decision-making, self-esteem and internal/external locus of control. The amount such contributors were exhibited varied with grade level being taught. Kovess-Masfety et al. demonstrated the importance of educators teaching a grade levels that suit them, which encourages confidence, and, in-turn cause less stress.

*Prevention in School Environment*

Hyman and Snook (2000) argued for schools to become more democratic in nature than authoritative. Democratic schools empower all members of the educational community. Everyone is valued as an integral part of the school’s success. This includes parents, students, teachers, administration, and anyone else involved in the educational community. Hyman and Snook suggested such school climates encourage a sense of belongingness and justice. This is in stark contrast to authoritarian rule-bound schools who they term as toxic for all members. Hyman and
Snook described authoritarian ran schools as creating a poor morale for all involved, which means both students and teachers suffer from feeling dispirited and trapped by conflict and oppression. Educators in this type of climate are at serious risk of becoming perpetrators of student maltreatment due to the punitive climate of the school.

Hyman et al. (2000) proposed that teachers develop a democratic classroom society. The emphasis in democratic classrooms is “cooperation, mutual goal setting, and shared responsibility” (p. 495). Hyman and Snook suggest that by students sharing in the responsibilities of the classroom climate teachers are less likely to have discipline issues because students do not feel the need to rebel from authoritarian rule. Students and teachers alike develop an internal locus of control rather than relying on external rules (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2006).

Campbell (2001) found that ethical dilemmas contribute to teacher’s confusion as to their loyalties, which increase stress levels. The multifaceted role of the educator and their relationship with students, colleagues, teacher unions, administration, and districts can create confusion as to job responsibilities and priorities (Campbell, 2001). Educators have two distinct moral commitments; one of upholding ethical principles and second being a moral educator through modeling and direct instruction (Campbell, 2000). Though these descriptors sound similar, they can be cause conflicting roles. Teachers frequently come against ethical dilemmas that question their allegiance to their colleagues or their students.

Disconnection to a Discussion of Teacher Ethics
Barrett, Headley, Stovall, and Witte (2006) argued that the teaching profession lacks a cohesive, nationally recognized, and enforceable code of ethics. While other human service professions have developed ethical codes regarding professional conduct; teaching has yet to come to a consensus on such a standard. While teaching preparation programs have a high emphasis on subject matter knowledge and pedagogy (Cherubini, 2008; Gomez et al., 2004; No Child Left Behind Act of 2001), less emphasis is placed on the ethical dimension of the profession (Barrett et al., 2006; Campbell, 2000; Gomez et al., 2004). Campbell posits that although a written set of rules does not embrace the need for educators to internalize the ethical requirements of the profession, it is a move in the right direction. Barrett et al. found, when examining teacher perceptions on the frequency and seriousness of ethical violations, that teachers do have an understanding of right and wrong behavior. What is lacking is a written set of principles to serve as a reference regarding ethical standards. Campbell (2001) suggested the importance of taking ethical standards and applying them to real life ethical dilemmas. Encouraging educators to find ethical standards relevant to daily interactions will support internalization of principles.

Barrett et al. (2006) suggested more attention be given to teacher’s behaviors, both in and out of the classroom. Barrett (2007) expounds on this concept when warning teachers about their MySpace usage and the danger of public exposure of inappropriate behavior. Although, there is no disagreement that teachers have the same freedoms as others Americans, society has bestowed on them an expectation to
be a role models to children, both inside and outside the classroom. Campbell (2006) suggested teaching credential programs play a crucial role in preparing future teachers for the moral and ethical dimensions society places on this revered vocation.

*Developing a Model for Teacher Ethics Education*

Sockett, (2008) examined the various philosophies of education, primarily educating teachers to be teachers. Sockett posits that teaching involves both a service aspect and a knowledge aspect. This presumes teaching does involve both moral and epistemic goals. The extent to which these objectives are viewed as important changes the perspective of teacher training. If the primary goal of teaching is to impart knowledge to students, and the main service to students is to expand their knowledge, then the moral or service aspect is not foremost in this philosophical perspective of teaching. In contrast, if the development of the individual is of foremost importance and only through the development of a nurturing relationship can teachers impart enduring understandings then Socket proposes that servitude and moral obligations are of far greater importance than imparting only knowledge to students.

Sockett (2008) defined four different models of moral and epistemological purposes in teacher education: the scholar-professional, the nurturer-professional, the clinician-professional, and the moral agent-professional. Each model differs on importance of teacher’s moral and epistemic responsibilities. The scholar-professional philosophy views the teacher’s educational responsibility as primarily one of having students acquire knowledge so that they can become virtuous members
of a democratic society. The moral learning arises only after the knowledge has been taught. The nurturer-professional is as the title implies; a philosophy that views moral obligations to be foremost in education. The child is seen as an individual and the development of a relationship and in turn an understanding of each child is primary in the job of educating students. In this viewpoint, each child’s educational needs are individual and sought to be met morally and then in turn cognitively. Next, is the model of the clinician-professional, which educators are the most familiar with. The clinician model posits that research-based instruction be the foremost guide in education. Like the medical profession, from which it acquires the title, educational practices are based on scholarly knowledge and social morality is focused on equality and interdependence of individuals. Lastly, Sockett described the moral agent-professional model is less prevalent and holds to the belief that the teacher is the moral agent of education and the art of pedagogy is a result of morality. Variations of these four models are prevalent in teacher credential programs, but Sockett found the clinician model to be by far the most common.

Cherubini (2008) demonstrated improved ethical awareness in teacher candidates through utilization of a case study methodology regarding ethical dilemmas. Cherubini found that through reflection and discussions teacher candidates deepen their own understanding of ethical principles. Participants expressed a change in paradigms as they struggled with ethical concepts and how their own life experiences affected their perspective of ethical decisions. Cherubini posits case
study pedagogy encourages teachers to define who they are as teachers and what political, religious, and social beliefs influence their ethical perspective.

Freire (1998/2008) in his *Letters to Those who Dare Teach*, described teaching as an ongoing learning process with key elements. These elements are not qualities to be learned in coursework, but to be developed and nurtured through practice. Freire believed humility to be an essential element of teaching. Educators must understand that they do not have answers for everything and never will. Freire shares this thought, “Without humility, one can hardly listen with respect to those one judges to be too far below one’s own level of competence.” (p. 208) This thought supports Hyman and Snook’s (2000) proposal of a democratic school climate where all have a voice. Freire adds lovingness along with humility is a vital part of the teaching process. Loving kindness prevents student maltreatment, because the two acts cannot coincide together. In addition, educators must have courage to overcome the fear they may have from the overwhelming responsibility their jobs entail. Lastly, Freire encourages teachers to develop a joy of living, which contributes to a positive school climate. Gillette and Schultz (2008) expound the need for future teachers to have a creative vision that includes the social justice aspect of teaching.

Many of the important attributes of teaching cannot be learned through pedagogical course work. Gillette and Schultz (2008) summarize the need of teacher credential programs to foster an “environment that encourages our teacher candidates to take action and teach for change in the roles as teachers”. (p. 236) In the clinician model of teacher preparation prevalent in American colleges, teacher candidates have
little exposure to the aforementioned attributes needed for effective instruction (Sockett, 2008). Grant and Agosto (2008) suggested teacher credential programs include social justice in their curriculum, yet they fail to define the meaning as it applies to the classroom. These untaught elements of teaching can leave the educator without the needed skills for effective teaching and developing student-teacher relationships (Benbenishyt et al., 2002).

McEachern et al. (2008) suggested the role of the school counselor to be paramount in preventing and identifying when abuse is occurring in the classroom. One of their responsibilities as a student advocate is to intervene after they have assessed the extent of the problem. An intervention program can be implemented which includes mediation and education regarding ethical student-teacher interactions. McEachern et al. research indicated that many teachers are unaware of their behaviors and the maltreatment instances are reduced when support and education are provided. With the pressure of high-stakes testing, over-crowded classrooms, and inclusive classrooms, which include students with special needs and English language learners in the general education setting, teachers are under a significant amount of stress to provide successful educational outcomes. Unfortunately, these factors may lead to an increase of emotional abuse in the classroom as teachers have difficulty coping with the various stressors. Hyman (1995) suggested teacher candidates and in-service teachers receive training in classroom management, crisis management, and anger management. In addition, curricula that
include conflict resolution and peer mediation would be beneficial for a positive school climate.

Kovess-Masfety et al. (2006) suggested the need for overhauls to be performed on the way schools are currently operated. Their research found that a major contributor to the prevention of teacher psychological distress was a strong relationship between staff and administration in addition to a support system to prevent teacher burnout. As previously mentioned, a teacher in distress is more likely to behave in an abusive manner to students (McEachern et al., 2008). Educating teachers can be an overriding factor in assuring a safe and effective education environment for students and teachers alike.

Conclusion

The role a teacher plays in a student’s life is an important one. Teachers have an opportunity to exert great influence on a child’s life during crucial developmental years (Cherubini, 2008). The enormity of this responsibility cannot be overstated. During student’s extremely influential developmental stages, they look to their teachers for approval and acceptance. What they experience can affect them for a lifetime, either in a positive manner or negative manner, depending on the interaction. Coopersmith (1968), in his book, *The Antecedents of Self-esteem*, defined the significance student-teacher interactions when he stated, “If he places high value on himself, there have been key persons in his life who have treated him with concern and respect; if he holds himself lowly, significant others have treated him as an inferior object.” (p.31) The physical and psychological trauma that students suffer
after experiencing maltreatment from school staff can be devastating for the student and those who witness such abuse (Aluede, 2004; Hyman et al., 1988; Jaffé et al., 1986). The classroom can be turned into a torture chamber, rather than the safe environment that society envisions it to be (Hyman & Snook, 2001).

The purpose of the present research is to determine if teacher candidates perceive they are prepared for developing ethical student-teacher interactions. A secondary purpose is to examine any variances among multiple subject, single subject, and special education credential programs in candidate perceived preparation regarding ethics in the classroom.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

Parents send children to school entrusting their care to professionals who are trained to educate them in becoming successful members of society. While teacher preparation programs prepare future educators for the job of imparting knowledge, it is questionable whether future teachers are prepared for the various ethical and moral challenges of the job. Though little research has been conducted in America regarding teacher ethical conduct, previous studies in Israel and Zimbabwe suggest a need for concern. Results from those studies indicated a serious problem regarding verbal and emotional student maltreatment in the classroom. Considering the dramatic impact teachers have on students’ lives and the high stress nature of the job, it is imperative for teacher preparation programs to be examined in order to assure they are preparing teachers for the multifaceted responsibilities of their job. Therefore, the purpose of this program evaluation study was to examine teacher candidates’ perception of preparedness in regards to student-teacher ethical interactions through the administration of a teacher candidate survey. A secondary purpose of the research was to determine whether any differences exists among multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated programs regarding perceived ethical preparedness.

The present chapter will examine the methods used to obtain information to help answer the abovementioned research questions. The first section concerns the
methodology design followed by the demographics of the individuals participating in the study along with a brief description of the university the research was conducted at. Next, the research questions will be reviewed and the instrument used to gather data will be explored. The procedures implemented when collecting data will be explained in depth. In addition, the data analysis program used and the various analytical tests ran on data will be detailed and any limitations/delimitations will be examined. Lastly, a summarization of the key concepts will be reviewed.

Design

The present study was a program evaluation study because candidates were required to review the courses they have taken and determine if they perceived them to be effective in preparing them to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions. An evaluation study was used to address the prevention aspect of student maltreatment.

School and Participants

The university campus in which this study was conducted was California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) located in San Marcos, California. The university, established in 1989, is a young and growing college community located in northern San Diego County. The College of Education is committed to preparing educators for the diverse classrooms they would encounter and has a strong focus regarding social justice and equity for all students. The College of Education offers several different credential programs depending on the grade level credential students seek to teach. The present study focused on multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated credential programs.
Three hundred and seventeen credential candidates participated in the present study. Candidates of all ages (over the age of 18) who were enrolled in preliminary credential programs were included in the study. Individuals were all English proficient. Staff and faculty of the university were excluded from participating. All participants were students in the College of Education at California State University San Marcos.

*Key Questions*

The present study was designed to evaluate the perceived preparedness teacher credential students had regarding ethical student-teacher interactions. The overarching research question is, “Do teacher candidates perceive they are prepared for ethical student-teacher interactions?” In addition, sub-questions relating to the larger question were:

*Research question one.* Do teacher candidates perceive the teacher credential program as providing them with adequate stress management strategies, which help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom?

*Research question two.* Do teacher candidates perceive that ethics has been adequately addressed within course content?

*Research question three.* How many courses do teacher candidates recognize as addressing ethical teacher conduct?

*Research question four.* Do teacher candidates perceive they have received adequate education regarding the prevention of unethical teacher behaviors?
Research question five. Does a variance exist between the perceived preparedness in regards to teacher ethical conduct among multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated credential programs?

Appropriateness and Application of Instrument

The present study was an evaluation of the credential programs at CSUSM in regards to preparing students for ethical student-teacher interactions within the educational setting. Participants were invited to complete a survey, presented in Appendix A, which focused on perceived preparedness for ethical student-teacher interactions.

The first area of interest concerned the responses regarding participant’s perception of being adequately prepared to address ethics within the educational system. The second area of interest concerned the classes which participants viewed as addressing the topic of ethics as well as which classes were most beneficial with regard to this topic. The last area of interest concerned the responses to an open-ended question regarding the proportion of courses candidates perceived as including ethics in the coursework.

Another variable of interest related to which of the several credential programs in which participants were enrolled. This information was obtained from the demographic portion of the survey. Participants were sought out because of the program they were enrolled in; that is, the research deliberately sampled representatives of each of the college’s credential concentrations. Participants were not sought out because of gender or ethnicity.
Measures

The present study asked individuals to respond to questions by rating the questions of a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 representing strongly agree and 1 representing strongly disagree. Participants were asked to respond to questions regarding perceived ethical preparedness from coursework within the credential programs. Participants completed demographic questions before they began the survey. Demographic information related to which credential program the participant was enrolled in, if enrollment was full-time or part-time, whether the participant was part of a cohort which took all classes together, the number of semesters completed in the credential program, undergraduate majors, as well as, age, gender, and ethnicity.

The survey began by defining ethics as a “set of principals regarding right and moral conduct.” The survey then asked participants if the program provided them with stress management strategies to help with job related pressures. The questions were answered by responding to a Likert-type scale with responses ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Next, participants were asked if they agreed or disagreed that they were adequately prepared for ethical dilemmas they might encounter in their teaching career. Participants were queried if the credential program had addressed how to develop ethical student-teacher interactions, the need for a positive classroom environment, and if they had received education regarding the components of teacher verbal or emotional abuse of students. In addition, questions were posited as to whether or not specific guidelines had been addressed in regards to
ethical student-teacher interactions and how teacher behavior might affect student physical and emotional wellbeing.

Participants were asked how many courses they had taken addressed a teacher’s code of ethics and how many courses addressed ethical student-teacher interactions. Participants responded by identifying 0-2, 3-5, 6-9, or All classes. Participants were asked to identify which courses were most beneficial in preparing them to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions. The last question was an open-ended response.

Procedure

Participants were students who were approached on a college campus. The researcher first obtained permission from the Associate Dean of the College of Education and then obtained permission from the department heads of the credential programs. Next, permission was gathered from various professors to administer the survey to their students at the beginning of class time. Professors were chosen by their prior relationship with researcher and at random. Professors were contacted through email. Professors were from the multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated programs.

The researcher introduced herself to students as a California State University San Marcos student involved in a study concerning teacher preparation programs. Participation was voluntary and individuals were chosen by convenience. Individuals were informed they could decline from participating or skip any questions they are not comfortable in answering. Information sheets were handed out to participants.
Surveys were then handed out to participants and an envelope was placed at the front of the classroom for participants to place their completed survey. This procedure enabled complete participant confidentiality. There was no compensation offered for participating in the study. Participants were debriefed and thanked for their time. Treatment of the participants was in accordance with the American Psychological Association’s ethical guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2002)

Data Analysis

In order to analyze four questions, a one-samples t-test and a comparative one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were conducted using the statistical program, SPSS 16.0. Demographic data gathered, which included credential program enrollment, were utilized in the data analyses.

Limitations/Delimitations

The present study was limited to students enrolled in the teacher credential program at California State University San Marcos. It focused on those students enrolled in classes to obtain their preliminary credential in multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated programs. The study was limited to the perceptions of credential students as to the ethical training they have received from credential classes.

Summary

Due to the central role educator’s play in student social, emotional, and cognitive development, it is vital to examine teacher preparation programs and their focus. Ethical student-teacher interactions encourage positive relationships, which, in-
turn contributes to positive educational outcomes (Crosby et al., 2000). Therefore, the focus of this research was to examine the perceived preparedness of teacher candidates in the various credential programs at CSUSM. Examining teacher training in the area of ethics is a beginning in the process of helping prevent student maltreatment. The following chapter is a presentation of the analysis of the data collected in the present study.
Chapter 4

Results

Children who have life experiences that support high self-esteem and self-worth are happier and more resilient with the demands of life (Coopersmith, 1967). In contrast, children who experience maltreatment at the hands of trusted educators are likely to experience emotional trauma and a multitude of physical and emotional symptoms (Aluede, 2004; McEachern et al., 2008). Because of the serious implications for students it is imperative that educators understand the descriptors of abuse and ways in which to prevent the occurrence in the classroom. Research suggests educators do not intentionally inflict emotional harm on their students, but rather are misguided or unaware of their influence on their students’ development (Benbenishty et al., 2002; Hyman, 1995; Nesbit & Philpott, 2002). These findings support the need to include ethics as a theme for teacher preparation programs (Campbell, 2001).

The present research examined the perceived preparedness of credential students at CSUSM. The primary research question is, “Do teacher candidates perceive they are prepared for ethical student-teacher interactions?” In addition, sub-questions relating to the larger question were:

*Research question one.* Do teacher candidates perceive the teacher credential program as providing them with adequate stress management strategies, which help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom?
Research question two. Do teacher candidates perceive that ethics has been adequately addressed within course content?

Research question three. How many courses do teacher candidates recognize as addressing ethical teacher conduct?

Research question four. Do teacher candidates perceive they have received adequate education regarding the prevention of unethical teacher behaviors?

Research question five. Does a variance exist between the perceived preparedness in regards to teacher ethical conduct among multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated credential programs?

This chapter examines the data gathered and presents the results of the administered survey. These findings will help address the above research questions. The first section involves the sample of participants included in the data followed by a detailed examination of the data and subsequent analysis. Next, an interpretation of the results in relation to the research questions will be discussed. Lastly, a summarization of the key concepts relating to the results of the study will be reviewed.

Sample

Three hundred and seventeen individuals (51 men, 262 women, 4 unreported) participated in the current study. Individuals under the age of 18 were not eligible for participation. The sample maximum age was 61; the minimum age was 21, with a mean age of 29. The ethnicity of the sample was 72% White, 13.6% Hispanic, 5% Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.4 % unreported, 2.8% other, 1.9% African-American/Black,
and 1.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native. Participants reported that 70% were full-time enrollees; 12.6% were part-time enrollees, with 17.4% not reporting. Participants reported completing a mean of 1.73 semesters in the credential program. The credential program enrollment of the sample indicated that 30.9% were Multiple Subject (elementary education general education candidates), 24.3% were special education candidates, 14.5% were undergraduate general education “integrated program” candidates, 13.6% were single subject (high school) candidates, and 6.3% were middle level educational candidates.

Data Analysis

The following data was tested for violation of assumption for a one-way ANOVA. All three assumptions, homogeneity of variance, normality, and independence of observation, were tested for all variables. The assumption of normality was not violated for the Overall Preparedness scale created (probability of this happening by chance is .15) all other variables probability of this happening by chance is < .05. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated for Question number 8 (probability of this happening by chance is = .40), Question number 9 (probability of this happening by chance is = .89), the Prevention scale (probability of this happening by chance is .51), and the Overall Preparedness Scale (probability of this happening by chance is .50) all other variables probability of this happening by chance is < .05. Therefore, all results reported here should be interpreted with caution.
A scale was created for the purpose of this thesis. The *Prevention* scale, was found to have good reliability, the Cronbach's alpha is .81. The *Ethics* scale, was found to have average reliability, the Cronbach's alpha is .62. The *Overall Preparedness* scale, was found to have good reliability, the Cronbach's alpha is .82.

**Research question one.** Do teacher candidates perceive the teacher credential program as providing them with adequate stress management strategies, which help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom?

Using a one-samples t-test, it was determined that teacher candidates perceive the teacher credential program has not provided them with adequate stress management strategies, that would help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom, *t-score* (312) = 43.3, probability of this happening by chance is < .001 (*Mean* = 2.65, *Standard deviation* = .061, *Sample size* = 313). The average ratings for agreement or disagreement are shown in Table 1 and should be interpreted using a scale with 5 indicating strongly agree through 1 indicating strongly disagree. There did not appear to be significantly different among each of the credential programs on this particular question, *F-ratio* (4, 275) = .363, probability of this happening by chance is .835. Refer to Table 1 on page 40.
The teacher credential program at CSUSM....

1) provided me with stress management strategies which will help me with job related pressures.

2) has addressed various ethical dilemmas I might encounter as a teacher.

3) has addressed how to develop ethical student-teacher interactions.

4) emphasized the need to create a positive classroom environment.

5) has addressed the components of student verbal or emotional abuse by teachers.

6) taught specific guidelines regarding ethical student-teacher interactions.

7) has addressed how my behavior can affect my student’s physical and emotional wellbeing.

**Research question two.** Do teacher candidates perceive that ethics has been adequately addressed within course content?

Using a one-samples t-test, it was determined that on average, teacher candidates felt neutral with regard to ethics being adequately addressed in course
content, \( t\)-score (316) = 1.12, probability of this happening by chance is < .265 \((Mean = 3.52, Standard\ deviation = 561.39, Sample\ size = 317)\). The average ratings for agreement or disagreement are shown and should be interpreted using a scale with 5 indicating strongly agree through 1 indicating strongly disagree. There did not appear to be significantly different among each of the credential programs on this particular question, \( F\)-ratio \((4, 279) = .682, probability of this happening by chance is .605.

**Research question three.** How many courses do teacher candidates recognize as addressing ethical teacher conduct?

Using a one-samples \( t\)-test, it was determined that, on average, teacher candidates felt 0-1 courses completed addressed a teacher code of ethics, \( t\)-score \((303) = 28.0, probability of this happening by chance is < .001 \((Mean = 1.78, Standard\ deviation = 1.11, Sample\ size = 304)\). There did not appear to be significantly different among each of the credential programs on this particular question, \( F\)-ratio \((4, 269) = 1.39, probability of this happening by chance is .239.

**Research question four.** Do teacher candidates perceive they have received adequate education regarding the prevention of unethical teacher behaviors?

Using a one-samples \( t\)-test, it was determined that teacher candidates indicated feelings between neutrality and agreement that the teacher credential program has provided them with adequate education regarding prevention strategies, which would help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom, \( t\)-score \((316) = 98.48, probability of this happening by chance is < .001 \((Mean = 3.62, Standard\ deviation = .
.66, Sample size = 317). The average ratings for agreement or disagreement are shown and should be interpreted using a scale with 5 indicating strongly agree through 1 indicating strongly disagree. Post-hoc analysis confirmed a significant difference between multiple subject and special education programs, $F$-ratio $(4, 279) = 2.56$, probability of this happening by chance is .039. No other analyses were significant.

Research question five. Does a variance exist between the perceived preparedness in regards to teacher ethical conduct among multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated credential programs?

A one-way ANOVA was conducted in order to explore differences in prevention of verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom, $F$-ratio $(4, 279) = 2.56$, probability of this happening by chance is < .05. Tukey's HSD post-hoc tests were used to identify among which credential programs a significant difference was obtained. The post-hoc analyses revealed that there was a significant difference between the Special Education credential program and Multiple Subjects credential program (Mean Difference = .27, Standard Error = .10, probability of this happening by chance is < .05), such that teacher candidates in the Special Education credential program feel more prepared for prevention of verbal or emotional abuse occurring in the classroom (Mean = 3.79, Standard deviation = .67, Sample size = 76) than teacher candidates in the Multiple Subjects credential program (Mean = 3.51, Standard deviation = .64, Sample size = 99). No other analyses were significant.
Ethics and Teacher Credentialing

**Overall Preparedness Scale**

Using a one-samples t-test, the *Overall Preparedness* scale score determined that teacher candidates indicated feelings between neutrality and agreement that the teacher credential program has provided them with adequate education regarding ethics, which would help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom, *t*-score (316) = 96.26, probability of this happening by chance is < .001 (*Mean* = 3.64, *Standard deviation* = .67, *Sample size* = 317). The average ratings for agreement or disagreement are shown and should be interpreted using a scale with 5 indicating strongly agree through 1 indicating strongly disagree. However, this difference was not found to be significantly different based on each credential program, *F*-ratio (4, 279) = 1.97, probability of this happening by chance is .100.

**Results Related to the Theme of the Study**

The results showed that candidates do not perceive the credential program as providing them with adequate stress management strategies, which help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom. Yet, when candidates were asked if they perceive they have had adequate education in prevention measures regarding verbal or emotional abuse in the classroom the average response was 3.62, with 3 being neutral and 4 agree. In regards to perceived ethical preparedness, candidates responded with a mean of 3.52, with 3 being neutral and 4 agree. The *Overall Preparedness* score demonstrated again that candidates do not strongly agree the teacher credential program has provided them with adequate education regarding
ethics, with a mean score of 3.64, with 3 being neutral and 4 agree. The question candidates agreed with the most was that the credential program has emphasized the need to create a positive classroom environment, which does encourage positive student-teacher relationships. Candidates also identified 0-1 courses that addressed either a code of ethics or ethical student-teacher interactions. Mean scores appear in Table 1 of the average response rating for survey questions out of a range of 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

The post hoc analyses demonstrated a significant difference between multiple subject and special education programs regarding the prevention of emotional or verbal abuse in the classroom. Mean scores of multiple subject participant responses appear in Figure 1. Refer to Figure 1 on page 45.
As is demonstrated in Figure 2, special education participants perceived themselves to be more prepared in the prevention of unethical student-teacher interactions. Refer to Figure 2 on page 46.
Figure 2. Special education participant responses on Prevention Scale.

No significant difference was found between the credential programs in the other areas of analysis.

Summary

The data presented in this chapter addressed the research questions regarding teacher candidate perceived preparedness for ethical student-teacher interactions. Teacher candidates responded that they do not perceive the program has given them adequate stress management strategies to assist with the prevention of student maltreatment. Students felt neutral regarding the topic of ethics being adequately addressed in the credential program. They somewhat agreed that the credential
program addressed prevention of student maltreatment. The overall response to the research question concerning teacher candidate perception of being prepared for ethical student-teacher interactions was between neutrality and agreement. The data demonstrated a significant difference between the multiple subject and special education credential programs, with special educators perceiving to receive more education regarding the prevention of unethical student-teacher interactions. This being so, the scores were still between neutrality and agreement.
Chapter 5

Discussion

The responsibilities of the modern educator are complex and diverse. Teachers must be prepared for the pressures put upon them for student success. Teacher preparation programs play a vital role in preparing teachers for the multifaceted role of educators. It is here that teacher candidates learn the pedagogy of best practice instruction. But are they prepared to support the social and emotional growth of their students and engage in ethical student-teacher interactions? Sockett (2008) posited this question and suggested that teacher credential programs have moved to a more epistemic focus to prepare teachers for the high-stake testing atmosphere that presently pervades education. The present focus leaves little room for moral education that supports the social and emotional development of students and encourages a more caring educator (Gomez et al., 2004).

Research conducted on educational systems in Israel and Zimbabwe gives cause for alarm (Khoury-Kassabri, 2006; Shumba, 2004). In Israel, Khoury-Kassabri, provided evidence that almost one third of all students reported experiencing verbal or emotional abuse by school staff. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, Shumba found that over 50% of all students reported experiencing some form of verbal or emotional abuse by school staff. While research such as these have not been conducted in America, Hyman and Snook (1999) did find that 50% to 60% of Americans responded positively when asked if they had experienced verbal or emotional abuse from school
staff during their educational experience. Considering the serious implications for students it is imperative this topic be addressed by the educational community.

Previous research has demonstrated that students experience emotional trauma when abuse occurs in the classroom such as excessive screaming at students, degrading comments, name-calling, threatening comments, using homework as punishment, harsh criticism, and excessive demands on performance (Brendgen et al., 2006; McEachern et al., 1987). Students may display symptoms such as low self-esteem, anxiety, fear of the teacher, and school-depression, headaches, stomachaches, sleep disturbances, excessive crying, and overall withdrawal from community. In addition, behavioral problems may demonstrate themselves as aggression, rebelliousness, or disrespect toward adults. Brendgen et al. (2006) suggest that students are simply modeling teachers’ maladaptive behaviors. These findings support the need to examine teacher preparation programs and verify that teacher candidates are being prepared to be moral and ethical educators, considering their influence on student development.

This chapter will examine the research question in relation to the data collected in an attempt to answer if teacher candidates perceive they are adequately prepared to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions. In addition, sub-questions relating to the larger question were:
Research question one. Do teacher candidates perceive the teacher credential program as providing them with adequate stress management strategies, which help prevent verbal and emotional abuse in the classroom?

Research question two. Do teacher candidates perceive that ethics has been adequately addressed within course content?

Research question three. How many courses do teacher candidates recognize as addressing ethical teacher conduct?

Research question four. Do teacher candidates perceive they have received adequate education regarding the prevention of unethical teacher behaviors?

Research question five. Does a variance exist among the perceived preparedness in regards to teacher ethical conduct among multiple subject, single subject, middle level, special education, and integrated credential programs?

The current findings are summarized in context of the research review presented in Chapter 2 on the topic of ethical student-teacher interactions. In addition, limitations to the present study are examined and suggestions for future research in this area will be explored. In conclusion, recommendations are proposed for the CSUSM teacher credential program which could enhance the ethical preparedness of future educators.

Summary and Interpretation of Findings

The central findings of the present study suggest that teacher candidates are uncertain with regard to their perception of being prepared to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions. The results on the Overall Preparedness scale created
and applied with teacher candidates for the purpose of this study indicate that
candidates are ambiguous in their perception of the credential program preparing
them adequately to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions. The findings
support the need to expand education regarding ethics in the teacher credential
program.

The results indicated that candidates do not perceive that they receive training
regarding stress management strategies to assist with job related pressures. The
present findings found candidates uncertain if ethics are being adequately addressed
in required coursework. In line with other findings, participants identified one or
fewer courses addressing a teacher code of ethics. While scores were slightly higher
regarding perceived education in the prevention of unethical student-teacher
interactions, participants’ responses were still between neutral and agree. Participants
did acknowledge the credential programs do have a strong emphasis on creating a
positive classroom environment and do address how teacher behavior can affect
student physical and emotional wellbeing. Although these are components of
developing ethical student-teacher interactions, it is clear from the results of this
study that candidates do not perceive a strong focus on ethics in the credential
program.

Interestingly, there was a significant difference between the special education
and multiple subject programs in the area of prevention. This finding was not
unexpected considering the additional training special educators receive to support
exceptional students. Even so, special education candidates reported feeling only somewhat prepared in the area of prevention of unethical student-teacher interactions.

The findings of the present study are consistent with previous research on the subject. Benbenishyt et al. (2002) found that many teachers were ill prepared for the pressures of the job and the needed skills for classroom management. Grant and Agosto (2008) suggested that many teacher credential programs include topics such as social justice and equity, yet fail to make it relevant for the classroom. Barrett et al. (2006) suggests the teaching profession lacks a cohesive, nationally recognized, and enforceable code of ethics. Though the responses were not included for the purpose of this study, participants were asked an open-ended question in regard to which courses they perceived most beneficial in preparing candidates to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions. Some respondents stated that they were unsure what a code of ethics was or that courses taught a lot of theory with little practical application. These comments support the need for an emphasis to be put on the ethical dimension of the profession (Barret et al., 2006; Campbell, 2000; Gomez et al., 2004).

The present research adds support for the proposition that teacher credential programs should expand their focus from epistemic goals and incorporate an emphasis on the ethical dimension of the teaching profession. Future research on the occurrence of student victimization will prove to be difficult in a litigious society. This makes it all the more important for research to focus on teacher credential programs and implementation of prevention measures to assure students are receiving instruction in a nurturing environment.
Limitations of Study

At least three caveats should be mentioned with regard to the present study. First, the study was limited to teacher candidates enrolled in the College of Education at CSUSM and cannot be assumed to apply to all teacher credential programs. Secondly, the College of Education at CSUSM has a strong emphasis on social justice and equity. The focus is threaded through much of the coursework and is included in the college’s mission statement. It is possible that by including the term ethics, even though the definition was clearly stated on the survey, that participants confused ethics with social justice and equity. When participants were asked if courses addressed the topic of ethics they may have regarded social justice and equity as ethics. This possibility was demonstrated by the comments in response to Question 10 that were not included in the quantitative data analysis. This question asked which courses were most beneficial in preparing candidates for ethical student-teacher interactions. Responses ranged from candidates perceiving all courses addressed ethics to responses that differentiated the difference between courses that addressed social justice and equity and those that addressed ethics. The responses that differentiated between the two agreed that most courses addressed social justice and equity while few to none addressed the concept of ethics. This confusion might have been eliminated and results different if the researcher had removed the term ethics from the survey. Lastly, the participants were new to teaching and had yet to be responsible for their own classroom. This lack of work experience might affect their
perception of how much education on ethics is enough to support ethical student-teacher interactions.

**Recommendation for Future Research**

Continued exploration on the occurrence of verbal or emotional abuse in the classroom is needed. A study that questions if experienced teachers in the field perceive they were prepared as new teachers to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions would be enlightening. In addition, an extensive study needs to be conducted that surveys students, parents, administrators, and teachers about how they define verbal or emotional abuse and how often they perceive it occurs in the classroom. This valuable information would be beneficial in the development of prevention strategies to be utilized by teacher credential programs and school administration. Finally, future research should include the environmental perspective in relation to increased risk of student maltreatment by school staff. Khoury-Kassabri (2006) found a significant difference between student population and location in relation to students’ exposure to victimization. Students in environments with fewer resources had a greater chance of experiencing verbal or emotional abuse. With the current educational ideology of sanctioning funds and resources to schools that are low performing, it is possible the risks of student maltreatment are increasing. Further research in this area is vital.

**Implications for the College of Education at CSUSM**

In light of the results of the present study it is clear that CSUSM’s focus on the need for a positive classroom environment is reaching teacher candidates.
Participants’ strong agreement supports this statement. In contrast, credential candidates seemed ambiguous regarding their education in the area of ethics. The results also demonstrated candidates do not feel prepared for the stress that they will encounter as a teacher in the present educational climate.

The College of Teachers in Ontario, Canada found success by implementing an inquiry model that instructs through the use of case studies involving complex ethical dilemmas (Cherubini, 2008). Through reflection, candidates explore the ethical conundrums that they will experience as a modern-day educator. Campbell (2006) also encourages teacher credential programs to focus on what she terms ethical knowledge that identifies a teacher’s role as a moral agent in the classroom. In addition, the creation of a Code of Ethics for educators, though not insuring adherence, would provide a moral imperative (Campbell, 2001).

The present study collected data regarding undergraduate degrees of teacher candidates. Although these results were not used for the present study, they demonstrated the vast differences in prior knowledge teacher candidates come to the program with. Thirty-four different undergraduate degrees were represented. They ranged from Child Development and Liberal Studies to Ceramics and Apparel Merchandising. It is questionable how much education a candidate with a Ceramics undergraduate degree has in the area of child development. The present study did not examine the quantity of courses that addressed child development or the participants’ prior knowledge in this area. Considering previously reviewed research agrees that the education of teacher candidates is a key component in the prevention of student
victimization, this is an area that might be examined further. An additional course in child development for those candidates who have not had prior education would be beneficial. Understanding the various development stages of children should be a key component in learning how to teach them.

Conclusion

Children are a society’s greatest assets. They represent the future of humanity. It is the responsibility of all members of a community to assure that children are nurtured and protected. This responsibility is especially true for the educational system, whose primary goal is preparing children to be productive, successful members of society. As our educational system focuses on high-stake testing and productivity, more pressure is exerted on students and teachers alike. In this demanding climate, it is vital that society not forget that these students are children, children who need a caring professional to guide them through the trials and tribulations of childhood. Success can only be achieved when every teacher understands their duty to guarantee that every student in every classroom feels nurtured and worthy of a kind word and smile while they learn.
References


Gillette, M. D., & Schultz, B. D. (2008). Do you see what I see?: Teacher capacity as


Background of recent efforts in Manitoba to highlight the problem of emotional child abuse. Winnipeg, MAN.


Demers, M. Cochran-Smith, S. Feiman-Nemser, D. J. McIntyre (Eds.),


Appendix A

Teacher Candidate Survey
(Circle all that apply)  Credential Program: Multiple Subject/ Single Subject/ Special Education/ ICP/ Middle Level  Enrollment: Full-time/ Part-time  Cohort:______________
Semesters completed in credential program? ______ Age ______ Gender ______
Ethnicity: African American/Black ______ American Indian/Alaskan Native ______
Asian/Pacific Islander ______ Hispanic ______ White ______ Undergraduate Major ______

CSUSM Credential Program Survey

For the purpose of this survey ethics will be defined as a set of principals regarding right and moral conduct

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly Disagree

The teacher credential program at California State San Marcos...

1. provided me with stress management strategies which will help me with job related pressures.  5  4  3  2  1

2. has addressed various ethical dilemmas I might encounter as a teacher.  5  4  3  2  1

3. has addressed how to develop ethical student-teacher interactions.  5  4  3  2  1

4. emphasized the need to create a positive classroom environment.  5  4  3  2  1

5. has addressed the components of student verbal or emotional abuse by teachers.  5  4  3  2  1

6. taught specific guidelines regarding ethical student-teacher interactions.  5  4  3  2  1

7. has addressed how my behavior can affect my students' physical and emotional wellbeing.  5  4  3  2  1

8. How many of your courses addressed a teacher's code of ethics?
   0-2  3-5  6-9  All Classes

9. How many of your courses addressed ethical student-teacher interactions?
   0-2  3-5  6-9  All Classes

10. What courses were most beneficial in preparing you to engage in ethical student-teacher interactions?