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Effects of student nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors on teachers' behaviors and perceptions

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EFFECTS OF
STUDENT NONVERBAL AND VERBAL IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS
ON TEACHERS'
BEHAVIORS AND PERCEPTIONS

Thesis submitted to
The Graduate School of
Marshall University

In partial fulfillment of the
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Master of Arts
Communication Studies

by

Nina C. Persi

Marshall University

Huntington, West Virginia

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as meeting the research requirements for the master's degree.

Advisor _____ *Robert Brakunko* _____

Committee Member _____ *Edward Woods* _____

Committee Member _____ *Camilla Brammer* _____

Department of Communication Studies

_____ *Ronald Deutsch* _____

Dean of the Graduate School

-i-

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<div align="center">

O.U., ready or not, here I come!

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<div align="right">

Nina C. Persi

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Chapter I

Introduction

Rationale

In the education profession, teachers are often hired, retained, or terminated based on their effectiveness at teaching and moreover, their skill in engaging students to learn. Effective teachers promote student learning which involves cognitive, affective and behavioral changes (Bloom, 1956). As Comstock, Rowell, and Bowers (1995) state, "In other words, teachers who communicate positive regard to their students promote student learning" (p. 251).

Numerous studies have sought to identify the particular communication behaviors that a teacher can employ to increase his or her effectiveness in the classroom. Additionally, researchers have been interested in explaining how teachers communicate this positive regard to their students, stimulating them to learn. Over the past fifteen years, researchers have investigated the impact of teachers' nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors on the dynamics of the classroom in a variety of studies including Andersen's (1979) initial investigation of the immediacy construct in relation to student learning, Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond's (1986) study linking immediacy to teacher management of classroom interaction and behavior control strategies, and Moore, Masterson, Christophel, and Shea's (1996) more recent investigation examining

clearly associated with teachers' effectiveness as repeated evidence shows that students learn most from teachers who are "warm, friendly, immediate, approachable, affiliative and fostering of close, professionally appropriate personal relationships" (Andersen & Andersen, 1987, p. 57).

Immediacy

Immediacy, as conceptualized by Mehrabian (1971, 1981) refers to behaviors that enhance closeness to and interaction with others because they reduce psychological and/or physical distance between communicators, increase overall sensory stimulation and arousal, and promote liking. According to Mehrabian (1981), the verbal and nonverbal behaviors considered to decrease psychological and physical distance between people and indicate immediacy are eye contact, reduced distance, touch, smiling, humor, and use of inclusive language.

Mehrabian (1971) bases the immediacy construct on approach and avoidance principles. Approach or immediate behaviors indicate liking while nonimmediate behaviors or avoidance indicate disliking. Simply stated, "People are drawn toward persons and things they like, evaluate highly, and prefer, and they avoid or move away from things they dislike, evaluate negatively, or do not prefer" (Mehrabian, 1971, p. 1). Kearney, Plax, and Wendt-Wasco (1985) explain this relationship with clarity, "Since we cannot always move away from things we

do not like and get to things we do like, this liking comes across in smaller, more abbreviated forms of actual approach" (p. 64). Mehrabian (1971) regards immediacy and liking as "two sides of the same coin. That is, liking encourages greater immediacy and immediacy produces more liking" (p.77). It appears then, the major communicative function of immediacy behaviors is to reflect a more positive orientation of the communicator to the receiver (Andersen, Norton, & Nussbaum, 1981).

To substantiate this claim of the linkage of immediacy and liking, Mehrabian (1968d, 1969b cited in Mehrabian, 1972), reviewed experimental findings corresponding to the communication of attitudes (evaluation and liking) and status (potency or social control) through posture and position cues. Physical proximity, touching, eye contact, a forward lean rather than a reclining position, and an orientation of the torso toward rather than away from an interaction partner were all associated in the communication of a more positive attitude. More recently, the interpersonal warmth and closeness immediacy promotes is supported in research by Burgoon, Buller, Hale, and deTurck (1984). By examining interpersonal encounters, Burgoon (1984, et al.) found that high eye contact, close proximity, forward body lean, and smiling all indicated greater intimacy, attraction, and trust. In contrast, low eye contact, a more distant position, backward body lean, and the absence of smiling and touch conveyed greater detachment from the

interaction.

The previous studies placed emphasis on the nonverbal aspect of immediacy, but immediacy exists in the verbal context as well. As Mehrabian (1972) explains, "The basic hypothesis relating immediacy to attitudes predicts that less immediacy is selected by a communicator when he has negative feelings toward his addressee, toward the contents of his communication, or toward the act of communicating those contents" (Wiener & Mehrabian, 1968, cited in Mehrabian, 1972, p. 31). This nonimmediacy is conveyed by a speaker's separation from himself from the object of his message, from his addressee, or from the message itself is an instance of avoidance behavior which is motivated by negative affect toward the object, the addressee, or the message respectively.

Several studies indicate that verbal immediate cues result in perceptions of approach or avoidance. Conville (1975) concluded that communicators with low verbal nonimmediacy were perceived as more authoritative and as having a more positive character than were communicators with medium and high verbal nonimmediacy (cited in Sanders & Wiseman, 1990, p. 34). Anthony's (1978) study illustrated that when an individual uses immediate expressions in conversation about another, he or she signals a greater liking for and a greater intent for continued interaction in comparison to a less immediate communicator. In comparison, a communicator's negative attitude toward another individual is

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reflected in lower levels of verbal immediacy (Mehrabian, 1967). After reviewing

the extensive research on verbal immediacy, Bradac, Bowers, and Courtright

(1979) determined that positive affect on the behalf of a source increases verbal

immediacy, cognitive stress on behalf of a source was negatively related to

immediacy, individuals view high immediacy as an indication of positive affect,

and lastly, verbal immediacy is associated with perceptions of source competence

and character. From this discussion of both verbal and nonverbal immediacy, it is

clear then, these behaviors reflect a positive attitude on the part of the sender

toward the receiver (Mehrabian, 1971).

Teacher Immediacy

The immediacy construct has been particularly well-suited to examine the

communication interactions between teachers and students. In reference to

instructional communication, the behaviors that teachers enact in the classroom

communicate specific attitudes towards students and "as such, immediate teachers

communicate positive attitudes or approach orientations, while nonimmediate

teachers signal distancing and detachment" (Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, &

Richmond, 1986, p. 45). These attitudes of teachers can be communicated to

students through the use of both verbal and nonverbal cues. Typical nonverbal

teacher immediacy behaviors include smiling at the class, eye contact, gesturing

during class, movement about the classroom, using a variety of vocal expressions

while talking to the class, and a relaxed posture (Gorham, 1988). Furthermore, typical verbal teacher immediacy behaviors involve using humor in class, praising students' work, actions, or comments, frequently initiating and/or demonstrating willingness to become engaged in conversations with students before, after or outside of class, self-disclosing, asking questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions, following up on student-initiated topics, providing feedback on students' work and inviting students to telephone or meet outside of class if they have questions or want to discuss a matter (Gorham, 1988).

Seminal research by Andersen (1979) found a significant relationship between nonverbal teacher immediacy and positive student affect. Findings from this study revealed that "The more immediate a person is, the more likely he/she is to communicate at a close distance, smile, engage in eye contact, use direct body orientation, use overall body movement and gestures, touch others, relax, and be vocally expressive" (p. 548).

Student Immediacy

An examination of the effects of immediate/nonimmediate student behaviors on teacher behaviors and perceptions has not been undertaken to date. Although teachers may claim to be impartial when interacting with their students, it is highly likely that teachers will favor some students and as a result may give them preferential treatment. For instance, a teacher's positive impression of a

student may result in behaviors which could conceivably range from acceptance of late assignments without penalty to maintenance of direct eye contact while involved in conversation. In contrast, if a teacher views a student in a negative or neutral manner, this perception could possibly limit the students' ability to succeed in the classroom and may ultimately affect the teacher's overall relationship with and evaluation of the student.

Based on this assumption, the presence and enactment of student immediacy behaviors could be linked to favorable impression formation and in turn influence outcomes controlled by their teachers. An understanding of this communicative phenomenon is vital to both students and teachers and could provide valuable information for subsequent research. Students are influential, dynamic communicators within the classroom both verbally and nonverbally, thus, the case for expanding our an understanding of their behaviors is compelling and provides the rationale for this investigation.

Literature Review

Immediacy and Learning

Learning has been conceptualized as a process involving the acquisition or modification of affective, behavioral, and/or cognitive learning (Bloom 1956, Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964). Krathwohl, et al. (1964) found that most of the objectives stated by teachers and in education literature could be placed in one

of these three major classifications. Specifically, affective learning is concerned with the development of favorable or unfavorable attitudes toward course content, the teacher, or learning in general; cognitive learning emphasizes comprehension and retention of knowledge; and behavioral learning is the development of psychomotor skills or observable behavior change as a result of learning (Bloom, 1956). The research that has been conducted linking immediacy behaviors to student learning is quite extensive and illustrates its association in promoting teacher effectiveness.

Immediacy and Affective Learning

Andersen (1979) first investigated immediacy in the classroom and this seminal research found that teacher immediacy was positively related to student's affective learning. Specifically, nonverbal immediacy predicted 46% of the variance in student affect and about 20% of the variance toward course content, however, immediacy was not shown to be associated with cognitive learning when measured by performance on a multiple choice test. Students viewed immediate teachers as being more positive and effective which subsequently led to increased affect toward both the teacher and the course itself. Additionally, the presence of immediacy in teachers was positively related to student likelihood of enrolling in another related course.

Andersen, Norton, and Nussbaum (1981) also found that nonverbal

immediacy positively influenced the perceived effectiveness of a teacher and student affective orientations toward the course. Specifically, the results indicated that the better teachers (those who were stratified above the mean) were perceived as demonstrating more interpersonal solidarity in the classroom, a more positive communicator style score overall, and were also perceived as more dramatic, open, relaxed, impression-leaving, and friendly. Again, no meaningful statistical relationships were found between teacher communication and cognitive learning.

Andersen and Withrow (1981) investigated the role of immediacy on the nonverbal expressiveness of the teacher. In order to measure nonverbal expressiveness, the researchers combined items from the Behavioral Indicants of Immediacy Scale (Andersen, Andersen, & Jensen, 1979), the Communication Style Measure (Norton, 1979) and new items directly assessing expressiveness and enthusiasm. Results indicated that nonverbal expressiveness had a positive impact on the students' attitudes toward the teacher and the message, but no effect on cognitive learning.

Kearney, Plax, and Wendt-Wasco (1985) examined immediacy salience and teacher nonverbal immediacy as potential indicators of student affective learning across different types of course content. Divergent courses were defined on a continuum ranging from P-type (courses focusing primarily on people-oriented content) to T-type (courses including content which is product or task-oriented).

Results from this investigation indicated that teacher immediacy is critical for particular student affective learning outcomes in both P and T-type classes. In general, a positive relationship was found between teacher immediacy and effective learning for students in communication and accounting classes.

McCroskey, Richmond, Plax, and Kearney (1985) and Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond (1986) focused on teacher control strategies related to both nonverbal immediacy and affective learning. These studies indicated that students' affect is primarily a function of perceptions of nonverbal immediacy. Particularly, students evaluated highly those teachers who were immediate and employed selective behavior alteration techniques (BAT's) in classroom management. Results indicated that positive student affect was associated with verbal control messages related to nonverbal immediacy or approach. Teacher immediacy was positively associated with the use of primarily reward-oriented or prosocial BAT's and generalized nonverbal immediacy was shown to be negatively associated with the use of punishment-oriented or anti-social BAT's.

Gorham (1988) investigated both verbal and nonverbal immediacy in the classroom and found that teachers indicated differentiated use of various types of verbal immediacy messages between small and larger classes, and that the impact of both verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors on learning were enhanced as class size increased.

Studies linking affective learning to immediacy beyond college students include McDowell, McDowell and Hyderdahl's (1980) study of verbal and nonverbal immediacy in junior and senior high school classrooms and Kelley's (1988) study of verbal and nonverbal immediacy at the junior and senior high school levels as well. Additional studies examining the multicultural classroom (Sanders & Wisemen, 1990), a comparison of U.S. and Puerto Rican classrooms (Fayer, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1993), and a comparison between Euro-American and African-American college teachers and students (Neuliep, 1995), further demonstrated a positive relationship between immediacy and student affective learning.

Immediacy and Behavioral Learning

Furthermore, immediacy is positively correlated with student behavioral learning. Andersen's (1979) initial study of immediacy in instructional communication indicated that teacher immediacy behaviors predicted 18% of the variance in college students' likelihood of engaging in the communication practices suggested in the course and 18.31% of enrolling in another related course.

McDowell, McDowell and Hyderdahl (1980) replicated Andersen's (1979) study in junior and senior high schools. Junior high students who reported high ratings of teachers with the Behavioral Indicants of Immediacy Scale (BII) also

reported that they enjoyed engaging in communication practices and received

higher grades. At the senior high level, significant positive relationships existed

between the BII and an engaging in communication practices as well.

Gorham (1988), Christophel (1990) and Sanders and Wiseman (1990) also

confirmed a relationship between teachers' use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors

and students' attitudes toward proposed behaviors and student intentions to engage

in the proposed behaviors.

Immediacy and Cognitive Learning

The role of immediacy and its' association with student perceptions of

cognitive learning has also been investigated as evidenced in research findings

Early research by Andersen (1979) and McDowell, McDowell and Hyerdahl

(1980) did not find a correlation between cognitive learning as operationalized by

scores on a 50-item multiple choice test.

Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey (1987) argued that the previous

measurement of cognitive learning based on students' test results was not accurate

and in their study, they relied on student perceptions and memory. Their

measurement of cognitive learning was the following two questions: "On a scale

of 0-9, how much did you learn in the class (0 means you learned nothing and 9

means you learned more than in any other class you've had)?" and (on the same

scale) "How much do you think you could have learned if you had the ideal

instructor?" (Richmond, et al., 1987, p. 581). A "learning loss" score was calculated by subtracting the first scale from the second scale and adjusted for the type of course in question and separated teacher behavior from perceived value of the subject area (Richmond, et al., 1987, p. 581). In two studies involving college students, correlations involving cognitive learning, learning-loss variables and total immediacy scores indicated approximately 50% shared variance for study one, and for study two, correlations indicated 26% of variance for learning and that with learning loss 36% shared variance.

Kelley and Gorham (1988) investigated the influence of immediacy on the recall of information as immediacy was thought to influence arousal which in turn would influence attention and recall. Four experimental conditions were used involving degrees of eye contact and immediacy and results showed that high physical immediacy with eye contact had the greatest effect on short term recall.

Gorham (1988) investigated both verbal and nonverbal immediacy on student learning and measured cognitive learning through student perceptions of their own learning by answering the questions from Richmond and colleagues' (1987) study. Findings from the study showed the combined verbal and nonverbal immediacy scores accounted for 19.3% of the variance in students' perceptions of cognitive learning and 31.4% of the variance in learning loss.

Sanders and Wiseman (1990) examined the effects of verbal and nonverbal

teacher immediacy on all three areas of learning in the multi cultural classroom and assessed students' cognitive learning through the use of the same question "On a scale of 0-9..." (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990, p. 346). For all four ethnic groups; White, Asian, Hispanic, and Black seven particular nonverbal and verbal behaviors were significantly relating to cognitive learning suggesting that immediacy is instrumental in learning regardless of ethnicity.

Similar findings from Christophel (1990), Gorham and Zakahi (1990), Fayer, Gorham, and McCroskey (1993), and Neuliep (1995) all support conclusions that teachers' immediacy behaviors positively impact student's perceptions of their own learning.

Verbal Immediacy and Learning

The majority of immediacy studies have focused primarily on nonverbal immediacy while a more limited number of of investigations have examined verbal immediacy. Seminal research by Andersen, Norton, and Nussbaum (1981) found that perceptions of teacher immediacy and communicator style were significantly associated and that style was positively related to affective and behavioral learning but not cognitive learning.

Gorham (1988) developed a specific measure of verbal immediacy and found that teachers who enacted these behaviors positively influenced student's perceptions of cognitive learning, behavioral intent, and general affect toward the

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course. Additional research by Christophel (1990), Gorham and Christophel (1990), and Sanders and Wiseman (1990) illustrate that the presence of such behaviors increases student affective, behavioral, and cognitive learning.

Lastly, Downs, Javidi, and Nussbaum (1988) examined three particular aspects of verbal immediacy; use of humor, self-disclosure, and narratives. Findings showed that award winning teachers used each type of verbal immediacy but not more frequently than non-award winning teachers. The researchers explained this by suggesting award winning teachers may be able to monitor when they are engaging in an abundance of self-disclosure or inappropriate humor.

Immediacy and Motivation

Additionally, the impact of teacher immediacy on student motivation in the classroom has been investigated. Richmond (1990) found immediacy to be positively associated with motivation and motivation to be positively associated with affective and cognitive learning. Christophel (1990) found that both verbal and nonverbal immediacy were positively associated with student motivation to study, with state motivation being more highly related to immediacy than trait motivation. Furthermore, the investigation concluded that immediacy had to first modify students' state motivation in order to study its' impact on learning.

The Current Study

While the study of teacher immediacy in the classroom has been extensive, studies directly related to student immediacy behaviors do not exist. The following investigations have emphasized similar concepts to the ones that were addressed in the present study.

Immediacy and Student Compliance

Kearney, Plax, Smith, and Sorensen (1988) investigated the effect of teacher nonverbal immediacy and strategy type on college students' likelihood of resisting teacher compliance-gaining attempts. Students were asked to indicate their likelihood of complying with teacher demands in one of the following scenarios: An immediate teacher who used prosocial (or antisocial) behavior alteration techniques or a nonimmediate teacher who used either strategy type. The researchers found that students were less likely to resist an immediate teacher who employed prosocial techniques, but more likely to resist an immediate teacher who used antisocial techniques. In contrast, students reported greater resistance to a nonimmediate teacher who used antisocial techniques. Findings from this study indicate the significant influence of teachers' nonverbal immediacy on students' decisions to resist or comply with demands.

Lending further support to the influence of nonverbal behavior on compliance-gaining attempts, Segrin (1993) conducted a meta-analysis of forty-

nine studies with a total of 9,977 subjects to determine the strength of the

nonverbal-compliance relationship. Results from this investigation indicated that

there are consistently positive and small effects for gaze, touch, proxemics, and

apparel in increasing compliance-gaining effectiveness. Additionally, the effects

of nonverbal behaviors were compared with those of verbal behaviors. Analysis

showed that nonverbal behavioral effects on compliance-gaining appeared to be as

strong, and in some cases stronger, than the effects associated with various verbal-

compliance gaining strategies. In this investigation, it was posited that students'

nonverbal as well as verbal cues would have an impact on whether teachers' would

comply with requests made by the students.

Teacher Credibility and Evaluation

Sorensen (1989) assessed the relationship between teacher communication

behaviors and student perceptions of the teacher-learner relationship. Results

indicated the good teachers were judged by students to engage in more immediacy

behaviors than poor teachers. Additionally, McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen,

Fayer, and Barraclough (1995) conducted a study to point to the importance of

teachers' nonverbal immediacy across four cultures (Australia, Finland, Puerto

Rico, and the United States) and to assess the influence of these behaviors on

teacher evaluations. Subjects' responses demonstrated a high correlation between

total immediacy scores and two different measures of teacher evaluation,

illustrating shared variance between perceived immediacy and teacher evaluation ranging from about 27 to 48%. These findings clearly illustrated that nonverbal immediacy plays an important role in students' evaluations of their teachers. Furthermore, while teachers' immediacy may be substantially more important in some cultures than others, the direction of the relationship was constant in this particular study.

In a similar study conducted by Moore, Masterson, Christophel, and Shea (1996) students responded to instruments designed to measure the frequency of teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors and to gather students' perceptions of the quality of instruction. Responses from the subjects yielded significant positive correlations between immediacy and student ratings of instruction. In addition, students who observed frequent verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors in their professors were more inclined to give high ratings to such items as the overall quality of instruction and value of the course. Specifically, verbal and nonverbal immediacy were strong predictors of positive ratings for faculty/student interaction and lectures/communication.

It was expected that the relationship between credibility and immediacy would also be important when the situation was reversed and the teacher would be assessing his or her perceptions of the student's credibility.

__Reciprocal Immediacy__

In reference to the process of immediacy and intimacy changes in interpersonal transactions, Burgoon (1985) states that five different theories have been advanced and tested. The theory most applicable to this particular investigation was the reciprocity model (Burgoon, 1985). Burgoon (1985) explains, "Grounded largely in work on verbal self-disclosure and a proposed societal norm of reciprocity, it proposes that changes in immediacy and intimacy by one interactant will be met in kind by one's partner, leading to escalating or de-escalating levels of intimacy" (p. 376). Burgoon (1985) also refers to "a recent dyadic experiment using multiple nonverbal, verbal, and relational dependent measure found evidence of both linear reciprocity and linear compensation effects, as well as nonlinear relationships supporting either a violations model or reinterpreted arousal labeling model" (Burgoon & Hale, 1984, cited in Burgoon, 1985, p. 377).

Although previous studies have not investigated students' reciprocal immediacy towards their teachers, an investigation by Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, and Richmond (1986) alluded to the likelihood of this relationship based on Mehrabian's (1971) approach/avoidance principle of immediacy.

Research on teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom has been based on the proposition that teachers

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nonverbally communicate attitudes toward students. As such,

immediate teachers communicate positive attitudes or

approach orientations, while nonimmediate teachers signal

distancing and detachment. Consequently, teachers who have

positive feelings about their students are more likely to be

immediate and in turn, students are more likely to respond

reciprocally to those teachers (p. 45).

Based upon the extensive literature that documents students' positive affect toward

teachers who incorporate immediacy behaviors in the classroom, it was expected

that the presence or lack of immediate behaviors from students' would influence

reciprocal immediacy from their teachers as well.

Attentiveness

Norton (1977) broadly defines communicator style as "the way one verbally

and paraverbally interacts to signal how literal meaning should be taken,

interpreted, filtered, or understood" (p. 52). Furthermore, Norton (1977, 1978) has

conceptualized communicator style through various subconstructs such as

dominant, dramatic, animated, open, contentious, relaxed, friendly, attentive,

impression-leaving, precise, and communicative image. For the present study,

attentiveness is the main subconstruct under examination.

Norton and Pettegrew (1979) further explained attentiveness as a stylistic

component which signals that the communicative process is working. Rogers (1951) identified some of the stylistic components of an attentive communicator by these words: "One who conveys to the speaker that his contribution is worth listening to, that as a person he is respected enough to receive the undivided attention of another. The attentive communicator signals this by nodding his/her head, looking directly at the speaker, and restating what the speaker has just communicated" (cited in Norton & Pettegrew, 1979, p. 14). Rogers' original list of attentive behavioral cues has undergone considerable expansion as a result of more current research and includes eye contact, forward trunk lean, physical proximity, verbal following, restatement and interpretation, listener silence, and gestures (cited in Norton & Pettegrew, 1979).

Previous research on attentiveness has illustrated a strong predictive relationship between attentive activity and projection of a positive communicator image, interpersonal attractiveness, and effectiveness in teaching and in psychotherapeutic contexts (Norton & Pettegrew, 1979). However, what has not been determined through research is whether attentiveness is contingent upon the overt behavior of the receiver and if this has any bearing on the speaker's actions. This particular issue was addressed in the present study, an it was predicted that the presence or absence of immediate student would have an influence on whether the teacher enacted attentiveness when conversing. Additionally, because

attentive behaviors and immediacy behaviors are similar in nature, it was expected that if teachers reciprocate immediacy behaviors with their students, they were also more inclined to demonstrate attentiveness with the student as well when engaging in conversation.

Gender Differences

Past research in social psychology and communication literature has indicated numerous differences between genders in communication behaviors. In reference to nonverbal and verbal communication, there are extensive findings that show that males and females respond differently in such areas as distance, eye contact, facial expressions, posture and gestures. Although it would be difficult to summarize the findings for the purposes of this study, some general findings are presented in order to justify the inclusion of gender of respondent and gender of student in scenario in this investigation.

Pearson, West, and Turner (1995) in the book, Gender and Communication offer several conclusions in reviewing research conducted regarding differences between females and males in nonverbal decoding differences. In general, the authors state that females are better judges of nonverbal behavior, are more accurate decoders of nonverbal communication, are more sensitive to verbal-nonverbal cue conflicts in the perception of sincerity, and use gestures to help in making assessments of the relationships between people. Males, on the other

hand, are more accurate in judging deception, males who have occupations such as acting, art, and mental health are equal to, or superior to, females in decoding nonverbal cues, and use actions to help in making assessments of the relationships between people.

Furthermore, the gender variables were included based upon previous organizational communication research suggesting they are significant receiver-oriented variables which influence communication-oriented variables. Falcione and Greenbaum (1980) indicated that age, race, and sex were important variables in 26% of all articles within the area of intergroup communication.

One particular study in instructional communication addressed differences in gender and immediacy. Gorham's (1998) investigation of immediacy and student learning indicated that female teachers were somewhat more likely than males to provide feedback; to ask questions that solicit opinions or viewpoints; and to praise students' work, actions, or comments. Additionally, females were substantially more inclined to touch students and to smile. Gorham (1988) states, "While female teachers were found to be somewhat more immediate than males, the differences on the majority of immediacy variables were not significant and we cannot conclude that teacher gender is related to either immediacy or student learning in any particularly meaningful way" (p. 51).

Although in this investigation, participants will be responding to a

hypothetical situation, it was still valuable to assess whether or not females and males differ in their perceptions and proposed behaviors in response to the verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors of the student. Also, as this study was exploratory in nature, the author wanted to determine if the gender in the student scenario had any effect on the respondent as well.

Teaching Experience and Immediacy

Gorham and Zakahi's (1990) investigation of both teacher and student perceptions of immediacy and learning tested the relationship between teaching experience and teachers' ability to monitor perceptions of immediacy and learning. Results indicated there were no significant differences between the levels of teacher experience and the difference scores for perceptions of verbal and nonverbal immediacy. However, when students reported on the differences between more experienced and less experienced teachers, results showed that teachers with 1-5 years of experience were perceived as more verbally immediate than were those with 11 or more years of experience. Results for nonverbal immediacy were not significant.

Length of time instructing as a variable was included within this investigation to further explore the relationship between teacher experience and responses to immediacy.

Objectives

The primary intent of this study was to identify whether the immediacy behaviors in students has a significant impact on behaviors and perceptions of teachers. Variables included in the study were gender of the subject, gender of the student in the scenario, immediate or nonimmediate student scenario, subjects' length of teaching in years, a measure of subjects' perceptions of student credibility, a measure of subjects' attentiveness to students, a measure of subjects' reciprocal immediacy, and a measure of subjects' compliance with student requests. Of particular concern was the variance between scores of subjects' with an immediate student scenario as compared with scores of subjects with a nonimmediate student scenario.

By examining teachers' expectations for their own behaviors and perceptions of the student based on immediacy levels, this study sought to provide both an exploratory and explanatory view of the impact student behaviors have both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, this study attempted to discover if immediacy behaviors contribute to a teacher's favorable image of a student and whether these behaviors influence the teacher to respond in a positive manner as well. Based on this literature review, the following hypotheses and research questions were advanced and tested.

Hypotheses

The five principal hypotheses under investigation are:

Hypothesis$_1$: *The enactment or absence of student immediacy behaviors will influence demonstrations of attentiveness by teachers when conversing with students.*

Hypothesis$_2$: *The enactment or absence of student immediacy behaviors will influence teachers' reciprocal immediacy.*

Hypothesis$_3$: *The enactment or absence of student immediacy behaviors will influence teacher compliance with students' requests.*

Hypothesis$_4$: *The enactment or absence of student immediacy behaviors will influence teachers' perceptions of student credibility.*

Hypothesis$_5$: *A positive association will exist between teachers' scores of reciprocal immediacy and teachers' scores of attentiveness.*

The three principal research questions under investigation are:

Research Question$_1$: *Is there a significant difference in the means between male and female responses to the measures?*

Research Question$_2$: *Is there a significant difference in the means of responses based on the gender of the student in the scenario?*

Research Question$_3$: *Is there a significant difference in the means of subjects' scores based on length of time teaching?*

Chapter II

Methods

Research Design

This investigation used a survey questionnaire and assessed the effect of

immediacy in student behaviors on teacher perceptions and behaviors. The

independent variables were gender of the subject, gender of the student in the

scenario, immediate or nonimmediate student scenario, and subjects' indication of

teaching experience in years. The dependent variables were the subjects' rating of

student credibility utilizing McCroskey and Young's Teacher Credibility Measure

(1981) with a semantic differential scale, the subjects' willingness to demonstrate

components of attentiveness using selected items from an attentiveness measure

with a Likert-type scale established by Norton and Pettegrew (1979), the subjects'

scores on likelihood of illustrating reciprocal immediacy behaviors by using

selected items from Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey's Nonverbal Immediacy

Behaviors Instrument (1987) and Gorham's Verbal Immediacy Behaviors Measure

(1988) with a Likert-type scale, and the subjects' willingness to comply with

student requests as measured with a Likert-type scale.

Measures

Student Credibility Measure

Constructed by McCroskey and Young (1981) the Teacher Credibility scale

is a 12-item semantic differential scale which is utilized by students to evaluate a

specific instructor on the two dimensions of credibility (competence and character)

in terms of bi-polar adjectives on a 7-point scale. Responses are recoded so that

higher scores indicate perceptions of higher teacher credibility. In this study, the

measure was revised to measure subjects' perceptions of student credibility.

Various researchers report reliability for the measure ranging from .84 to .93 for

the competence dimension and .86 to .93 for the character factor (Beauty &

Behnke, 1980; McCroskey & Young, 1981; Beauty & Zahn, 1990; Powers,

Nitcavic, & Koerner, 1990, cited in Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994).

Additionally, a pilot study involving twenty undergraduate students at a

mid-sized south-eastern university assessed student perceptions of their teachers'

immediacy behaviors and overall credibility. Utilizing the General Immediacy

Scale and Teacher Credibility Measure, a one-tail test yielded a positive

correlation coefficient showing a strong correlation and a substantial relationship

between the two variables ($r=.60$, $p=.0002$, $r^2=.36$). In this study, the reliability for

the credibility measure ($n = 165$) was established by Cronbach's alpha at .89, $\bar{x} =$

52.73, $SD = 8.51$.

Attentiveness

The attentiveness variable was assessed by using a measure developed by

Norton and Pettegrew (1979). Items were selected from the original thirty item

semantic differential scale and Likert-type scale which measures subjects'

perceptions of three factors; behavioral (II) signals, sensitivities (III), and

evaluations (IV) relating to attentiveness. In this study, the measure was

reconstructed so that responses were measured with a 5-point Likert-type scale.

Items were chosen based on their overall applicability to this particular study. The

internal reliability (Hoyt coefficient) for the items in factors II, III, and IV is .91. In

this investigation, the reliability for the attentiveness measure (n = 175) was

reported by Cronbach's alpha at .65, $\bar{x} = 18.44$, SD = 3.44.

Teacher Reciprocal Immediacy

Gorham (1988) devised the Verbal Immediacy Behaviors scale to measure

student perceptions of their teachers' verbal behaviors or teachers' self reports of

their own behaviors using a 17-item Likert-type scale with a 4-point continuum. In

order to measure subjects' willingness to reciprocate immediacy for this study,

several items from this scale were chosen. Alpha and split-half coefficients for

students' assessments support high reliability for the Verbal Immediacy Behaviors

scale with results ranging from .83 to .94 and for the teachers' self-report at .89

(Gorham, 1988; Christophel, 1990; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Powell & Harville,

1990, cited in Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994).

Richmond, Gorham, and McCroskey (1987) constructed the Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument which measures nonverbal behaviors that a teacher might enact while lecturing in front of the class. First, students indicate whether the instructor demonstrates the immediacy behavior. If yes, then they indicate the frequency ranging on a 1-4 continuum. Again, specific items from this scale were altered so they could assess subjects' tendencies to give reciprocal immediacy to the student in the scenario. For the purposes of this study, respondents recorded their responses based on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument has an estimated reliability ranging from .73 to .89 (Richmond et al., 1987; Gorham, 1988; Christophel, 1990; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990, cited in Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994). Reliability in this study for reciprocal immediacy (n = 169) was established by Cronbach's alpha at .42, $\bar{x}$ = 15.13, SD = 2.44.

Teacher Compliance

Since no measure exists to assess teachers' intentions of complying with student requests, a list of potential items was generated and presented to a pilot group of teachers (n=5) to determine the realism and applicability of each item. Reviewers were also asked to suggest any necessary revisions. From this list, seven particular items were determined to be the most likely requests made by

students. This list was then given to two undergraduate communication classes and subjects (n=27) were asked to rate the likelihood of their asking teachers those particular requests. A total of six items resulted from this survey and final questions were measured by a 5-point Likert-type scale. Reliability for the teacher compliance measure (n = 165) was reported by Cronbach's alpha at .55, $\bar{x} = 22.41$, SD = 4.22.

The explanatory variables taken into consideration are gender of the subject, gender of the student in scenario, and length of time teaching.

Procedures

The population parameter for this cross-sectional survey questionnaire included full-time and part-time faculty at the same mid-sized southeastern university where the pilot study was conducted. Full-time and part-time faculty includes individuals employed at the university's community college and the part-time staff represents graduate teaching assistants as well. A list of the complete population was obtained from the university's office of institutional research, and a simple random sample of 400 subjects was generated by use of a random numbers table. A total of 240 surveys was sent out to full-time faculty and 160 for part-time faculty. Totals of completed surveys for the part-time sample were 68 and 107 for the full-time sample resulting in an overall number of 175 completed responses. Ninety-three males (53%) and eighty-one females (46%) (one subject did not

report his or her gender) responded to the questionnaire which represented a 44% return.

There were four different scenarios within the survey and sixty of each condition were distributed among the sample size. For the male immediate scenario, 47 questionnaires were returned by 22 males and 25 females; for the female immediate scenario, 43 questionnaires were returned by 25 males and 18 females; for the male nonimmediate scenario, 43 questionnaires were returned by 25 males and 18 females, and for the female nonimmediate scenario, 42 questionnaires were returned by 20 males and 21 females (one respondent did not indicate his or her gender in this cell).

Once the sampling frame was determined, a prenotification of the survey was sent to the subjects approximately two weeks prior to the surveys' arrival (See Appendix A). A study by Fox, Crask, and Kim (1988) found that prenotification of a survey increases the response rate by as much as 47.4% (cited in Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991, p. 195). This brief note explained the nature of the study and encouraged participants' response to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to subjects on green paper as Fox, Crask, and Kim (1988) concluded colored paper produced a higher response rate than those printed on white paper (cited in Frey, et al., 1991, p. 195). The surveys were sent after the two-week period and subjects were instructed to put completed surveys in the accompanying previously

addressed envelope through campus mail procedures (See Appendix B).

Participants were asked to complete the survey within a two-week time period and

were thanked for their cooperation. A follow-up mailing was sent to all

participants after the two-week response period and reminded them to return their

completed surveys (See Appendix C).

After subjects read the cover letter they were instructed to read a brief

description of a student. These scenarios were adopted from a study by Kearney,

Plax, Smith, and Sorensen (1988) and were modified to accommodate the

specifications of the hypotheses under examination. In order to test some of the

research questions, four different treatments of the scenario including a male

immediate student, a female immediate student, a male nonimmediate student, and

a female nonimmediate student were used. Figure 1 indicates the scenario

descriptions with the headings removed.

Figure 1

Male/Female Description for the Immediate Student Scenario

A male/female student under your instruction seems relaxed, animated, and vocally expressive during your class lectures and discussion. Specifically, he/she asks questions in class and initiates conversations with you before, after, or outside of class. He/she smiles frequently, engages in a lot of eye contact with you as well as others, and is generally perceived as friendly and approachable. Moreover, when addressing you, he/she calls you by name and communicates at a relatively close distance while engaged in conversation with you.

Male/Female Description for the Nonimmediate Student Scenario

A male/female student under your instruction seems tense, reserved, and vocally unexpressive during your class lectures and discussion. Specifically, he/she does not ask questions in class and has not initiated conversations with you before, after, or outside of class. He/she seldom smiles, avoids looking directly at you as well as others, and is generally perceived as remote, aloof, or unapproachable. Moreover, when addressing you, he/she does not call you by name and communicates at a relatively far distance while engaged in conversation with you.

Subjects were then asked to respond to the scenarios by completing a number of questionnaire items to assess their attitudes towards the student and intentions of performing several behaviors in relation to the student described in the scenario. The first measure was five items which examined respondents to the attentiveness variable; the second measure involved twelve items which assessed subjects perceptions of the student's credibility, and the last measure was eleven items which incorporated the measures of reciprocal immediacy (four items) and

teacher compliance with the student's requests (six items). Upon completion of those measures, subjects responded to two demographic items inquiring about their gender and length of time instructing in years. A median split was used to classify "high" versus "low" years of teaching. Low amount of teaching was 11 years and below, whereas high amount of teaching was 12 years and above. Table 1 and Table 2 list the independent and dependent variables that were examined in the study.

Table 1

Independent Variables

X_1 :   Gender of Student in Scenario

Male=1
Female=2

X_2:   Gender of Subject

Male=1
Female=2

X_3:   Level of Teaching Experience

Low=1
High=2

X_4:   Level of Immediacy in Scenario

Nonimmediate=1
Immediate = 2

Table 2

Dependent Variables

(See Appendix B for actual measures)

Y_1: Subjects' perception of student credibility

Twelve items with a semantic differential scale with a 5-point continuum. Higher responses indicate higher overall credibility.

Y_2: Subjects' willingness to be attentive to the student while conversing

Five items with a Likert-type scale on a 5-point continuum, responses ranging from:
Very likely=5
Likely=4
Undecided=3
Unlikely=2
Very unlikely=1

Y_3: Subjects' willingness to reciprocate immediate behaviors

5 items with a Likert-type scale on a 5-point continuum, responses ranging from:
Very likely=5
Likely=4
Undecided=3
Unlikely=2
Very unlikely=1

Y_4: Subjects' willingness to comply with student requests

5 items with a Likert-type scale on a 5-point continuum, responses ranging from:
Very likely=5
Likely=4
Undecided=3
Unlikely=2
Very unlikely=1

Data Analysis

A 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 factorial design (gender of the student in the scenario [X_1] x gender of subject [X_2] x high versus low years of teaching [X_3] x immediate or nonimmediate student [X_4]) was set up for the analysis of the data. The effects of the independent variables were analyzed through the use of multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA).

The dependent variables of subjects' responses to the attentiveness measure [Y_2] and subjects' ratings of reciprocal immediacy [Y_3] were analyzed through the use of Pearsons' Product Moment Correlation (r).

Chapter III

Results

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the enactment or absence of student immediacy behaviors would influence demonstrations of attentiveness by teachers when conversing with those students. The influence of gender of the respondent and gender of the student in the scenario was also tested. Univariate tests on the dependent attentiveness variable (n=174) indicated significant effects for three independent variables: immediacy ($F[7, 166] = 8.41$, $p = .004$, $eta^2 = .048$), gender of respondent ($F[7, 166] = 7.26$, $p = .008$, $eta^2 = .042$), and gender of student ($F[7, 166] = 7.14$, $p = .008$, $eta^2 = .041$). No significant interaction existed amongst the factors. Female faculty ($\bar{x} = 19.08$) reported higher attentiveness than male faculty ($\bar{x} = 17.83$) and faculty ($\bar{x} = 18.94$) who received the female scenario reported higher scores of attentiveness than those faculty who received the male scenario ($\bar{x} = 17.93$). In reference to the immediacy condition, faculty ($\bar{x} = 19.18$) who received the scenario with the student nonimmediate characteristics reported they were more likely to be attentive when involved in conversation with the student as compared to faculty ($\bar{x} = 17.83$) with an immediate student description, thus, the hypothesis was supported. An independent t-test was run to see if there was a difference in responses between more experienced teachers ($\bar{x} = 18.59$) and less experienced teachers ($\bar{x} = 18.22$)

in reference to the attentiveness variable; the results were not significant. Differences in responses of faculty who reported "high" years of teaching and faculty who reported "low" years of teaching were insignificant [t(172) = .70, NS].

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the enactment or absence of student immediacy behaviors would influence teachers' reciprocal immediacy. Univariate tests on the dependent reciprocal immediacy variable (n = 172) did not yield any significant effects for any independent variable, thus, the hypothesis was not confirmed. An independent t-test was run to see if there was a difference in responses between more experienced teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 15.56) and less experienced teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 14.95) in reference to the reciprocal immediacy variable; the results were not significant. Differences in responses of faculty who reported "high" years of teaching and faculty who reported "low" years of teaching were insignificant [t(170) = 1.02, NS].

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the enactment or absence of student immediacy behaviors would influence teacher compliance with students' requests. The influence of gender of the student and gender of the respondent was also tested but did not yield significant results. Univariate tests on the dependent compliance variable (n = 172) revealed significant effects for one independent variable, immediacy (F[7, 164] = 7.30, p = .008, eta^2= .043). With respect to the immediacy behaviors of the student, faculty ($\bar{x}$ = 23.53) who responded to the student scenario

indicating nonimmediate behaviors reported they were more inclined to comply with requests made by students as compared to faculty ($\bar{x} = 21.31$) with an immediate student, therefore, the hypothesis was confirmed. The independent t-test run to assess if there was a difference in responses between more experienced teachers ($\bar{x} = 22.20$) and less experienced teachers ($\bar{x} = 22.57$) in reference to the compliance variable was not significant. Differences in responses of faculty who reported "high" years of teaching and faculty who reported "low" years of teaching were insignificant [t(170) = .47, NS].

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the enactment or absence of student immediacy behaviors would influence teachers' perceptions of student credibility. The influence of gender of the student and gender of the respondent was also tested. Univariate tests on the credibility variable (n = 169) indicated significant effects for two independent variables, immediacy (F[7, 161] = 82.92, p = .000, eta^2 = .340), and gender of student (F[7, 161] = 4.60, p = .034, eta^2 = .028). In the immediate condition, faculty ($\bar{x} = 57.12$) were more likely to perceive the student as being credible than faculty ($\bar{x} = 46.76$) in the nonimmediate condition, thus, the hypothesis was confirmed. Also, faculty ($\bar{x} = 53.17$) who responded to the female scenario perceived higher ratings of credibility as compared to faculty ($\bar{x} = 51.20$) who received the male scenario. No significant interaction existed amongst the factors. Results from the independent t-test indicated no significant difference in

responses between more experienced teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 15.56) and less experienced

teachers ($\bar{x}$ = 14.95) in reference to the credibility variable. Differences in

responses of faculty who reported "high" years of teaching and faculty who

reported "low" years of teaching were insignificant [t(167) = .24, NS].

No other independent variables were statistically significant for any other

hypothesis. Table 3 indicates the means for all dependent measures based on the

immediacy condition of the student.

Table 3

Means for Dependent Variables by Immediacy Condition

	Immediate Student	Nonimmediate Student	
Attentiveness	$\bar{x}$ = 17.68	$\bar{x}$ = 19.18	*
Student Credibility	$\bar{x}$ = 57.12	$\bar{x}$ = 46.76	*
Teacher compliance with student requests	$\bar{x}$ = 21.31	$\bar{x}$ = 23.53	*
Reciprocal Immediacy	$\bar{x}$ = 15.14	$\bar{x}$ = 14.81	NS

*p < .05

Hypothesis 5 predicted a positive association would exist between subjects'

scores of reciprocal immediacy and subjects' scores of attentiveness. One

Pearson's Product-Moment correlation was run for two dependent variables,

reciprocal immediacy and attentiveness. As predicted, reciprocal immediacy and

attentiveness were positively correlated. A one-tail significance yielded a positive

correlation coefficient indicating a substantial relationship; r (168) = .38, p = .000.

$r^2 = .14$. Faculty who reported the likelihood of demonstrating attentiveness while

conversing with the student in the scenario were more likely to enact reciprocal

immediacy with the student as well.

Chapter IV

Discussion

This study investigated teachers' perceptions and behaviors toward their students with respect to the immediacy construct. The findings demonstrated that varied differences occur when the student is described as one who exhibits "warm, friendly, immediate, approachable, affiliative and fostering of close, professionally appropriate personal relationships" (Andersen & Andersen, 1987, p. 57). The importance of the findings are discussed in reference to the study of instructional communication specifically, and the study of communication behavior in general.

This study illustrated that when students who are described as nonimmediate are involved in a conversation with their teacher, they can expect their teachers to show a greater interest in what they are saying. Because the student was described as reserved, aloof, and unapproachable, perhaps, in a one on one situation, the teacher responded in a way suggesting he or she may be particularly sensitive to the uneasiness of the student and would attempt to make the student feel more comfortable. Although this finding is inconsistent with the reciprocity model (Burgoon, 1985) it is supported by Argyle and Dean's (1965; Argyle & Cook, 1976) equilibrium theory. Argyle and Dean (1965) and Argyle and Cook (1976) argue that approach and avoidance forces operate to produce a more comfortable interpersonal interaction in conversation, and changes in one or

more immediacy behaviors are said to be arousing and prompt compensatory adjustments on other behaviors to restore equilibrium. Results from this study demonstrated that perhaps teachers are compensating for the nonimmediate student by increasing their own attentiveness in order for the interaction to be more balanced and comfortable. With a more immediate student, the individual is already relaxed and responsive so it appears the teacher would have to do or say little in the conversation to encourage responses by the student. From the description, the less immediate student appears to be somewhat lacking in interpersonal communication skills and as a result the teacher may be more likely to convey to the student that his or her contribution is worth listening to and he or she is respected enough to receive undivided attention in the conversation. This finding illustrates that attentiveness could be linked not only to the particular communicator style of the teacher, but also to the overt behaviors of the receiver adding to Norton and Pettegrew's (1979) research. To extend the generalizability of this conclusion, further studies exploring this relationship should be employed in additional contexts such as the superior-subordinate, doctor-patient, and therapist-patient relationships.

In reference to gender, analysis indicated that females were more likely to demonstrate attentive behaviors with students, findings that are consistent with gender differences throughout the nonverbal and verbal literature. Also, faculty

who received the female scenario reported they were more inclined to demonstrate attentive behaviors. Because there is limited amount of research dealing with the influence of gender on attentiveness behavior of another, these results are difficult to interpret. This finding was examined in reference to similar concepts of attentiveness. At least two factors of the attentiveness construct have been shown to be related to gender in previous studies.

Hall (1984) examined gender differences in eye contact and concluded that females are gazed at more frequently than males. The relationship between self-disclosure and gender has also been established. According to Pearson, West, and Turner (1995) "Women tend more than men to be the recipients of self-disclosure regardless of the discloser's sex" (p. 155). Moreover, Winstead (1986) states "the presence of a female has a powerful effect on the social behavior of another; it makes him or her more self-disclosing, more open, and less lonely" (cited in Pearson, West, & Turner, 1995, p. 155). Gaze and self-disclosure are part of a cluster of attentive behaviors including paraphrasing and forward lean and findings from this study were consistent with previous research, further broadening our understanding of gender differences. Future research of immediacy and attentiveness should address the gender variable to further extend the validity and generalizability of these results.

With respect to the reciprocal immediacy demonstrated by teachers within

the classroom in reference to student displays or absence of immediacy, the results were not significant. Researchers investigating student immediacy in the future might potentially explain this result by examining teachers in a natural classroom setting. By using direct observation, researchers could assess whether or not teachers in fact tend to reciprocate immediacy behaviors with their immediate students. Moreover, as no research particularly addresses teachers' reciprocal immediacy in response to students' demonstrations of immediacy perhaps teacher immediacy is a trait behavior and is not contingent on the student's behavior. Researchers examining reciprocal immediacy in general should examine this finding further to see if a trait assumption is supported.

In reference to teacher compliance with student requests, this study indicated that teachers were more willing to comply with those students who exhibited nonimmediacy behaviors than with the immediate students. Although this finding is inconsistent with the study of student compliance with teacher requests by Kearney, Plax, Smith, and Sorensen (1988), it is significant as it indicates the avoidance behavior of the student did not discourage the approach behavior of the teacher. Perhaps because the student is more unresponsive both verbally and nonverbally, the teacher may view the student with more empathy and concern and may comply with the student's request in the hope that the student in turn, will attempt to make changes in their behaviors indicating liking as well.

Most teachers want to assist their students whenever possible and some are particulary drawn to help those who appear to be more of a challenge and less affiliative. Moreover, if a teacher would not comply with the nonimmediate student's requests, the potential is there for the student to become even more reticent both in and outside of the classroom and may never ask for assistance from the teacher again. Conversely, if a teacher would comply with a student who is generally perceived as being well-liked and affiliative, this may indicate to the teacher that he or she does in fact favor that particular individual and would do things they normally would not do for other less desirable students.

This finding is a particularly fascinating one and deserves more attention in research addressing student immediacy. For instance, it may be valuable to have student confederates display both verbal and nonverbal immediacy and nonimmediacy in the classroom and report on teachers' willingness to comply with their requests. By conducting this kind of investigation, researchers could find out if verbal immediacy behaviors have more salience than nonverbal behaviors, whether there is more compliance with some requests over others, and whether the attitude of the student changes as a result of teacher compliance or noncompliance.

This study indicated also that the display of immediacy by students affects teachers' perceptions of students'. Although ideally teachers are thought to rely on objective criteria when assessing the capabilities of their students, this finding

illustrated that communication characteristics are also directly responsible for the impressions teachers form about their students. This could be both advantageous and detrimental for students. For those students who are naturally immediate, they could enjoy higher ratings of credibility by their teachers, subsequently affecting grade outcomes. However, if students are indeed competent but perhaps less immediate, they may be perceived as having less credibility than their more immediate counterparts. Once again, this may influence grades by teachers particularly in courses where performance is emphasized as is the case in many communication courses.

With respect to the gender variable regarding credibility, results indicated that female students were perceived as being more credible than male students. This result may be due to the stereotypical characteristics that are associated with females such as warmth, empathy, and affiliativeness, components that may be associated with the character dimension of the credibility measure.

An additional finding derived from this study revealed that when teachers employ reciprocal immediacy with their students they are more likely to also demonstrate the characteristic of the attentive communicator style when conversing with students. Although this result was intuitively based since many of the characteristics of both immediacy and attentiveness are similar, it is significant as the research scenario was described as taking place in the teacher's office. This

finding illustrates that the teachers who are more attuned to their own communication behaviors in the classroom are also more sensitive to similar behaviors when removed from the classroom and placed in another environment.

A final result from this study indicated that length of time teaching had no effect on the teachers' responses, however, this variable should be included in future studies investigating student immediacy to support or disconfirm this finding.

Conclusions

This study has been an initial attempt to understand how students and their communication behaviors are perceived and by their teachers. The findings suggest a number of potentially valuable directions for future research for instructional communication.

First, it is important to recognize that these results were obtained through the use of survey methods. Future research should investigate the effects of student immediacy where it is actually occurring, in the classroom. It would be advantageous to observe both student nonverbal and verbal immediacy to determine whether an overall presence or absence of such behaviors by the class as a whole affects the enactment of such behaviors from the teacher or whether immediate students have an effect on nonimmediate students. Additionally, by viewing immediate students' behaviors in a variety of disciplines, it would be

interesting to note the impact on teachers in different fields or majors. For instance, are teachers in art, music, or English more attuned to the immediate student as compared to those in math or science? Furthermore, by observing immediacy in the classroom, researchers can gain insight into the process orientation of immediacy and not just from the teacher's perspective or the student's perspectives. Second, both the attentiveness and reciprocal immediacy variables in response to student immediacy may be analyzed through more realistic methods such as an academic advising session. This could determine important outcomes of the student-teacher relationship outside the classroom and the teachers could use self-report methods immediately after the interaction to assess their actual behaviors and impressions in response to student behaviors. Third, it would be advantageous to conduct a longitudinal study of an initially nonimmediate student and the effects of training in specific nonverbal and verbal immediacy behaviors. Lastly, it would be useful to look at student immediacy behaviors at the elementary and secondary levels to see if differences exist between levels of instruction.

In some regards, this study demonstrates the positive value teachers place on immediacy behaviors by students and furthers our understanding of communication in the classroom. It is inferred that from these results, immediacy behaviors may explain why teachers have more positive perceptions of some

students over others but does not determine how they would potentially act with those students based on the presence or absence of such behaviors. Even though some teachers may view themselves as being impartial this study indicates that communication behaviors of students whether indicating liking or disliking have a direct influence on the teachers' perceptions and possible actions. It is important for both teachers and students to be aware of the outcomes associated with immediacy, and it is hoped that the questions raised by this study will serve as a catalyst for future research in a previously underexplored area.

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Prenotification Letter

September 25, 1996

Dear   :

From the field of full-time and part-time faculty at Marshall University, you have been selected at random as a participant for a forthcoming questionnaire concerning student communication behaviors. This questionnaire is a critical part of a larger endeavor, my thesis as a master's candidate in Communication Studies. The primary goal of this study is to assess your response to selected communicative behaviors of students. The results of this study will benefit teachers and students alike as communication in the classroom is central to the educational process.

You will receive the questionnaire through campus mail in approximately two weeks. In addition, an enclosed pre-addressed envelope will be included for convenience in return. You are assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of your responses as they will be held in the strictest of confidence.

As a teaching assistant, I am aware of the demands of time upon educators and have attempted to make the questionnaire both simple and brief. Your participation is vital for a successful study. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Nina C. Persi

Appendix B

The Survey Instrument

October 14, 1996

Dear Questionnaire Participant:

This survey of both full-time and part-time faculty at Marshall University will aid in understanding teachers behaviors and responses to selected communication behaviors. In order to successfully administer this questionnaire, please read all instructions carefully prior to recording your responses. Additionally, I would appreciate your not discussing the questionnaire with others in your department who may be participants in the study as well.

After filling out your responses, please place the completed questionnaire in the pre-addressed return envelope through campus mail within the next two weeks. I would like to re-emphasize that both your anonymity and confidentiality of responses will be maintained. Thank you in advance for your continued cooperation.

Sincerely,

Nina C. Persi

Please read the following description of a student and keep it in reference for all successive questions.

> A male/female student under your instruction seems tense, reserved, and vocally unexpressive during your class lectures and discussion. Specifically, he/she does not ask questions in class and has not initiated conversation with you before, after, or outside of class. He/she seldom smiles, avoids looking directly at you as well as others. Moreover, when addressing you, he/she does not call you by name and communicates at a relatively far distance while engaged in conversation with you.

Instructions: Please picture yourself having a conversation in your office with the student in the scenario about an upcoming exam. Based on your perceptions, assess your likeliness to perform the following behaviors when engaged in conversation with him/her. Please record your responses based on the following scale:

<div align="center">

Very likely=5
Likely=4
Undecided=3
Unlikely=2
Very unlikely=1

</div>

1. Would you try to encourage the student to continue talking by frequently nodding your head during the conversation?   1 2 3 4 5

2. Would you try to encourage the student to continue talking by leaning toward him/her?   1 2 3 4 5

3. Would you try to encourage the student to continue talking by directly looking at him/her?   1 2 3 4 5

4. Would you try to encourage the student to continue talking by frequently relating similar experiences during the conversation?   1 2 3 4 5

5. When communicating with this student, would you restate what he/she said if unclear on what was said?   1 2 3 4 5

Instructions: The following are a series of attitude scales. You are asked to evaluate the student that was described in the scenario. For example, if you think the student appears to be very stressful, you might mark the following scale as below.

Stressful <u>X</u> __ __ __ __ __ Unstressful

Of course, if you consider the student to be more unstressful, you would mark your "X" nearer the "unstressful" adjective. The middle space should be considered "neutral." Mark this space if you feel neither adjective on the scale applies to the student or if you feel both apply equally.

I perceive the student in the scenario to be:

Intelligent __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Unintelligent

Untrained __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Trained

Expert __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Inexpert

Uninformed __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Informed

Competent __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Incompetent

Stupid __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Bright

Sinful __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Virtuous

Dishonest __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Honest

Unselfish __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Selfish

Sympathetic __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Unsympathetic

High Character __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Low character

Untrustworthy __ __ __ __ __ __ __ Trustworthy

Instructions: Please keep the student in the scenario in mind when answering the following questions. Please record your responses based on the following scale:

Very likely=5
Likely=4
Undecided=3
Unlikely=2
Very unlikely=1

1.   Would you initiate a conversation with this student before,   1 2 3 4 5
after, or outside of class?

2.   Due to the difficulty in her/his understanding of an assignment, 1 2 3 4 5
would you extend the due date of an assignment for him/her?

3.   Would you use humor with this student in class?   1 2 3 4 5

4.   If asked by this student, would you change a grade to a   1 2 3 4 5
higher score if he/she projects a sincere belief a better grade is appropriate?

5.   Would you avoid eye contact with this student while teaching? 1 2 3 4 5

6.   If asked by this student, would you provide your lecture notes   1 2 3 4 5
to him/her if he/she had missed a class?

7.   Would you smile at this student while teaching?   1 2 3 4 5

8.   If asked by this student, would you take a look at an   1 2 3 4 5
assignment before he/she turns it in for a grade?

9.   Would you invite this student to telephone or meet with you   1 2 3 4 5
outside of class if they had questions or want to discuss something?

10. If asked by this student, would you provide him/her   1 2 3 4 5
with a letter of recommendation or reference?

11. If asked by this student, would you schedule an appointment   1 2 3 4 5
    with him/her that was not during your office hours?

12. Are you male or female? _____

13. How many years have you been teaching full-time? _____

14. How many years have you been teaching part-time? _____

Appendix C
Follow-up Letter

November 11, 1996

Dear Questionnaire Participant:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you if you have completed and returned my thesis questionnaire regarding selected communication behaviors of students. If, however, you have not done so, I would appreciate your taking the time to fill it out and return it to me prior to Thanksgiving Break. Your participation is vital in order to interpret the data with confidence. Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Nina C. Persi