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Contrasting the Relationships between Teacher Immediacy, Teacher Credibility, and Student Motivation in Self-Contained and Mass-Lecture Courses

Stephen A. Cox
Timothy S. Todd

Research shows that increased teacher immediacy (i.e., interpersonal behaviors that create physical and/or psychological closeness) enhances teacher credibility, student motivation, and learning (Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; McCroskey, Richmond, Sallinen, Fayer, & Barraclough, 1995; Frymier, 1993; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Because most college students are first exposed to the communication discipline in an introductory level course, motivating these new students and establishing teacher credibility are critical activities for the basic communication course instructor. If basic course instructors can enhance their credibility and their students' motivation, communication students will learn more and departments may recruit additional students. Clearly, the relationship between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation in basic communication courses can influence both student and departmental success.

Forms of mass-instruction (e.g., mass lectures, online courses, and interactive television courses) allow
educational institutions to reach a larger number of students often at a lower per-student cost. Scholars suggest that the use of mass-instruction in basic communication courses will continue to increase as college enrollment increases (Gleason, 1986; Morreale, 1998; Trank, 1990). With a trend towards mass-instruction, educators who are effective in self-contained courses may or may not be as effective in these alternative instructional formats (Carbone, 1998). Previous research fails to address if the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation may differ in the mass-lecture format versus the self-contained format of the basic communication course. Due to the increased average distance between teacher and student, the larger mass-lecture setting may make it more difficult for teachers to appear physically and psychologically immediate, thereby diminishing the positive effects teacher immediacy can have on student motivation and teacher credibility in smaller, self-contained classes.

The purpose of this study is to investigate if the basic courses’ instructional format makes a significant difference on the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation. By contrasting the findings from two distinct course formats, it is possible to assess the methodological limitations and applicability of previous research into the dynamics of teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation. Investigating the dynamics of mass-lecture and self-contained formats can benefit basic course instructors’ understanding, adaptation, and performance in each of these unique classroom settings.
Studies clearly show the positive influence that teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy can have on student motivation. Teacher communication not only sends messages of content and control, but it may also be the primary means by which student motivation can be increased and learning enhanced (Christophel, 1990; Richmond, 1990). Richmond (1990) found a significant correlation of .38 between nonverbal immediacy and student motivation. In a series of studies conducted by Christophel (1990), she found the relationship between nonverbal immediacy and student motivation ranged from .34 to .47, and verbal immediacy correlated with motivation between .36 to .47. Although somewhat weaker than earlier findings, Frymier (1993) also reported student motivation to be significantly correlated with nonverbal immediacy (.21) and verbal immediacy (.37). To further understand these relationships, Christophel and Gorham (1995) measured teacher immediacy and student motivation during both the second/third week and twelfth/thirteenth week of the semester. They found these relationships strengthened over time — the verbal immediacy and motivation relationship increased from .49 to .53, and the nonverbal immediacy and motivation relationship increased from .23 to .44 over the semester (Christophel & Gorham, 1995). These studies, however, do not indicate if their data were from respondents in mass-lecture or self-contained courses.
Immediacy & Teacher Credibility

McGlone and Anderson (1973) wrote that teacher credibility includes teacher fairness, expertness, personality, trustworthiness, impressiveness, sociability, affability, sympathy, and accuracy. Because vocal variety is positively related to teacher credibility (Beatty & Behnke, 1980), the use of greater vocal variety may boost teacher credibility by making the teacher “sound” more personable, social, sympathetic, and/or trustworthy. Extending research into the communication dimensions of teacher credibility, the relationship between nonverbal immediacy and teacher credibility has also been studied. Frymier and Thompson (1992) found that nonverbal immediacy was significantly correlated with two dimensions of teacher credibility—teacher character (0.40) and teacher competence (0.29). Thweatt and McCroskey’s (1998) quasi-experimental study of teacher immediacy, misbehavior, and credibility found teachers who had appropriate behaviors and high nonverbal immediacy were rated significantly more competent and trustworthy than teachers with low nonverbal immediacy and appropriate behaviors. In related studies, McCroskey, et al., (1995) and Christensen and Menzel (1998) found that increased teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy enhanced students’ affect towards and evaluations of teachers. Combined, these studies show that teacher verbal and nonverbal immediacy has a positive relationship with teacher credibility, but it is not clear how course format may moderate these relationships.
Teacher Credibility & Student Motivation

A positive relationship also exists between teacher credibility and student motivation. More credible teachers should be more effective persuaders and better able to motivate student learning (McCroskey & Teven, 1999; Teven & McCroskey, 1997). Frymier and Thompson's (1992) regression analysis found that teacher credibility accounted for 30% of the variance in student motivation. Student motivation was significantly correlated with both teacher character (.43) and competence (.49) (Frymier & Thompson, 1992). This limited research should be extended to see if the teacher credibility and student motivation relationship differs in self-contained and mass-lecture formats.

Mass-Lecture Format

Very few studies have examined the communication dynamics of the mass-lecture classroom. Moore, Masterson, Christophel, and Shea (1996) found that teachers of very small classes (< 20 students) were rated as being significantly more immediate than teachers of small (21-40), large (41-99), or very large (100+) classes. Bourhis and Noland (1990) and McCroskey and Andersen (1976) found that high communication apprehension (CA) students had significantly better academic performance than moderate and low CA students in communication-restricted classrooms, such as the mass-lecture format. Other research has examined related topics such as students' preferences about course size (e.g., Feigenbaum & Friend, 1992) and academic performance in large versus small courses.
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(e.g., Hancock, 1996). The remaining literature on the mass-lecture format provides advice, tools, and strategies for being effective teachers in mass-lecture settings (e.g., Carbone, 1998; Pearson, 1990; Smith, Kopfman, & Ahyun, 1996). This literature provides little insight into the dynamics of teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation in the mass-lecture format.

Research Questions

The literature review shows that teacher immediacy has a positive relationship with both teacher credibility and student motivation, and teacher credibility has a positive relationship with student motivation. Other than Moore, et al., (1996), these studies on teacher immediacy, student motivation, and teacher credibility failed to gather data about course format. These authors did not report if respondents were evaluating teachers in mass-lecture or self-contained courses, nor did the respondents identify the size of the class they were evaluating. Subjects were asked to evaluate a) the class/teacher they were currently in (Christophel 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995), b) the class/teacher immediately prior to the course in which they completed the surveys (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Frymier, 1993; Frymier & Thompson, 1992; McCroskey, et al., 1990; Richmond, 1990), or c) hypothetical scenarios containing no contextual information about the course format (Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). Because it is unknown if the respondents were evaluating self-contained or mass-lecture courses, the conclusions about teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation
may or may not apply across different instructional formats.

The relationships between verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation may differ in mass-lecture and self-contained formats of the basic communication course due to the particular formats' physical dimensions. In mass-lecture formats, teachers are more physically distant from each student making it is more difficult for professors to be verbally and nonverbally immediate. For example, larger class settings make it more difficult to address all students by their first names, speak with a conversational tone of voice, encourage student participation, provide individualized feedback, make eye contact with students, and stand near students. Ratings of teacher immediacy have been found to be significantly higher in smaller class settings because smaller classes allow for increased physical closeness and personal interaction with students (Moore, et al., 1996). Because past research has not been consistent in drawing samples from a particular class format, the conclusions from these studies may provide misleading conclusions about the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation. By statistically contrasting data from mass-lectures with data from self-contained formats, additional insight can be gained into the classroom dynamics of the basic course.

Because the literature review showed relationships do exist between the study's variables, it is cumbersome and unnecessary to propose separate research questions for each possible relationship in each of the two course formats. By generating a correlation matrix for each basic course format, the correlated relationships in the
self-contained format could be statistically compared to the correlated relationships in the mass-lecture format. Therefore, the following research questions were proposed:

RQ1: What are the relationships between student motivation, teacher credibility, verbal immediacy, and nonverbal immediacy in the self-contained format of the basic communication courses?

RQ2: What are the relationships between student motivation, teacher credibility, verbal immediacy, and nonverbal immediacy in the mass-lecture format of the basic communication courses?

RQ3: Do the relationships between student motivation, teacher credibility, verbal immediacy, and nonverbal immediacy differ significantly between self-contained and mass-lecture formats of the basic communication courses?

**METHODODOLOGY**

Data were collected during 1997 and 1998 at a comprehensive university located in the southern United States. A sample of 1196 students completed the entire survey administered during the final week of the semester. Students were enrolled in either a self-contained or a mass-lecture (with a lab) section of basic public speaking or introduction to interpersonal communication. Twelve different instructors taught these courses; seven instructors taught only self-contained sections
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while the remaining five taught both mass-lecture and self-contained sections. Respondents in 3-hour, self-contained sections evaluated courses taught by adjunct or tenure-track professors. The mass-lecture respondents were given the surveys during the mass-lecture and instructed to “evaluate your experience in this class.” The researchers intended for respondents to evaluate the weekly 2-hour mass-lecture taught by a full-time adjunct or tenure-track professor; however, it is unclear if or how the weekly 2-hour lab (16-18 students) taught by a graduate teaching assistant may have influenced their responses. Therefore, data from the mass-lecture may reflect some respondents’ “overall” impression of the mass-lecture and lab experience.

Of the 1196 respondents, 326 were enrolled in the self-contained format and 865 were enrolled in the mass-lecture format (5 respondents failed to report course format). Twenty-nine percent were Freshmen, 36% Sophomores, 17% Juniors, 16% Seniors, and 1% irregular students. Fifty-five percent were female, 88% Caucasian, 7% African American, and 5% other races. Forty-one percent of respondents were age 19 or younger, 50% were from age 20 to 23, and 9% were 24 or older.

Surveys contained four instruments: the Student Motivation Scale (Christophel, 1990), the Teacher Credibility Scale (McCroskey & Young, 1981), the Verbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument (Gorham, 1988), and the Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument (Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987). Based on a Varimax rotated factor analysis (item loading >.70, crossloading <.30), a seven-item version of the Student Motivation Scale (Christophel, 1990) was used. The
modified version contained seven, five-point, semantic differential questions and achieved a reliability alpha of .88 (M = 23.8, SD = 5.6). Following a Varimax rotated factor analysis of the complete Teacher Credibility Scale (McCroskey & Young, 1981), a modified five-item (five-point semantic differential) scale was used to measure teacher credibility—including questions on both teacher competence and character. The modified, five-item Teacher Credibility Scale achieved a reliability alpha of .91 (M = 21.7, SD = 4.0). Gorham’s (1988) 17-item (five-point Likert-type) Verbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument was used to measure teachers’ verbal immediacy behaviors, and it achieved a reliability alpha of .91 (M = 59.7, SD = 12.9). Finally, the 14-item (five-point Likert-type), Nonverbal Immediacy Behaviors Instrument was used (Richmond, Gorham, & McCroskey, 1987), which achieved a reliability alpha of .90 (M = 56.3, SD = 9.4). Higher scores on each instrument represent greater/stronger perceptions of each variable. These data were analyzed via Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients, Fisher’s Zr transformations, and ANOVA procedures to indicate the existence of any statistically significant relationships or differences.

RESULTS

RQ1: Relationships in the self-contained format

Correlation coefficients are reported to the one thousandth decimal as required for Fisher’s Zr transformations (Ferguson & Takane, 1989). All the variables in the self-contained format were positively and significantly correlated at \( p < .01 \) (see Table 1, column 3). In
# Table 1
Correlation Matrices and \( t \)-Tests between Self-Contained and Mass-Lecture Formats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correlated Classroom Variables</th>
<th>Combined Data (self+mass)</th>
<th>Self-contained Format</th>
<th>Mass-lecture Format</th>
<th>( t ) Statistic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Motivation and Teacher Credibility</td>
<td>( r = 0.515^* )  ( r^2 = 0.27 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.586^* )  ( r^2 = 0.34 )</td>
<td>( r = -0.426^* )  ( r^2 = 0.18 )</td>
<td>3.31 ( p &lt; 0.001 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Immediacy</td>
<td>( r = 0.475^* )  ( r^2 = 0.23 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.469^* )  ( r^2 = 0.22 )</td>
<td>( r = -0.412^* )  ( r^2 = 0.17 )</td>
<td>1.13 ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonverbal Immediacy</td>
<td>( r = 0.379^* )  ( r^2 = 0.14 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.416^* )  ( r^2 = 0.17 )</td>
<td>( r = -0.308^* )  ( r^2 = 0.09 )</td>
<td>1.86 ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Credibility and Verbal Immediacy</td>
<td>( r = 0.454^* )  ( r^2 = 0.21 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.590^* )  ( r^2 = 0.35 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.333^* )  ( r^2 = 0.11 )</td>
<td>5.06 ( p &lt; 0.001 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Credibility and Nonverbal Immediacy</td>
<td>( r = 0.469^* )  ( r^2 = 0.22 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.536^* )  ( r^2 = 0.29 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.381^* )  ( r^2 = 0.14 )</td>
<td>3.02 ( p &lt; 0.01 )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Immediacy and Nonverbal Immediacy</td>
<td>( r = 0.553^* )  ( r^2 = 0.31 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.702^* )  ( r^2 = 0.49 )</td>
<td>( r = 0.482^* )  ( r^2 = 0.23 )</td>
<td>5.28 ( p &lt; 0.001 )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Combined data (N=1196); Self-contained (n=326); Mass-lecture (n=865);
*\( p < 0.01; t = 1.96, p < 0.05; t = 2.58, p < 0.01; t = 3.29, p < 0.001 \)
Self-Contained vs. Mass-Lecture

self-contained formats, student motivation was moderately correlated with teacher credibility ($r = .586, r^2 = .34$), verbal immediacy ($r = .469, r^2 = .22$), and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .416, r^2 = .17$). Students in self-contained courses reported a moderate correlation between teacher credibility and both verbal immediacy ($r = .590, r^2 = .35$) and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .536, r^2 = .29$). Also, verbal and nonverbal immediacy were highly correlated ($r = .702, r^2 = .49$).

RQ2: Relationships in the mass-lecture format

Verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation were all found to be positively correlated ($p < .01$) in the mass-lecture format (see Table 1, column 4). The positive relationship between student motivation and teacher credibility ($r = .426$) was significant but moderate ($r^2 = .18$). While verbal immediacy was moderately related to student motivation ($r = .412, r^2 = .17$), nonverbal immediacy had a low correlation ($r = .308, r^2 = .09$) with student motivation in mass-lecture formats. Concerning teacher credibility in mass-lecture formats, verbal immediacy ($r = .333, r^2 = .11$) and nonverbal immediacy ($r = .381, r^2 = .14$) had small but significant relationships with teacher credibility. In the mass-lecture the relationship between verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy was moderate ($r = .482, r^2 = .23$).

RQ3: Differences between relationships in self-contained and mass-lecture formats

RQ3 was concerned with determining if the relationships between classroom variables differed across in-
strucational formats. T-test comparisons between the correlation coefficients in self-contained and mass-lecture formats were calculated (see Table 1, column 5). This comparison was done using Fisher's Z transformation, which converts correlation coefficients into standardized scores that can be compared using a t-test. All the coefficients in the self-contained format were stronger than those in the mass-lecture format; however, the t-test indicates if these differences were statistically significant.

Student motivation. The t-test shows that the correlation between student motivation and teacher credibility was significantly higher in the self-contained ($r = .586$, $r^2 = .34$) format versus the mass-lecture ($r = .426$, $r^2 = .18$) format ($t = 3.31$, $p < .001$). The relationship between student motivation and both verbal immediacy ($t = 1.13$, $p = \text{ns}$) and nonverbal immediacy ($t = 1.86$, $p = \text{ns}$) was not significantly different across formats. Combined, verbal and nonverbal immediacy in self-contained formats accounted for 39% of the variance in student motivation, and in mass-lecture formats, these variables accounted for 26% of the variance in motivation. In light of these findings, an ANOVA was run to see if student motivation significantly differed across course format. Results indicate that student motivation in self-contained formats ($m = 24.84$, $sd = 6.11$) was significantly higher than student motivation in mass-lecture formats ($m = 23.40$, $sd = 5.38$). While the F statistic was statistically significant ($F[1, 1183] = 15.66$, $r^2 = .01$, $p < .001$), examination of the means and standard deviations indicates that the differences are not dramatic.

Teacher credibility. T-tests comparing the correlation coefficients between teacher credibility and verbal
immediacy \( (t = 5.06, p < .001) \), and teacher credibility and nonverbal immediacy \( (t = 3.02, p < .01) \) showed that these coefficients were significantly higher in the self-contained format. Combined, teachers' verbal and nonverbal immediacy in self-contained formats accounted for 64% of the variance in teacher credibility; however, these variables accounted for only 25% of the variance in teacher credibility in the mass-lecture format. An ANOVA was also run to determine if teacher credibility differed between self-contained and mass-lecture formats. The ANOVA was significant \( \text{F}[1, 1188] = 4.28, r^2 = .004, p < .05 \) showing that teacher credibility was statistically different and higher in the self-contained formats \( (m = 22.04, \text{sd} = 4.17) \) versus the mass-lecture format \( (m = 21.51, \text{sd} = 3.90) \). Although statistically different, the variation in teacher credibility between course formats was very small.

**Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy.** The \( t \)-test \( (t = 5.28, p < .001) \) showed that the correlation between verbal and nonverbal immediacy was significantly higher in the self-contained format \( (r = .702, r^2 = .49) \) than in the mass-lecture \( (r = .482, r^2 = .23) \). ANOVAs were also calculated to see if verbal immediacy and nonverbal immediacy differ across instructional formats. Results show that verbal immediacy was statistically higher \( \text{F}[1, 1181] = 165.84, r^2 = .12, p < .05 \) in the self-contained \( (m = 67.10, \text{sd} = 13.24) \) versus the mass-lecture format \( (m = 56.94, \text{sd} = 11.63) \). However, nonverbal immediacy was not statistically different \( \text{F}[1, 1180] = .14, p = \text{ns} \) in the self-contained \( (m = 56.46, \text{sd} = 11.25) \) versus the mass-lecture format \( (m = 56.23, \text{sd} = 8.64) \).
DISCUSSION

The major significance of this study is not the confirmation that teacher credibility, teacher immediacy, and student motivation are positively related. Rather, this study's contribution is its focus on the differences in the relationships between these classroom variables across self-contained and mass-lecture formats of the basic courses. This study showed that four of the six correlation coefficients between teacher verbal immediacy, nonverbal immediacy, teacher credibility, and student motivation were statistically higher in the self-contained format of the basic communication courses. Only the relationships between student motivation and both verbal and nonverbal immediacy were not significantly different across course formats (see Table 1). The varied results between the two formats clearly show that future research must specify the course format from which the data is gathered. Otherwise, combining data from mass-lecture and self-contained formats produces misleading conclusions about teacher credibility, teacher immediacy, and student motivation that may not hold true in either course format.

While previous research found that teacher credibility accounted for 30% of the variance in student motivation (Frymier & Thompson, 1992), this study found teacher credibility accounted for 34% ($r = .586$) of the student motivation variance in the self-contained format but only 18% ($r = .426$) in the mass-lecture. Not reported in previous studies, this investigation found that verbal immediacy accounted for 35% ($r = .590$) of the variance in teacher credibility in self-contained classes, but only...
11% (r = .333) in the mass-lecture format. Frymier and Thompson's (1992) study found that nonverbal immediacy accounted for 8% (r = .29) to 16% (r = .40) of the variance in teacher credibility; this study found nonverbal immediacy accounted for 29% (r = .536) in the self-contained and .14% (r = .381) in the mass-lecture classes. Overall, these results further support the notion that more verbally and nonverbally immediate teachers create more engaging classrooms, facilitate greater student participation, and develop more personal rapport with students, all of which boost students' motivation (Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993) and perceptions of teacher competence and character (McCroskey, et al., 1995; Thweatt & McCroskey, 1998). These findings suggest that mass-lecture instructors would be advised to make extra efforts to display verbal and nonverbal immediacy.

Consistent with past research (Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993), verbal immediacy was more highly correlated with student motivation than was nonverbal immediacy regardless of the basic course format. Earlier studies reported the student motivation and verbal immediacy relationship ranged from .36 to .53 while the student motivation and nonverbal immediacy relationship ranged from .21 to .47. Similarly, this study found that student motivation correlated with verbal immediacy at .469 in the self-contained format and at .412 in the mass-lecture format. Student motivation and nonverbal immediacy correlated at .416 in the self-contained format and at .308 in the mass-lecture format. These findings suggest that some of the variance reported by earlier studies may have been due to the predominant course format.
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represented in the sample. Additional investigations should be conducted to better understand which verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors contribute the most to student motivation in both basic course formats. Such insight into immediacy behaviors can further help teachers in basic and advanced courses enhance the state motivation of students.

Results are consistent with claims that students are significantly more motivated with more verbally immediate teachers (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993). The teachers of self-contained classes were found to be significantly more verbally immediate and students in self-contained classes were significantly more motivated. This finding supports research showing immediacy is higher in smaller classes (Moore, et al., 1996). Apparently, the larger size of the mass-lecture decreases verbal immediacy behaviors such as soliciting student viewpoints, addressing students by name, encouraging students to talk, and conversing with students after class. It is not surprising that students would be less motivated in class environments that lack these teacher behaviors. An unexpected finding was that non-verbal immediacy was not significantly different across instructional format. Apparently, teachers in either format were no more or less likely to display nonverbally immediate behaviors such as using gestures, standing behind the podium, smiling at students, looking at notes, or using vocal variety while teaching.

These results suggest that the link between verbal immediacy and student motivation (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Christophel & Gorham, 1995; Frymier, 1993) may be the influence that verbal
immediacy has on teacher credibility. Because the correlation between teacher verbal immediacy and student motivation was not statistically different across the two instructional formats, some other variable must be contributing to the higher student motivation in self-contained classes. Recall that self-contained classes were significantly higher in teacher credibility, student motivation, and verbal immediacy. Verbal immediacy accounted for 35% of the variance in teacher credibility in self-contained classes versus only 11% in the mass-lecture classes. Teacher credibility was also significantly more related to student motivation in the self-contained format accounting for 34% ($r = .586$) of the variance in student motivation versus 18% ($r = .426$) variance in the mass-lecture format. These results suggest that the higher student motivation in the more verbally immediate, self-contained classes is due to verbal immediacy contributing statistically more variance to teacher credibility. The results suggest the following path — as verbal immediacy increases it contributes more to teacher credibility, and enhanced teacher credibility has a positive effect on student motivation. Perhaps the lower levels of teacher verbal immediacy in mass-lecture formats lowers teacher credibility, and this decreased teacher credibility lowers student motivation. Additional studies could apply statistical path analysis to better understand how teacher immediacy and credibility contribute to student motivation.

The correlation coefficients found in this study were relatively high, or higher, compared to those reported in earlier studies. This study's data were entirely drawn from students in basic communication courses but ear-
lier studies either did not specify the disciplines represented in their samples or used sampling techniques that gathered a heterogeneous sample of disciplines. It is possible that communication teachers, versus other disciplines, are more aware of their own communication behaviors and display more verbal and non-verbal immediacy. If the instructors teaching the mass-lectures and those teaching self-contained courses were distinct, non-overlapping groups of instructors, this study’s findings could have been attributed to differences between instructors rather than differences between the instructional formats. Differences found between the formats are less likely to be due to differences in instructors because the mass-lecture instructors also taught some of the self-contained sections of these courses.

A limitation of this study is that the data from the mass-lecture respondents may have been influenced by their experiences with a lab instructor, therefore reflecting a “hybrid” rather than a “pure” mass-lecture experience. Additional research should analyze data from mass-lecture students who do and students who do not have lab instructors to measure possible differences in teacher immediacy, credibility, and student motivation. Future research should investigate if the relationships between teacher immediacy, teacher credibility, student motivation, and course format differ between the communication discipline and other disciplines, including those in the humanities and the sciences. Such studies can potentially improve the teaching outcomes in basic and advanced courses across the university. Perhaps the communication discipline’s most significant contribution to the university will be improving classroom communi-
cation between professors and students in order to maximize the one critical process in higher education – the teaching/learning transaction.

REFERENCES


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