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STUDENT'S PERCEPTION OF TEACHER IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS ON  
STUDENT SUCCESS AND RETENTION

by

Rebecca R Mullane

A Dissertation Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in Communication

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2014

ABSTRACT  
STUDENT'S PERCEPTION OF TEACHER IMMEDIACY BEHAVIORS ON  
STUDENT SUCCESS AND RETENTION

by

Rebecca R. Mullane

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2014  
Under the Supervision of Mike Allen, Ph.D.

This investigation tested the relationship and the fit for a causal model between both verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors in the classroom and affective learning, cognitive learning, and student success and retention. Data was collected from two distinct populations, a large Midwestern university and a Midwestern community college. Results indicate that both verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors independently predict or cause a level of affective learning and cognitive learning, and affective learning predicts or causes cognitive learning, further supporting that path model. Practical implications of these findings are discussed and recommendations for areas of future research development are advanced.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Review of the Literature	4
Causal Model	4
Teacher Immediacy Behaviors	5
Nonverbal	8
Verbal	9
Verbal versus Nonverbal Immediacy	10
Effectiveness	13
Student Perception of Immediacy, Affective Learning, and Cognitive Learning	17
Student Success and Retention	21
Hypotheses	26
Methodology	28
Participants	28
Instruments and Measures	28
Procedures	31
Data Analysis	31
Results	33
H1: Affective Learning & Nonverbal Immediacy	33
H2: Affective Learning & Verbal Immediacy	33
H3: Student Success & Retention & Nonverbal Immediacy	34
H4: Student Success & Retention & Verbal Immediacy	34
H5: Affective Learning & Student Success & Retention	35
H6: Causal Model	35
Discussion	37
Verbal & Nonverbal Teacher Immediacy Behaviors	37
Causal Model	39
Limitations & Future Research	44
References	56
Appendix	63
Vita	67

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Causal Model	49
Figure 2: Large Midwestern University Causal Model with Path Coefficients	50
Figure 3: Midwestern Community College Model with Path Coefficients	51

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Correlations – Large Midwestern University	52
Table 2: Correlations – Midwestern Community College	53
Table 3: Large Midwestern University Correlations between Variables	54
Table 4: Midwestern Community College Correlations between Variables	55

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many individuals who have supported me throughout the process of research and writing necessary to complete this dissertation. First, I need to thank my advisor, Dr. Mike Allen for his consistent support, guidance, and patience throughout the entire process. Additionally, your support and straightforward approach throughout my time in this program has been essential in believing I could complete the requirements necessary for the degree. Next, I want to thank my committee members, Dr. Nancy Burrell, Dr. Tae-Seop Lim, Dr. Lindsay Timmerman, and Dr. Ed Mabry. Your guidance and inquiries pushed me to strive for more answers and take on bigger challenges in research and writing. Finally, and most importantly, I must thank my family. Mom, you have always believed in me and never set any limits to what I can achieve in this life. Grandpa, you demonstrated a work ethic and instilled the value of finishing what I start that has been instrumental in enduring the process necessary to complete an academic PhD. Ryan, your support, love, and understanding throughout this entire process has been unmatched. Knowing I always had you by my side from the beginning to the end makes all the challenges and successes all the more worthwhile.



## Student's Perception of Teacher Immediacy Behaviors on Student Success and Retention

Improving the conditions to enhance and increase student success remains an ongoing concern for institutions of higher education. One area of focus for improving student success and retention focuses on teachers' communication behaviors (King & Witt, 2001). Scholars of instructional communication seek to identify specifically what types of teacher behaviors result in positive student outcomes. Previous research indicates that one of the most effective set of behaviors a teacher with excellent teacher communication can practice are "immediacy" behaviors (Andersen & Andersen, 1982; Carrell & Menzel, 2001; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001; King & Witt, 2009; Ozmen, 2011; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

Labeled as one of the most effective set of behaviors, teacher immediacy behaviors play an important role in student success and retention. Additionally, teachers can be trained to enact immediacy behaviors in the classroom (Frymier, 1993a; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Ozmen, 2011). Through the use of immediacy behaviors, teachers may utilize one more tool to increase student success and retention. By committing to train teachers on proper immediacy behaviors, colleges and universities can undertake professional development opportunities for faculty to improve student success and retention rates. Encouraging and employing these behaviors in the classroom provides institutions with a competitive advantage regarding retention rates while improving learning in the classroom.

Previous research has established a causal model supporting the link between immediacy behaviors, affective learning, and cognitive learning (Allen, Witt & Wheelless, 2006). More specifically, this model shows the levels of teaching immediacy behaviors

predicting affective learning, which in turn predicts or causes the level of cognitive learning. Having established this connection, researchers have laid the path for the importance of teacher immediacy behaviors and the direct effect on affective learning and cognitive learning. However, questions still exist for implementing successful teacher immediacy behaviors in the classroom to promote desired outcomes. Are certain immediacy behaviors more effective than others? What process does the student's perception play in identifying these behaviors? Are nonverbal immediacy behaviors more or less effective than verbal immediacy behaviors in predicting or causing affective learning? In addition to cognitive learning, what effect do immediacy behaviors have on student success and retention? Additional research and development is required to answer these questions and provide more information for future application concerning a student's perception of teacher immediacy behaviors and the effect on student success and retention.

Building off the causal model introduced by Allen et al. (2006), future research seeks to distinguish between the effects of verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors. A review of the literature identifies two distinct types of teacher immediacy behaviors: verbal and nonverbal (Carrell & Menzel, 2001; King & Witt, 2009; Ozmen, 2011). However, earlier research has produced conflicting results regarding which type of immediacy behavior produces a more positive effect on student success and retention rates (Christensen and Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Gorham, 1988; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986; Roach, Cornett-Devito & Devito, 2005; Zhang & Zhang, 2006).

The focus on student success and retention continues to rise in higher education as educational options increase (Nelson, Quinn, Marrington & Clarke, 2012; Taylor & McAleese, 2012). With the rising cost of higher education, students and parents spend considerable time researching educational options to select an institution that will help meet goals of success and retention. From the student's perspective, success may vary depending on the program or career path they are targeting, but in most cases, degree completion is part of this definition but not always (Yorke, 2004). Satisfying personal ambitions may be considered student success from a student's perspective. From the institutional standpoint, the standardized definition for student success focuses on graduation rates (Jones-White, Radcliffe, Huesman & Kellogg, 2010). For an adult or nontraditional student juggling responsibilities at home and work while adding in school, selecting the right institution becomes critical in the decision to return to school or not (Wyatt, 2011). Rapidly growing in numbers, nontraditional students contribute greatly to institutional enrollment numbers. Student success and retention from the viewpoint of educators: administrators, faculty, and staff serves as the basis for measuring institutional outcomes. Institutions depend heavily on student success and retention for marketing purposes, enrollment management, graduation numbers, and perhaps most important, learning (Braxton, Hirschy & McClendon, 2004). Determining the specific teacher immediacy behaviors responsible for increasing student success and retention provides all parties (students, parents, administrators, faculty, and staff) another tool to improve higher education opportunities and outcomes.

The following provides a general overview of the causal model linking teacher immediacy to affective learning and cognitive learning established by Allen et al. (2006).

Each component of the model will be outlined and explained. Building off the model, a more specific focus considers the different types of teacher immediacy (verbal and nonverbal) behaviors. The outcome of student success and retention as a result of teacher immediacy behaviors and affective learning becomes considered. A brief review of the Immediacy Behavior Scale (Gorham, 1988), Nonverbal Immediacy Behavior Scale (Richmond, Gorham & McCroskey, 1987), and the Affective Learning Scale (Christophel, 1990) is discussed. Research methods and results are presented along with a discussion of findings and implications for future research.

### **Causal Model**

In understanding the research presented in this paper, one must consider the causal model concerning teacher immediacy behaviors, affective learning, and cognitive learning tested by Allen et al. (2006). More specifically, the model components of teacher immediacy behavior and affective learning serve as the base for the current research which extends the model to include student success and retention as well as further identifying differences in effectiveness between verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors (Figure 1). When the causal model was tested, results indicated information consistent with an indirect impact of teacher immediacy on cognitive learning. The causal model predicts levels of student learning through a hypothesized series of processes. More specifically, this particular model predicts that higher levels of teacher immediacy cause an increased level of affective learning, which causes an increased level of cognitive learning.

Despite these discoveries and the support of the causal model, questions still exist regarding the specifics of teacher immediacy behaviors. Is there a difference in

effectiveness between verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors or are they equally as effective? Although increased teacher immediacy levels cause increased affective learning levels as well as increased cognitive learning levels, the effects of teacher immediacy behaviors on affective learning and subsequently, student success and retention remain unknown (Allen et al., 2006). In today's competitive market, higher education opportunities are ever increasing and the focus to improve student success and retention rates continues to rise as well (Tinto, 2012). Understanding the link between teacher immediacy behaviors and student success and retention, as well as the effectiveness of specific behaviors such as verbal versus nonverbal could provide institutions with another tool to improve student graduation rates.

### **Teacher Immediacy Behaviors**

Originally constructed by Mehrabian (1966), the immediacy principle focused on the notion that people becomes drawn to other individuals they like, evaluate highly, and prefer while avoiding persons that are not preferred or liked. The immediacy principle leads to the idea that the act of liking causes immediacy and explains the existence of immediacy (Richmond, McCroskey & Johnson, 2003). Liking encourages immediacy and immediacy results in increased liking (Gorham & Zakahi, 1990). In contrast, behaviors not considered immediate indicate disliking (Kearney, Plax & Wendt-Wasco, 1985). A major component of immediacy behaviors reflects back on the communication model and suggests a more positive attitude between the sender and the receiver (Gorham & Zakahi, 1990). One of the most effective set of behaviors practiced by teachers with excellent teacher communication is "immediacy" behaviors (Andersen & Andersen, 1982).

Including both verbal and nonverbal communication, immediacy behaviors reduce the psychological and/or physical distance between communicators (Andersen, Norton & Nussbaum, 1981; Carrell & Menzel, 2001; King & Witt, 2009; Ozmen, 2011). Reducing distance leads to perceived feelings of closeness, directness, and connectedness, generates a direct effect on the relationship between the communicators (King & Witt, 2009). In the teacher/student relationship, a teacher demonstrating immediacy behaviors towards a student has the potential to increase the student's willingness to respond positively to teacher requests, perceptions of the teacher's credibility, and motivation to focus on course materials and learn. Research indicates teacher immediacy behaviors positively correlate with perceived cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning for students (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990), as well as increased levels of affective learning, perceived cognitive learning, and motivation (Frymier, 1993a).

Instructors demonstrating more immediate teacher behaviors generate more positive attitudes from the students in regards to instruction compared to instructors who are less immediate, indicating a linear relationship (Andersen et al., 1981; Booth-Butterfield, Mosher & Mollish, 1992). Gorham and Zakahi (1990) further supported a linear relationship between teacher immediacy behavior and affective outcomes; however, that same linear relationship has not always been supported between teacher immediacy behaviors and cognitive learning outcomes. Previous research has found low levels of immediacy limiting cognitive learning and a threshold effect moderating increases in cognitive learning between teachers with moderate to high levels of immediacy in the classroom. However, the results may reflect an experimental design and

whether the teacher consented to the study. Teachers consenting to the research were found at least moderately immediate, if not highly immediate.

Increased levels of teacher immediacy have been linked to reduced receiver apprehension, which poses a barrier to students by limiting the ability to effectively process information (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). Receiver apprehension is “the fear of misinterpreting, inadequately processing, and/or not being able to adjust psychologically to messages sent by others” (Wheeless, 1975, p. 263). The definition of receiver apprehension is distinctly different from sender apprehension which focuses on “the fear of social disapproval” (p. 263). Students experiencing receiver apprehension become at a disadvantage when trying to learn materials due to a reduced ability to integrate incoming information (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). Students perceive that they will not be able to process all the information presented, distracting focus from the learning tasks at hand. Increased levels of receiver apprehension have been associated with decreased levels of cognitive complexity suggesting that a teacher’s ability to reduce a student’s receiver apprehension may increase cognitive learning (Ayres, Wilcox & Ayres, 1995). Teachers practicing immediacy behaviors in the classroom have the potential to reduce a student’s level of receiver apprehension so that they may successfully learn and participate in classroom tasks (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). Receiver apprehension is reduced by immediate teachers who are clear in teaching, making material easier to digest. Additionally, students with immediate teachers feel more comfortable toward the course, the material being learned, and the teacher, further reducing feelings of apprehension and increasing both affective and cognitive learning

(Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993b; Kelley & Gorham, 1988; Ozmen, 2011; Richmond et al., 1987; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990).

A meta-analysis conducted by Witt, Wheelless and Allen (2004) specifically examined the relationship between teacher immediacy, affective learning, and cognitive learning. After reviewing 81 studies conducted over the course of 23 years and involving 24, 474 students, results from the meta-analysis found teacher immediacy correlates with affective learning outcomes; however, only slightly with cognitive learning outcomes. The learning outcomes associated with cognitive learning reflect Bloom's taxonomy (Fink, 2003). Listed in order from the highest type of learning to the lowest type of learning, Bloom's taxonomies of cognitive learning include (a) evaluation; (b) synthesis; (c) analysis; (d) application; (e) comprehension; and (f) knowledge (ability to recall information). Affective learning outcomes measure one's attitude and motivation toward the teacher, course, and whether or not the individual would be interested in enrolling in another course of the same type (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993a; Witt et al., 2004).

### *Nonverbal Immediacy*

Nonverbal immediacy behaviors may include approach behaviors, signals of availability for communication sent through various channels, communication of interpersonal warmth and closeness, and sensory stimulation (Carrell & Menzel, 2001; Kearney et al., 1985). Kinesics, proxemics, vocalics, haptics, and oculusics are involved in nonverbal immediacy behaviors (Ozmen, 2011). More specifically, teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors may include smiling, variations in vocal delivery or expression, eye contact, positive use of or purposeful gestures, forward body leans, touch, and presenting a relaxed body position (Frymier, 1993a; Kearney et al., 1985; Ozmen, 2011; Sanders &



Wiseman, 1990). In contrast, non-immediate nonverbal immediacy behaviors may include a lack of vocal variety and nervousness (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001).

The benefits of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors include increased affective learning, recall of lists, and self-reported cognitive learning (Frymier, 1993b; Kelley & Gorham, 1988; Richmond et al., 1987). Effects on affective outcomes have been repeatedly reported throughout the literature (Ozmen, 2011; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Affective learning focuses on the students' attitude towards the material, instructor, course, or willingness to enroll in another course with similar content or the same instructor (Allen et al., 2006; Christophel, 1990; Kearney et al., 1985; Miller, 2005; Plax et al., 1986). Additionally, motivation stems from this focus on attitude. Students who connect interpersonally with teachers are more likely to develop a positive attitude towards the learning material and expected classroom behaviors (Andersen, 1981; Pogue & AhYun, 2006). Consequently, students possessing a positive attitude towards the instructor, course material, and learning outcomes are more motivated to learn resulting in increased student success and retention.

### *Verbal Immediacy*

Building off the definition of immediacy and closing the distance between communicators, verbal immediacy accomplishes this through a variety of verbal interactions. Using words that connect both parties such as "we" instead of "you" and "me" establish a sense of communication solidarity that connects communicators versus distancing communicators (Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Verbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom may include a teacher's use of humor, utilizing students first names, self-disclosure, verbal praise of comments made by students within the classroom, responding

to topics initiated by students in the classroom, and a demonstrated willingness to communication with students outside the classroom (Carrell & Menzel, 2001; Frymier, 1993a; Hackman & Walker, 1990). Previous research has linked verbal immediacy behaviors with student levels of affective and cognitive learning (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993b; Kelley & Gorham, 1988; Ozmen, 2011; Richmond et al., 1987; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Additionally, teacher clarity has been linked to verbal immediacy with a positive instructional outcome (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). Teachers practicing clarity in the classroom do so by utilizing appropriately structured verbal and nonverbal messages to ensure course content becomes effectively understood and processed by students. Making “abstract content more personal, concrete, or familiar” stimulates a student’s motivation to learn (Brophy, 1987, p. 47). Messages of clarity practice fluency, stay focused on the task at hand, and are effective in explaining material (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). On the other side of the spectrum, non-immediate verbal immediacy behaviors include teachers who criticize and conduct boring lectures.

#### *Verbal versus Nonverbal Immediacy*

Although both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors had a positive impact on learning, previous research found that nonverbal immediacy had a greater impact on learning than verbal immediacy (Christophel, 1990; Gorham, 1988). In contrast, Christensen and Menzel (1998) found verbal immediacy behaviors twice as effective on perceived learning and nearly three times as effective on motivation than nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Likewise, Frymier (1993b) determined that verbal immediacy behaviors played a more important role in the motivation of highly apprehensive students than nonverbal immediacy behaviors. Richmond et al. noted that empirical research

linking nonverbal immediacy behaviors and cognitive learning was less clear (1987). Despite the conflicting results, research indicates that teacher verbal immediacy behaviors produce a large impact on students' cognitive learning (Roach, Cornett-Devito & Devito, 2005; Zhang & Zhang, 2006).

Previous research produced some conflicting results regarding which type of immediacy behaviors are the most effective: verbal or nonverbal, research does indicate that teacher immediacy behaviors do affect student learning outcomes (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993b; Gorham, 1988; Roach et al., 2005; Zhang & Zhang, 2006). A meta-analysis analyzing 81 different studies, found that studies investigating nonverbal immediacy reported similar results to studies measuring verbal immediacy when compared with levels of perceived learning (Witt et al., 2004). Results taken from studies that combined the verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy measures reported the highest level of association with perceived learning. However, most studies measuring teacher immediacy behaviors have participants complete both measurements at the same time, whether combined or as two separate scales. Regardless, results support the relationship between increased teacher immediacy behaviors and increased levels of perceived learning.

The differences found between verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors and affective learning were nearly identical within a meta-analysis exploring 81 studies involving teacher immediacy behaviors (Witt et al., 2004). Affective learning focuses on students' attitudes, beliefs, and values toward the subject matter and learning experiences (Allen et al., 2006; Christophel, 1990; Kearney et al., 1985; Miller, 2005; Plax et al., 1986). The results of the research conducted by Witt et al. (2003) were not

surprising considering that both behaviors were measured within the same survey at the same time, either as combined scales or different. As with perceived learning, combined scales showed results with an even higher association between teacher immediacy behaviors and affective learning.

Despite similarities between perceived and affective learning in the above meta-analysis, results for cognitive learning showed distinct differences between verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors (Witt et al., 2004). These results support claims by Richmond et al. that nonverbal immediacy behaviors have not been clearly linked through empirical research with cognitive learning (1987). Nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors reported higher levels of association with cognitive learning than verbal teacher immediacy behaviors (Witt et al., 2004). Combined studies measuring both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors fell in the middle between the individual verbal and nonverbal immediacy behavior results. However, the number of studies focusing on cognitive learning were fewer than the number of studies measuring perceived and affective learning. Additionally, the number of various experimental designs was largest for this particular measure of learning. Measuring various levels of cognitive learning effectively has challenges. Bloom's lower order of cognitive learning such as evaluation may be easier to measure through test scores and course grades, while the higher orders of learning such as comprehension and knowledge may be more difficult to capture, especially over a limited amount of time (Fink, 2003). Scholars argued that measuring cognitive learning by utilizing and comparing exam scores and grades earned in a class does not accurately measure a student's level of learning within a course (Chesebro & McCroskey, 2000). To address these concerns, research experimented with the learning

loss scale to determine the relationship between a student's reports of learning compared to performance on a standard exam. Results support the notion that students can accurately report individual levels of learning, further validating measures that utilize self-report methods when measuring teacher communication and student learning.

### *Effectiveness*

Previous research identified that teacher immediacy behaviors are not always equally effective across all types of students. Each individual student brings his or her own "personalities, fears, and predispositions towards communication" into the classroom, creating a classroom environment that may or may not be productive for learning (Frymier, 1993b, p. 8). Unique features among students and between classrooms may affect how effective teacher immediacy behaviors are on individual students and classes. Regardless of the positive effects of immediacy, previous research indicated that high levels of immediacy on behalf of the teacher produced less positive results than moderate levels of immediacy (Christensen & Menzel, 1998). Results from this study recommended moderate levels of immediacy as sufficient with high levels of immediacy benefitting students in certain cases. So how does one know what level of immediacy to utilize with which student? Previous research indicates that teachers may improve use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors through training (Ozmen, 2011). Teachers trained to utilize nonverbal immediacy behaviors effectively generate increased positive student attitudes towards the teacher.

Despite the positive outcomes of training more immediate teachers in the classroom, teacher attitude may play a role in training. Previous research defines the differences between teachers actually feeling emotion and teachers trying to act out

behavior without emotion (Gorham & Zakahi, 1990). If a teacher does not feel excited and hopeful about a class or a particular student, can that teacher accurately portray those feelings to the student or class through immediacy behaviors? Questions such as these challenge the approach to teaching immediacy behaviors. Previous research argues that a teacher's personal and professional values and expectations had a greater effect on commitment and ability to change classroom behaviors than training or retraining. Results from research trying to determine a teacher's treatment of a typical student may be hard to decipher given that many teachers report treating different students differently (McCroskey, Richmond, Plax & Kearney, 1985). Teachers display noticeably more positive nonverbal behaviors to higher achieving students and without personal limitations compared to students tending towards lower achievement with personal and learning limitations (Gorham & Zahaki, 1990). These results indicate that both training and teacher attitude play an important role in ensuring teachers are using effective immediacy behaviors in the classroom.

Another explanation for the varied effectiveness of teacher immediacy behaviors on students may be explained through the student's level of involvement in the course (Booth-Butterfield et al., 1992). A low involved student observing teacher immediacy behaviors experienced an attitude change towards the course. Subsequently, for higher involved students, immediacy was less of a factor in regards to attitude. Highly involved students viewed the instructor much more positively when compared to the students with low involvement. Despite differences in involvement, teacher immediacy behaviors produced a large effect on both populations, further supporting the importance of teacher immediacy behaviors in the classroom.

Research identifies communication apprehension as a determining factor in measuring the effectiveness of teacher immediacy behaviors (Frymier, 1993b). Different from receiver apprehension, communication apprehension involves both the sending and receiving of messages (Wheeless, 1975). Additionally, communication apprehension is influenced by social evaluation when sending a message, compared to receiver apprehension where social observers are not exposed to how the receiver internally listened to and processed the message. Evaluation of communication apprehension is immediate while evaluation in receiver apprehension is delayed such as in a test or assignment in a classroom setting. Students experiencing communication apprehension have a fear or anxiety of either real or anticipated oral communication (Ayres et al., 1995; Frymier, 1993b; Wheeless, 1975). The more students know and understand about communication processes, the more likely they are to experience reduced apprehension (Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001). Higher levels of communication apprehension have been linked to lower GPA, lower grades, and increased negative attitudes towards school (Frymier, 1993b). Similarly, teachers associate increased communication apprehension with decreased academic ability; therefore, affecting expectations and interactions with these students. However, research shows that teacher immediacy behaviors do have a direct impact on students experiencing communication apprehension. Further supporting the connection between teacher immediacy and affective learning, higher levels of affective learning are associated with reduced levels of communication apprehension (Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001). Likewise, students reporting stable or increased apprehension experienced a decrease in affective learning levels. A highly immediate teacher provided a greater benefit to students with moderate or high levels of

communication apprehension (Frymier, 1993b). Whereas, students with lower levels of apprehension had higher levels of motivation in the classroom regardless of the level of immediacy they perceived the instructor as demonstrating. This research indicates that some students benefit more from an immediate teacher than other students.

In addition to apprehension, motivation serves as a variable in understanding the effectiveness of immediacy behaviors (Frymier, 1993a). High levels of communication apprehension amongst students lead to lower levels of motivation, which subsequently resulted in lower levels of affective learning (Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001). Students highly motivated at the beginning of the course were more likely motivated later in the course, regardless of how immediate the teacher was in the classroom (Frymier, 1993a). However, students reported low or moderate levels of motivation at the beginning of the semester, reported higher levels at the end of the semester if they perceived the teacher as being highly immediate in terms of classroom behaviors. These findings support Brophy's claim that student motivation is "stimulated most directly through modeling, communication of expectations, and direct instruction or socialization by significant others (especially parents and teachers)" (1987, p. 40). Despite the improved levels of motivation due to teacher immediacy, those students reporting very low levels of motivation at the beginning of the semester still had low motivation when compared to students with high motivation (Frymier, 1993a). Having a highly immediate teacher did significantly increase motivation, but not to the levels of students highly motivated at the beginning of the course. No significant differences were noted between verbal or nonverbal immediacy behaviors. A student's motivation to learn is an acquired skill developed through years of experience (Brophy, 1987). If a student has not acquired that



skill by the start of a semester, it is likely they will not fully acquire the competence in a 16-week semester.

### **Student Perception of Teacher Immediacy, Affective Learning, and Cognitive Learning**

Instructional communication research has identified that students' perceptions of the instructors is affected by the communication that takes place between the two parties (Witt & Kerksen, 2011). Additionally, students with positive perceptions of teachers have a more positive attitude towards the course being taught enhancing the overall outcomes of teaching and learning (Hess & Smythe, 2001; Kerksen-Griep, Trees & Hess, 2008). Previous research supports the notion that students are just as effective and accurate in accessing teachers' immediacy behaviors as a trained observer (Frymier, 1993a; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990). Additionally, research suggests that student perceptions of learning are consistent across various classrooms. Individual student reports of immediacy and learning portrayed accurate reflections of teacher behaviors and learning outcomes (Gorham & Zakahi, 1990). Therefore, verbal and nonverbal immediacy scales requiring students to reflect on his or her perceptions of teacher immediacy behaviors within the classroom serve as accurate measurements of effective behavior.

One factor affecting students' overall motivation to succeed in course work focuses on student perceptions of teacher behaviors (Gorham & Christophel, 1992). The focus of motivation addresses the ability to stimulate and maintain student interest within the classroom (Frymier, 1993a). Typically defined as either a state or a trait, motivation varies greatly from one student to another (Brophy, 1987). Trait motivation is more stable and resistant to situational influences compared to state motivation which is less stable

and affected by situational influences. As a situational influence, teacher immediacy behaviors have the ability to impact a student's state motivation (Frymier, 1993a).

Utilized in learning situations, motivation to learn employs both affective and cognitive learning through the implementation of goals and other associated learning strategies (Brophy, 1987). To gain and maintain a student's interest in a particular subject matter, several teacher strategies focusing on communication exist (Frymier, 1993a). These strategies include the use of movement, body language, pauses, props and visual presentations, humor, use of stories, questions and discussions. Direct comparisons between these strategies and verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors become possible. For example, "provid[ing] immediate feedback to student responses" is both an intrinsic motivation for students and a verbal immediacy behavior practiced by teachers (Brophy, 1987, p. 44). A teacher's attitude towards the course and the material being learned has a direct effect on the students' view of the course and the material in turn (Frymier, 1993a). A teacher with a negative or unenthusiastic attitude towards the course will likely have students who find the course and the content boring and tedious. Likewise, a positive and enthusiastic teacher increases the likelihood that the students will view the course and content as worthwhile and appreciable (Brophy, 1987; Frymier, 1993a). Additionally, negative teacher behaviors are perceived as having a larger impact on motivation levels than positive teacher behaviors (Gorham & Christophel, 1992). In other words, a teacher's behaviors have a greater outcome of demotivating students than motivating students; further establishing the importance of not practicing negative teacher behaviors in the classroom.

The idea of perception brings about the question as to whether teacher's are aware of the level of immediacy behaviors they are using in the class is consistent with the students' perceptions of those same behaviors. Gorham and Zakahi (1990) found that teachers are highly aware of individual use of immediacy behaviors in the classroom. Additionally, the teachers' perceptions of the immediacy agreed with the students' perceptions of immediacy. These outcomes provide a positive outlook on teachers' abilities to improve immediacy behaviors or adjust them accordingly for a particular student. Prior to these findings, researchers questioned a teacher's ability to monitor personal behaviors successfully enough to identify the use and degree of use for immediacy behaviors (Richmond et al., 1985). Previous research indicated that correlations between teacher perceptions and student learning were much lower than correlations between student perceptions and student learning. However, these results may explain the fact that teacher responses require a generalization of the class as a whole, while teachers treat individual students differently (Gorham & Zahaki, 1990; Richmond et al., 1985). Finding support that teachers are able to monitor behavior adds one more component for training more immediate teachers in the classroom by utilizing training techniques that enhance one's ability to self-monitor (Gorman & Zahaki, 1990). Further findings support that any teacher willing to improve instructional communication in the classroom, regardless of the number of years of experience or stage in one's career, would benefit from immediacy behavior training.

Despite the many benefits of training more teachers in the classroom, there may still be other factors within the classroom that have an impact on the overall effectiveness of teacher immediacy behaviors. Many educators may question whether course format

and size has an effect on teacher immediacy behaviors and levels of affective learning. Messman and Jones-Corely (2001) conducted a study to measure the effects of course format and delivery on affective learning when immediacy behaviors were reported. Results found that when students perceived teachers as highly immediate, levels of affective learning stayed consistent compared to students who reported teachers as less immediate. Students in a mixed-size-format (“one large lecture with 345 students each week and break-out sections with 23 students twice a week”) reported lower levels of affective learning compared to self-contained format (“equivalent of three class periods a week with the same instructor and 26 students”) when the teacher was perceived as “just” immediate compared to highly immediate (p. 189). However, when students perceived teachers as highly immediate, no significant differences between the two different types of course delivery and format exist. Training for and utilizing immediate behaviors in the classroom can assist teachers in overcoming the challenges of maintaining and increasing levels of affective learning in both large and small classroom delivery formats.

Focusing on improving and increasing the use of immediacy behaviors in the classroom serves as an appropriate strategy to improve teaching effectiveness by increasing levels of affective learning (Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993a; Kearney et al., 1985; Witt et al., 2004). In studying the objectives of the affective domain various ranges of learning emerge (Kearney et al., 1985). Lower levels of learning occur through selective attention and emotional responses while higher levels of learning include behavioral intentions and activity. As students make more personal connections with the material being learned, they begin to generate more positive attitudes toward the material and the learning process. Consequently, students with more positive attitudes toward the

course and the content are more likely to experience increased levels of cognitive learning. These behaviors lead students to apply course content to situations and experiences outside the classroom, resulting in life-long knowledge that goes far beyond that one specific teacher, course, and concept. The relationship between teacher immediacy behaviors, affective learning, and cognitive learning is further supported through the causal model (Allen et al., 2006).

Research focusing on teacher immediacy behaviors and affective learning identified a model indicating the relationship between the two concepts (Allen et al., 2006). The model states that higher levels of perceived teacher immediacy caused the student to experience increased levels of affective learning, producing increased cognitive learning. In other words, if a student perceives that his or her instructor is being immediate through a nonverbal behavior such as smiling at them in class, they are likely to feel more comfortable in the class. Additionally, students may be more motivated to attend and participate in class, therefore actively learning the course concepts. Subsequently, the student is more likely to experience cognitive learning by earning higher scores in the course and be more willing to take a similar course in the future whether with the same instructor or with the same material. Each of the concepts brings us back to the importance of student success and retention. Those students who feel welcomed and comfortable in class, are more likely to attend, earning better grades, experiencing success, and being retained for the following term.

### **Student Success & Retention**

Achieving student success and improving student retention are two key elements that many institutions of higher education are focusing on improving (Tinto, 2006). With

an increasing number of institutions of higher education, competition for enrollment numbers is at an all-time high. Ensuring students are successful and retaining those students from one semester to the next is essential for any institution to remain viable in today's educational marketplace. To meet retention demands and fulfill reporting requirements related to student success, institutions both nationally and internationally, set aside dollars to create new positions related to retention, along with additional support services to support academic engagement (Jones-White et al., 2010; Nelson et al., 2012; Taylor & McAleese, 2012).

Access to higher education has improved tremendously in the United States over the last forty years with enrollments more than doubling from 9 million students in 1980 to more than 20 million today (Tinto, 2012). Despite the dramatic growth in enrollments, completion rates have only slightly increased, if at all over this same time frame. To meet the needs of educational institutional managers managing income streams or government agencies tracking the return on investment of public monies, measuring student success and retention has become an integral component of higher education (Yorke, 2004). However, to do so, formal definitions were applied to provide a way to track and record student success and retention. Following the Student Right to Know (SRK) Act of 1990, the standardized definition of student success was narrowly defined to measure graduation or completion rates (Jones-White et al., 2010). To meet SRK reporting requirements, all four-year institutions must complete the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Graduation Rate Survey (GRS). In measuring graduation rates, a cohort of full-time, new freshmen are followed through degree completion. Students are measured as successful when they obtain a bachelor's degree

within 150% of normal time within the program (normally six years) at the same institution. However, these measures are somewhat limiting and do not fully account for student success occurring in higher education. Data collected through the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) works to broaden the definition of student success by including: a) “baccalaureate degree from the home institution”; b) “baccalaureate degree from another higher education institution”; c) “associate degree/certificate award from another institution”; or d) “student failed to obtain a degree in the six-year period examined”. The expanded definition more accurately takes into account student success experienced by transfer students, attending two-year institutions who are returning adult students.

Although many institutions in higher education have experienced a lull in completion rates over the past forty years, this is not due to a lack of effort through the establishment of a variety of programs and initiatives (Tinto, 2012). One area of higher education where many of these initiatives do not reach is likely the source for making improvements with rates of student success and retention: the classroom (Abu, Adera, Kamsani & Ametepee, 2012; Tinto, 2012). This argument is especially true for students who attend two-year colleges, attend part-time, and/or commute as they are less likely to make a connection to the campus and become involved with extracurricular activities (Tinto, 1975; Tinto, 2012).

Key areas in the classroom for improving student success and retention include expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and engagement (Tinto, 2012). Faculty members’ behavior in the classroom has an effect on student success and retention (Abu et al., 2012). Expectations need to be clear for all students to understand, support

communicated from teachers to students, feedback should be frequent as students learn to navigate the course, the material, and the teacher, and students must be actively engaged in the classroom (Tinto, 2012). Clarity in the classroom has been positively associated with the use of increased teacher immediacy in the classroom (Brophy, 1987; Chesebro & McCroskey, 2001). Verbal immediacy behaviors such as verbal praise of comments made by students within the classroom, responding to topics initiated by students in the classroom, and a demonstrated willingness to communication with students outside the classroom demonstrate a teacher creating a supportive environment for student learning (Carrell & Menzel, 2001; Frymier, 1993a; Hackman & Walker, 1990). Frequent feedback leads to increased motivation and has been recognized as an immediate behavior in the classroom (Brophy, 1987; Frymier, 1993a). Employing these strategies in the classroom requires teachers who are adequately trained to do so (Tinto, 2012). Traditionally, instructors in higher education are not trained how to teach students prior to entering the classroom. As a result, a growing number of institutions of higher education are increasing training for teachers in pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment to meet the needs of the students.

Previous research shows that institutions of higher education continue to admit and enroll an increasing number of students requiring developmental coursework in the areas of math and English (Parsad & Lewis, 2003). Although many students successfully complete developmental courses and move into general education coursework, approximately 60% to 70% do not (Fowler & Boylan, 2010). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2013), percentage rates for students earning a bachelor's degree from a four-year institution after six years are not much stronger, with only 59%



of students successfully completing the degree. These numbers indicate room for growth, but which path is the most effective to achieve the goal of decreasing dropout? One focus to increase rates of success and retention for both development students and students not requiring development coursework is to apply Tinto's Theoretical Model of Dropout Behavior (Tinto, 1975).

According to Tinto, given an individual's characteristics, prior experiences, and commitments, the likeliness of a student to continue or be retained by an institution of higher education depends on that student's integration into the academic and social communities (Tinto, 1975). The stronger the integration into the institution, the more likely the student will commit to the institution and the goal of obtaining a degree. A key component of academic integration occurs in the classroom, through interactions with classmates and instructors, along with grades earned (Tinto, 2012). Therefore, taking a closer look at the instructional communication occurring in the classroom provides a direct link to student success and retention according to Tinto's Model.

Understanding instructional communication occurring between students and teachers has become a critical goal for many scholars and educators as they seek to identify areas of focus to increase student success and retention (Ozmen, 2011). One area of instructional communication that scholars in communication and education have identified as critical to student success and retention is teacher immediacy behaviors. Teacher immediacy behaviors have been linked with student motivation levels which in turn affect student persistence and success (Brophy, 1987; Frymier, 1993a). Student state motivation is influenced by self-esteem, expectations, and self-efficacy. Students with a positive experience (through positive teacher immediacy behaviors) are more likely to

attribute success in a course to effort rather than luck and become involved in classroom activities. Research has found links between teacher immediacy behaviors and students' ratings of faculty/student interactions and instruction (Moore, Masterson, Christophel & Shea, 1996). The more immediate the teacher, the more positive the students' ratings of interaction and instruction reported. Students experiencing more positive experiences in the classroom and through interaction with the teacher have an increased rate of retention and opportunity to experience success in the classroom. These findings take us one step closer to connecting teacher immediacy behaviors and student success and retention.

### **Hypotheses**

Previous research indicates that teacher behaviors account for 44% of the motivating and demotivating factors affecting students (Gorham & Christophel, 1992). Additionally, students reported that motivation was determined by themselves and demotivation determined by the teacher, demonstrating a self-serving bias. Teacher behaviors perceived by the student as negative had a greater impact on demotivating the student than positive behaviors had on motivating the student. Increased teacher immediacy behaviors have the ability to improve student's affective learning, subsequently decreasing dropout rates per Tinto's Model and increasing student success and retention (Tinto, 1975). Focusing on teacher immediacy behaviors as a mean's to increase affective learning, leading to increases in cognitive learning, improve student success and retention not just for the short term, but create a pattern of long-term success that all institutions can model (Allen et al., 2006). With the goals above in mind, the following hypotheses are advanced.

- H1:** A positive relationship exists between affective learning and student perceptions of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors.
- H2:** A positive relationship exists between affective learning and student perceptions of teacher verbal immediacy behaviors.
- H3:** A positive relationship exists between student success and retention and student perceptions of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors.
- H4:** A positive relationship exists between student success and retention and student perceptions of teacher verbal immediacy behaviors.
- H5:** A positive relationship exists between affective learning and student success and retention.
- H6:** A test of the causal model will identify a positive relationship between verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy and affective learning, and affective learning and cognitive learning and student success and retention.

## Methodology

### Participants

Two separate samples were collected for this study. The first sample included 103 responses from a large Midwestern university. Participant age ranged from 18 to 40 with an average age of 22.40,  $SD = 4.34$ . Participants were recruited from a Business and Professional Communication course and were eligible for a minimal amount of extra credit from the instructor in exchange for participating in the survey. Insufficient data was collected from some students ( $N = 8$ ) for data analysis, so these responses were removed from the data set. The second sample included 264 responses from a Midwestern community college. Participant age ranged from 18 to 63, with an average age of 33.40,  $SD = 12.010$ . Participants were recruited through an email sent from the institution's research department. The targeted email list focused on students seeking an Associate's Degree who were not enrolled in an online only program. However, insufficient data was collected from some students ( $N = 94$ ) for data analysis, so these responses were removed from the data set. The primary requirements for participating in the survey for both samples were informed consent and current or recent (within the last six months) enrollment in a face-to-face post-secondary course. The only exclusion criteria for both samples in this study required the participant to be at least 18 years of age.

### Instrument and Measures

All participants were provided with the same survey questions and format (Please see Appendix A for a complete list of all survey items). The survey includes: (a) the Immediacy Behavior Scale (consisting of 16-items focusing on Verbal Immediacy

(Gorham, 1988) and 14-items addressing Nonverbal Immediacy (Richmond et al., 1987), (b) the 24-item Affective Learning Scale (Christophel, 1990), and (c) 10 items pertaining to Student Success and Retention. Additional demographic and reflective information (regarding student responses to discussing instructors outside of the classroom) were requested.

### **Immediacy Behavior Scale**

The Immediacy Behavior Scale consists of 34 items developed to measure immediacy behaviors of instructors as perceived by the student. More specifically, the scale includes a list of 20 statements focusing on an instructor's verbal immediacy behavior and an additional 14 statements addressing nonverbal immediacy behaviors (Gorham, 1988; Richmond et al., 1987). Participants indicate the frequency in which the instructor employed the various immediacy behavior addressed in the specific statement. Frequency scores range from 0 (Never) to 4 (Very Often). Verbal immediacy scale statements include "Uses personal examples of talks about experiences she/he has had outside of class" and "Asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions." Actions presumed as non-immediate are included such as "Calls on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated they want to talk" and "Criticizes or points out faults in students' work, actions, or comments." Nonverbal immediacy scale statements include "Moves around the classroom when teaching" and "Smiles at individual students in the class." Again, nonverbal behaviors presumed as non-immediate are included such as "Sits behind desk when teaching" and "Looks at board or notes when talking to the class." Nonverbal immediacy scale items 1 (Sits behind desk when teaching) and 9 (Sits on a desk or in a chair when teaching) were removed due to low reliability. The

remaining 12-items were used to measure nonverbal immediacy for the large Midwestern university data set ( $\alpha = .77$ ) and the Midwestern community college data set ( $\alpha = .79$ ). Verbal immediacy scale items 9 (Refers to class as “my” class or what “I” am doing) and 18 (Criticizes or points out faults) were removed due to low reliability. The remaining 18-items were used to measure verbal immediacy for the large Midwestern university data set ( $\alpha = .91$ ) and the Midwestern community college data set ( $\alpha = .90$ ). A complete list of scale items and measurements is available in Appendix A.

### **Affective Learning Scale**

To measure affective learning, the Affective Learning Scale requires a student to estimate his or her attitude towards learning and likeliness of behavior in regards to course content, instructor, and behavioral intentions (Christophel, 1990). Consisting of 24 items, the Affective Learning Scale includes 12 statements that begin with “My attitude about the...of this course.” with *content*, *behaviors recommended*, and *instructor* substituted in the middle. Participant responses consist of a range between a) Good (1) and Bad (7); b) Worthless (1) and Valuable (7); c) Fair (1) and Unfair (7); and d) Positive (1) and Negative (7). The 12 remaining statements focus on the student’s likelihood to participate in the course, enroll in another related course, and take another course with the same instructor. Responses range between (a) Likely (1) and Unlikely (7); (b) Impossible (1) and Possible (7); (c) Probable (1) and Improbable (7); and (d) Would (1) and Would not (2). All 24-items were used to measure affective learning for the large Midwestern university data set ( $\alpha = .95$ ) and the Midwestern community college data set ( $\alpha = .95$ ). A complete list of scale items and measurements is available for review in Appendix A.

### **Student Success & Retention Scale**

To measure student success and retention, ten questions were utilized to gather information from the student's perspective. Several questions focused on credit hours such as "How many credit hours have you enrolled for?" and "How many credit hours have you completed?" Additional questions gathered information regarding the participant's year in school, current GPA, desired degree, program of student, confidence of completing the degree, and motivation to finish the degree. Each question allowed the student to supply an open-ended answer except for the question regarding confidence which provided a five-point Likert scale (1 = very confident; 5 = not very confident).

### **Procedures**

Data collection was conducted between early November and late December of 2013. The survey was delivered exclusively online via the online survey instrument Qualtrics. After reading the online informed consent form, participants could indicate consent by clicking on a button on the bottom of the first page of the survey. The next page of the survey asked participants if they were 18 years of age or older. If they answered yes, the survey would continue through the survey and the questions and scales outlined above. If the participant indicated that they were not 18 years of age or older, the survey transitioned them to the last page, thanking them for his or her time. The survey took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

### **Data Analysis**

This study will test a causal model and measure the correlation between the following variables: (a) nonverbal teacher immediacy; (b) verbal teacher immediacy; (c) affective learning; (d) cognitive learning; and (e) retention and student success. Two

separate data sets and results will be measured. One data set will incorporate student responses from the Midwestern community college sample and the other will include student responses from a large Midwestern university. A test of the causal model using a chi-square statistic will measure whether immediacy predicts affective learning which should predict both (a) cognitive learning and (b) student success and retention.



## Results

Data examined the relationship between variables. A test for the causal model was conducted. Results from the large Midwestern university data set are reported first (labeled as H1a), followed by results from the Midwestern community college (labeled as H1b). See Tables 1 and 2 for detailed statistics.

### **H1: Affective Learning & Nonverbal Immediacy**

The first hypothesis predicted a positive relationship exists between affective learning and student perceptions of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors.

**H1a: Midwestern University.** There exists a positive significant correlation between affective learning and teacher nonverbal immediacy,  $r = .53$ ,  $N = 95$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**H1b: Midwestern Community College.** There exists a positive significant correlation between affective learning and teacher nonverbal immediacy,  $r = .50$ ,  $N = 155$ ,  $p < .05$ . Nearly identical, both data sets support the hypothesis, indicating that nonverbal immediate behaviors employed by teachers generates a positive effect on student affective learning.

### **H2: Affective Learning & Verbal Immediacy**

The second hypothesis predicted a positive relationship exists between affective learning and student perceptions of teacher verbal immediacy behaviors.

**H2a: Midwestern University.** There exists a positive significant correlation between affective learning and teacher verbal immediacy,  $r = .43$ ,  $N = 95$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**H2b: Midwestern Community College.** There exists a positive significant correlation between affective learning and teacher verbal immediacy,  $r = .61$ ,  $N = 155$ ,  $p < .05$ . Results from both data sets support the hypothesis, identifying a positive

relationship between the two variables, with a stronger correlation for the Midwestern community college data set.

### **H3: Student Success & Retention & Nonverbal Immediacy**

The fourth hypothesis predicted a positive relationship exists between student success and retention and student perceptions of teacher nonverbal immediacy behaviors.

**H3a: Midwestern University.** Results revealed no significant relationship between student success and retention and teacher nonverbal immediacy,  $r = .06$ ,  $N = 79$ ,  $p > .05$ .

**H3b: Midwestern Community College.** Results revealed no significant relationship between student success and retention and teacher nonverbal immediacy,  $r = .02$ ,  $N = 126$ ,  $p > .05$ . Results from both data sets indicate no significant relationship between student success and retention and nonverbal immediacy.

### **H4: Student Success & Retention & Verbal Immediacy**

The third hypothesis predicted a positive relationship exists between student success and retention and student perceptions of teacher verbal immediacy behaviors.

**H4a: Midwestern University.** Results revealed no significant relationship between student success and retention and teacher verbal immediacy,  $r = -.02$ ,  $N = 79$ ,  $p > .05$ .

**H4b: Midwestern Community College.** Results revealed no significant relationship between student success and retention and teacher verbal immediacy,  $r = .01$ ,  $N = 126$ ,  $p > .05$ . Results from both data sets indicate no significant relationship between student success and retention and verbal immediacy.

### **H5: Affective Learning & Student Success & Retention**

The fifth hypothesis predicted a positive relationship exists between affective learning and student success and retention.

**H5a: Midwestern University.** Results revealed no significant relationship between affective learning and student success and retention,  $r = .04$ ,  $N = 79$ ,  $p > .05$ .

**H5b: Midwestern Community College.** Results revealed no significant relationship between affective learning and student success and retention,  $r = -.12$ ,  $N = 115$ ,  $p > .05$ . Results from both data sets indicate no significant relationship between affective learning and student success and retention.

#### **H6: Causal Model**

A test of the causal model will identify a positive relationship between verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy to affective learning, and from affective learning to cognitive learning and from affective learning to student success and retention.

**H6a: Midwestern University.** The correlations between variables are displayed in Table 3. A chi-square test for goodness-of-fit was performed to test the causal model,  $\chi^2 (5, N = 95) = 1.81$ ,  $p > .05$ . Results from the data set indicate no significant departure from fit. As noted in Figure 2, the paths between (a) Verbal Immediacy and Nonverbal Immediacy, (b) Verbal Immediacy and Affective Learning, and (c) Nonverbal Immediacy and Affective Learning were all significant. The operational path model for these three paths fits the data to within sampling errors, confirming the process in constructing that path model. The results indicate that both verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors independently predict or cause a level of affective learning, demonstrating the significance of the additional path models to distinguish between the two types of teacher immediacy behaviors.

**H6b: Midwestern Community College.** The correlations between variables are displayed in Table 4. A chi-square test for goodness-of-fit was performed to test the causal model,  $\chi^2 (5, N = 170) = 2.27, p > .05$ . Results from the data set indicate no significant departure from perfect fit. As noted in Figure 3, the paths between (a) Verbal Immediacy and Nonverbal Immediacy, (b) Verbal Immediacy and Affective Learning, (c) Nonverbal Immediacy and Affective Learning, (d) Verbal Immediacy and Cognitive Learning, (e) Nonverbal Immediacy and Cognitive Learning, and (f) Affective Learning and Cognitive Learning were all significant. The operational path model for these six paths fits the data to within sampling errors, confirming the process in constructing that path model. The results indicate that both verbal and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors independently predict or cause a level of affective learning and cognitive learning, demonstrating the significance of the additional path models to distinguish between the two types of teacher immediacy behaviors. Results indicate that affective learning predicts or causes cognitive learning, further supporting that path model.

## Discussion

This investigation measures the relationships between nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors, verbal teacher immediacy behaviors, affective learning, cognitive learning, and student success and retention. Additionally, the present research tested a causal model to determine whether immediacy behaviors predict or cause affective learning, and whether affective learning predicts or causes cognitive learning and student success and retention. More specifically, this study establishes the importance of measuring nonverbal and verbal teacher immediacy behaviors as two separate variables in predicting student success and retention. Finally, this investigation employed two distinct data sets: a large Midwestern University and a Midwestern Community College. Previous research linked increased teacher immediacy behaviors to increased levels of affective learning. Likewise, increased levels of teacher immediacy behaviors predict increased levels of cognitive learning. Understanding the direct effect of teacher immediacy behaviors in the classroom provides educators another tool for increasing affective and cognitive learning. Subsequently, increased levels of student success and retention as a result of increased teacher immediacy would provide institutions of higher education an active teaching strategy to ensure student success and increase student retention and graduation rates.

### *Verbal & Nonverbal Teacher Immediacy Behaviors*

The results demonstrate the relationship of verbal teacher immediacy behaviors and nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors with affective learning. Verbal teacher immediacy demonstrates a positive significant relationship with affective learning independent of nonverbal teacher immediacy behaviors. Similarly, nonverbal teacher

immediacy behaviors significantly related to affective learning independent of verbal teacher immediacy behaviors. Previous research combined both types of teacher immediacy behaviors into one category (Witt et al., 2003). However, results from this study indicate the significant importance of measuring and analyzing these behaviors as two separate variables, especially when utilizing each variable in a causal model. Understanding the individual importance of each variable may provide guidance in training teachers to utilize verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors effectively in the classroom. Additionally, further research may provide stronger links between each individual immediacy behaviors and affective learning, cognitive learning, and student success and retention.

Previous research asked which type of immediacy behavior improves prediction of student learning (Christensen & Menzel, 1998; Christophel, 1990; Frymier, 1993b; Gorham, 1988). Results from this investigation found both types of immediacy behaviors produce a significant positive relationship with affective learning, within the Midwestern University and the Midwestern Community College data sets.

Results from this investigation support previous research indicating that immediacy behaviors would have a positive relationship with affective learning. The relationship between both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors and affective learning was moderate, but not strong. Previous research on teacher immediacy combining verbal and nonverbal scales showed results with an even higher association between teacher immediacy behaviors and affective learning (Witt et al., 2003). In this study, each variable was measured separately, perhaps reducing the relationship between variables. Another explanation for the moderate relationship between teacher immediacy

behaviors and affective learning may include student apprehension, motivation, and level of involvement. Previous research identified students already experiencing low levels of apprehension, higher levels of motivation, and increased levels of involvement are less likely affected by teacher immediacy behaviors in the classroom (Brophy, 1987; Booth-Butterfield et al., 1992; Frymier, 1993a; Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001). Similarly, students experiencing extremely low levels of motivation when entering the class are less likely positively affected by an immediate teacher.

### *Causal Model*

Results from the Midwestern University data set indicate that both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors predict or cause affective learning. More so, each of these variables predicts or causes affective learning independently of one another. These results not only support the model presented by Allen et al. (2006), but advance the model by differentiating between the two types of teacher immediacy behaviors. These results identify the need for specialized training for teachers to not only instruct how to effectively utilize teacher immediacy behaviors in the classroom as a tool to increase affective learning, but distinguishes between the two types of behaviors to use as appropriate based on the student, course content, or learning situation.

Likewise, the results from the Midwestern community college supported the operational path model that verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors predict or cause affective learning. Again, each immediacy variable predicts a significant effect on affective learning, further supporting the earlier results. Students react to both the verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors utilized by teachers in the classroom. Additionally, the Midwestern community college data set found both verbal and nonverbal teacher

immediacy behaviors to independently predict or cause cognitive learning. These results further support the need to distinguish between both sets of teacher immediacy behaviors in utilizing and analyzing the causal model. Finally, the Midwestern community college dataset found affective learning to predict or cause cognitive learning, supporting results from Allen et al. (2006).

Results from both data sets, the large Midwestern University and the Midwestern Community College did not support the model for cause or prediction of student success and retention. However, the larger sample size presented in the Midwestern Community College did move closer towards significance than the smaller sample size offered through the large Midwestern University data set. One could interpret these results as a positive progression towards the model predicting student success and retention within a larger sample size. Despite the results not supporting the initial hypothesis regarding the causal model, explanations beyond sample size do exist. More specifically, a review of the sample of students surveyed, as well as student populations in general, provides information that is integral in analyzing the results.

After reviewing the results of the test of the causal model, a relationship is noted between both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors, affective learning, and cognitive learning. So why was student success and retention not predicted by these same variables? Anecdotal information, along with empirical research links engagement in the classroom and positive experiences with increased levels of student success and retention (Abu et al., 2012; Tinto, 2012). Furthermore, common sense might support the idea that increased levels of affective and cognitive learning should also predict increased levels of student success and retention. Despite these hypotheses, results from this investigation do



not significantly support those ideas. However, by eliminating affective learning and cognitive learning as factors predicting student success and retention, focus can be placed on other influences that the teacher cannot predict or control such as financial obligations and social responsibilities.

Initially, when a student does not achieve success, defined by the NCS as completing some type of degree or certificate in a given amount of time, attention is placed on the institution, and perhaps more specifically, the classroom as the probable predictor for lack of success (Jones-White et al., 2010). However, despite having a positive relationship with a teacher, reporting that they would take another class with that particular teacher or in that particular subject, students still do not always achieve success or return to the institution for the following term. One of these reasons may very likely be due to finances. Since the early 1980s, the list-price of tuition at colleges and universities in the United States has risen by an average of 7% per year while the inflation rate has increased by just 3.2% (Feldman, 2012). The statistics outlining the increase in tuition closely parallel statistics reporting a lull in student completion rates over the last forty years (Tinto, 2012). Despite restructuring in Federal Financial Aid programs, many students simply lack the financial resources to continue attending an institution of higher education. Regardless of how positive the classroom experience due to the levels of teacher immediacy behaviors in the classroom or the levels of affective and cognitive learning experienced, many students simply do not return for financial reasons.

Continuing the focus on financial resources, many students limit the number of credits enrolled in to maintain a certain number of employment hours. For many students, working while attending school is not a choice for extra spending money, but a necessity

to cover the basic costs of living. For the growing adult student population, numbers supported by the average age of students reported in each data sample as 22 and 33 respectively for the large Midwestern University and the Midwestern Community College, maintaining employment, often full-time, while attending school is not negotiable. Not only must this group of students meet the financial needs of school, but often maintain a household and cover the living expenses of other family members such as a partner and children. For these busy adult students, finances are often really stretched along with time to complete homework and other assignments outside of class. Although some students are fortunate to work for an organization that supports higher education through monetary or time resources, many students return to higher education to improve job options because current working conditions are not rewarding or supportive. For still another group of students, the occupation that dominated much of their employment years may no longer be thriving in today's economy and dislocated workers are forced to return to school for retraining. Obligations concerning the balance of time and resources lead us to the next area of explanation, social responsibilities.

Many students, especially adult students, feel overwhelmed between balancing multiple social responsibilities, such as school, work, family, military, etc. Committing to higher education is not only a financial commitment, but one of time and energy as well. Although students may have a positive classroom experience and plan to return for the following semester, many do not due to social obligations. A student who has children may simply not have the time to devote to studies and family. Likewise, not all employers are supportive of employees returning to school. Scheduling may be inflexible and some students may feel forced to decide between maintaining a job or attending

school. In a situation such as this, the levels of immediacy displayed by a teacher in the classroom will likely have little to do with the student's ultimate decision. Students returning to school because they were let go from a position and subsequently called back may not choose to continue for both financial and social obligations. Similarly, students committed to the military may be required to walk away from the institution and the classroom in the middle of the term to serve the needs of the unit. When the student's service becomes completed, returning to school may constitute the first priority. Again, although these decisions are not easy for any student to make, a teacher's use of immediacy is not likely to affect the student's decision not to return to school for the next term. Although many institutions of higher education are striving to offer students more flexibilities to work around many of the financial and social obligation challenges addressed above, at the end of the day, many students choose not to return to school due to a lack of time and money associated with reasons beyond the institution's control or predictability.

Despite the lack of prediction for student success and retention, the results of the causal model strengthen the relationship between the use of both verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom and affective and cognitive learning. As institutions of higher education push to remain competitive in a market rapidly increasing in competitiveness, the ability to train teachers to be immediate in the classroom offers the potential to increase affective and cognitive learning. Although the results supporting the link between affective learning, cognitive learning, and student success and retention were not significant, a relationship does exist. Increasing student success and retention is important for all members of higher education, including teachers, administrators, and

staff. Teachers working the classroom traditionally want to see students succeed and meet their goals. The ability to witness a student learn or experience that “ah ha” moment is unparalleled in a teacher’s career. Administrators continuously strive to find means to improve the level of education able to offer and market while maintaining tuition costs to remain viable in a highly competitive market. Staff, such as academic advisors, financial aid representatives, program assistants, etc. often establish and build lasting relationships with students and are passionate about student success and satisfaction.

Equally important to those working in higher education, and perhaps even more so, increased levels of student success and retention produce a profound impact on students and parents. Few students look forward to failing a course, or worse, out of the institution all together. Likewise, parents are not likely to support an institution choice that does not offer high rates of success and retention. Although some students may select a path different from graduation, most if not all, would prefer for that choice to be their own opposed to an academic decision imposed due to lack of success in the classroom. Additionally, the relationships built between teachers and students in the classroom through the use of immediacy behaviors may not only retain a student, but may provide the mentorship and support necessary for success beyond the classroom. Although variables such as mentorship, support, and learning beyond the classroom are often more difficult to measure in an empirical study, they are no less important.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Although the research conducted in this study takes crucial strides in providing empirical support in understanding the impact and effects of teacher immediacy behaviors and affective learning, cognitive learning, and student success and retention,

limitations are present. The following section identifies those limitations and presents opportunities for future research.

A notable limitation to the research was the measures for student success and retention. Participants from both data sets appeared to have difficulty responding to questions regarding credit hours. Specifically, “How many credits hours until you complete your degree?”, “How many credit hours have you enrolled for?”, and “How many credit hours do you take per semester on average?” Several student responses for these questions were inconceivable in regards to the numbers matching with any relevant degree offered at the institution. Responses from the Midwestern Community College data set appeared to struggle more with these questions, including responses given in hours (noting practicums) instead of credit hours, combining all credits completed from various institutions over a lifetime, and noting that enrollment was not necessarily consistent from semester to semester given certain life responsibilities such as work or family. The average age and age range between the two data sets is notable with the Midwestern University participants reporting an average age of 22 and a range of 18 to 40 years, while the Midwestern Community College participants reporting an average age of 33 and range of 18 to 63 years. In remaining consistent between the two data sets, the same questionnaire and wording was utilized for both groups. However, future research should word questions for a diverse population to decode the meaning as intended. Additionally, unrealistic responses to the questions above indicate that perhaps students are truly unaware of credit load or how to calculate the number of credits needed to complete a degree. Most institutions offer students the option to access electronic unofficial transcripts immediately; however, many may not take the time to do so when

completing a short, voluntary survey, in which, they may or may not value the importance of the personal input.

An additional limitation to measuring the defining student success is the differing perspectives that exist in higher education. The NSC defines student success as a student obtaining a degree within 150% of normal time (normally six years) through one of the following channels: a) “baccalaureate degree from the home institution”; b) “baccalaureate degree from another higher education institution”; c) “associate degree/certificate award from another institution”; or d) “student failed to obtain a degree in the six-year period examined”. Although this perspective of success may be used as a benchmark for national standards within higher education, students may not share this same perspective. Although many students would identify the completion of a degree or certificate as success, many would not limit that success within the stringent time frame outlined by the NSC. From the NSC’s perspective, if an institution of higher education had a 100% completion rate for all of their students to complete a degree or certificate, but those completion dates fell beyond the six-year mark, the institution and those students would be viewed as a failure or unsuccessful. For today’s students who are challenged by financial and social responsibilities, completing a degree within 150% of the normal rate may simply not be feasible, yet completing that degree is still considered a success. As institutions of higher education strive to be more economically sound by cutting courses with low enrollment, limiting available sections, many students may not be able to feasibly complete a degree in the “successful” amount of time due to course offerings and the necessary prerequisites to move from one course to the next.

The conflicting verbiage utilized in the immediacy scales may also be seen as a limitation. The instructions prompted students to “reflect back on your overall instructional experiences at your current institution as you respond to the following questions”, yet, the wording in the individual questions often focused on one instructor or one particular class. Despite this limitation, results from both the verbal and nonverbal items on the immediacy scales were reliable and significant, indicating that the survey participants were able to respond appropriately.

Although administering surveys via online instruments is becoming commonplace, this particular set of scales asked students to reflect on an in-class experience with the teacher to respond to the set of questions. Online administration of this survey provided convenience and the ability to target a wider population; however, depending on the environment in which the student completed the survey, they may not have been focusing on an in-class experience. Especially while sitting in front of a computer to complete the survey. Future research should include surveys completed in-person to note any differences in responses. Additionally, with an increasing online environment in education, an online verbal and nonverbal immediacy scale should be constructed to measure student’s perception of immediacy in an online learning environment. Student levels of affective learning, cognitive learning, and student success and retention are just as important in an online environment as they are in a face-to-face environment.

In addition to the survey being administered through an online instrument, students from the Midwestern Community College data set were recruited through student email accounts. As students are increasing the use of text and other social media

for communication, checking one's student email account is becoming less commonplace. One could argue that the students actively checking a student email account, and taking the time to complete the survey (whether for personal benefit as in the Midwestern Community College data set or because of an extra credit opportunity presented to the Midwestern University data set) are already more likely to experience less apprehension, higher levels of motivation, and are more likely involved in the course. Again, students who fall into these categories may be less impacted by teacher immediacy behaviors than classmates who are less motivated and involved and experience higher levels of apprehension (Brophy, 1987; Booth-Butterfield et al., 1992; Frymier, 1993a; Messman & Jones-Corley, 2001).

Despite the limitations and directions for future research, this investigation provides valuable empirical evidence supporting the causal model and the need to distinguish between the variables of verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom. Identifying the causes and predictions of student levels of affective and cognitive learning are essential for success in the classroom and for the institution. This research takes one more step towards bridging the gap between student perceptions of teacher immediacy behaviors and student success and retention.



Figure 1

**Causal Model**

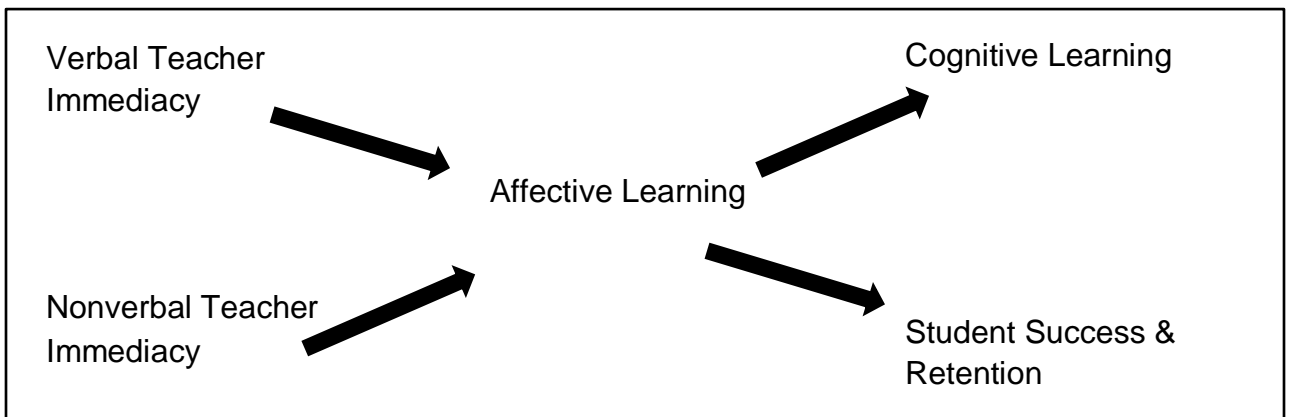
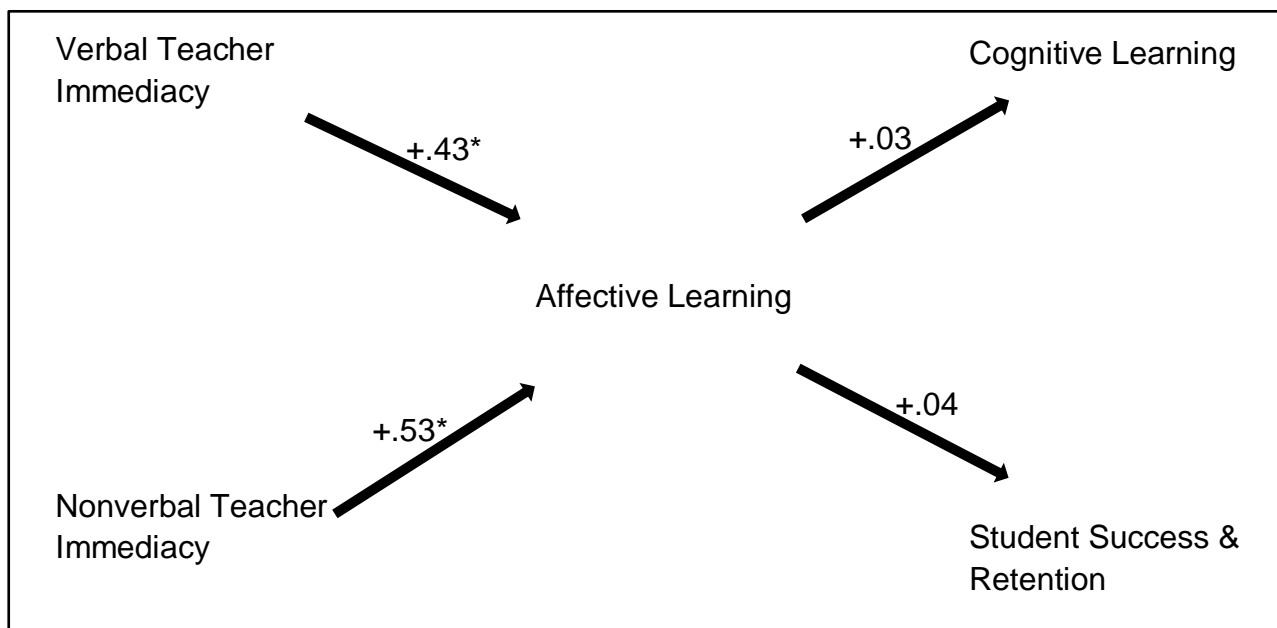
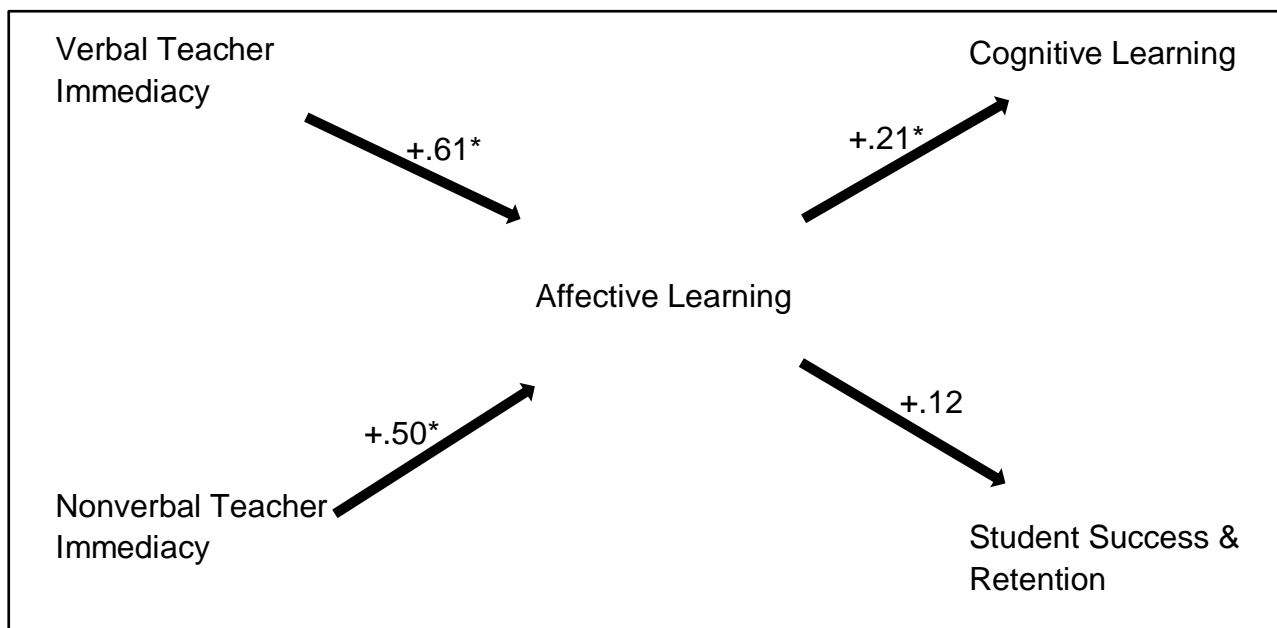


Figure 2

**Large Midwestern University Causal Model with Path Coefficients**

\* Statistically significant,  $p < .05$

Figure 3

**Midwestern Community College Causal Model with Path Coefficients**

\* Statistically significant,  $p < .05$

Table 1

**Correlations – Large Midwestern University**

		Affective Learning	Verbal Immediacy	Nonverbal Immediacy	Retention	Cognitive
Affective Learning	Pearson Correlation	1	.434**	.529**	.038	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.738	.787
	N	95	95	95	79	92
Verbal Immediacy	Pearson Correlation	.434**	1	.585**	.015	.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.894	.467
	N	95	95	95	79	92
Nonverbal Immediacy	Pearson Correlation	.529**	.585**	1	.057	.001
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.616	.992
	N	95	95	95	79	92
Retention	Pearson Correlation	.038	.015	.057	1	.154
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.738	.894	.616		.182
	N	79	79	79	80	77
Cognitive	Pearson Correlation	.029	.077	.001	.154	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.787	.467	.992	.182	
	N	92	92	92	77	93

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 2

**Correlations – Midwestern Community College**

		Affective Learning	Verbal Immediacy	Nonverbal Immediacy	Retention	Cognitive
Affective Learning	Pearson Correlation	1	.613**	.499**	.118	.208*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.208	.015
	N	155	155	155	115	138
Verbal Immediacy	Pearson Correlation	.613**	1	.644**	.013	.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.888	.039
	N	155	170	170	126	146
Nonverbal Immediacy	Pearson Correlation	.499**	.644**	1	.023	.169*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.802	.041
	N	155	170	170	126	146
Retention	Pearson Correlation	.118	.013	.023	1	.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.208	.888	.802		.617
	N	115	126	126	142	131
Cognitive	Pearson Correlation	.208*	.171*	.169*	.044	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.015	.039	.041	.617	
	N	138	146	146	131	164

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3

**Large Midwestern University Correlations between Variables**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Verbal Immediacy					
2. Nonverbal Immediacy	.59				
3. Affective Learning	.43	.53			
4. Cognitive Learning	.08	.00	.03		
5. Student Success & Retention	.02	.06	.04	.15	

$N = 95$

Table 4

**Midwestern Community College Correlations between Variables**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Verbal Immediacy					
2. Nonverbal Immediacy	.64				
3. Affective Learning	.61	.50			
4. Cognitive Learning	.17	.17	.21		
5. Student Success & Retention	.01	.02	.12	.04	

*N* = 170

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## Appendix A

### Demographic Questions

1. What is your age?
2. What is your gender?
3. What ethnic group do you identify with?
4. Do you receive financial aid?

### Student Success & Retention Questions

1. What year in school are you in?
2. How many credit hours have you enrolled for?
3. How many credit hours have you completed?
4. How many credits do you take per semester on average?
5. What is your current GPA?
6. What is your desired degree?
7. What is your program of study?
8. How many credit hours until you complete your degree?
9. How confident are you that you will finish your degree? (1-5; 1=very confident; 5=not very confident)
10. What motivates you to finish your degree?

### Immediacy Behavior Scale

#### *Verbal Immediacy Items* (Gorham, 1988)

Directions:

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain your perception of teacher immediacy behaviors in the classroom. Reflect back on your overall instructional experiences at your current institution as you respond to the following questions.

For each item, please select the option that best describes how you perceive your instructor to behave.

Scale: Never = 0 Rarely = 1 Occasionally = 2 Often = 3 Very Often = 4

1. Uses personal examples or talks about experiences she/he has had outside of class.
2. Asks questions or encourages students to talk.
3. Gets into discussions based on something a student brings up even when this doesn't seem to be part of his/her lecture plan.
4. Uses humor in class.
5. Addresses students by name.
6. Addresses me by name.
7. Gets into conversations with individual students before or after class.
8. Has initiated conversations with me before, after or outside of class.
9. Refers to class as "my" class or what "I" am doing. \*

10. Refers to class as “our” class or what “we” are doing.
11. Provides feedback on my individual work through comments on papers, oral discussions, etc.
12. Calls on students to answer questions even if they have not indicated they want to talk. \*
13. Asks how students feel about an assignment, due date or discussion topic.
14. Invites students to telephone or meet with him/her outside of class if they have questions or want to discuss something.
15. Asks questions that have specific, correct answers. \*
16. Asks questions that solicit viewpoints or opinions.
17. Praises students’ work, actions or comments.
18. Criticizes or points out faults in students’ work, actions or comments. \*
19. Will have discussions about things unrelated to class with individual students or with the class as a whole.
20. Is addressed by his/her first name by students.

\*Presumed to be *nonimmediate*. Item scoring reflected for analyses.

### ***Nonverbal Immediacy Items*** (Richmond et al., 1987)

Scale: Never = 0 Rarely = 1 Occasionally = 2 Often = 3 Very Often = 4

1. Sits behind desk when teaching. \*
2. Gestures when talking to the class.
3. Uses monotone/dull voice when talking to the class. \*
4. Looks at the class when talking.
5. Smiles at the class as a whole, not just individual students.
6. Has a very tense body position when talking to the class. \*
7. Touches students in the class.
8. Moves around the classroom when teaching.
9. Sits on a desk or in a chair when teaching. \*
10. Looks at board or notes when talking to the class. \*
11. Stands behind podium or desk when teaching. \*
12. Has a very relaxed body position when talking to the class.
13. Smiles at individual students in the class.
14. Uses a variety of vocal expressions when talking to the class.

\*Presumed to be *nonimmediate*.

### **Student Reflection Questions**

1. Do you discuss your instructor with other students outside of class?
2. What kind of items do you discuss?
3. Do other students discuss his or her instructor with you outside of class?
4. What kind of items do other students discuss?

### **Affective Learning Scale** (Christophel, 1990)



Directions:

The purpose of the next set of questions is to obtain your affective learning through your instructional experiences. Reflect back on the same instructional experiences you used above to answer each question.

For each item, please select the option that best describes how you feel about your learning experience.

My attitude about the *content* of this course:

(1) Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad*
(2) Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable
(3) Fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfair*
(4) Positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Negative*

My attitude about the *behaviors recommended* in this course:

(5) Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad*
(6) Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable
(7) Fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfair*
(8) Positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Negative*

My attitude about the *instructor* of this course:

(9) Good	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad*
(10) Worthless	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Valuable
(11) Fair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unfair*
(12) Positive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Negative*

My likelihood of actually attempting to *engage in the behaviors recommended* in this course:

(13) Likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unlikely*
(14) Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible
(15) Probable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Improbable*
(16) Would	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Would not*

My likelihood of actually *enrolling in another course of related content*, if I had the choice and my schedule permits: (If you are graduating, assume you would still be here.)

(17) Likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unlikely*
(18) Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible
(19) Probable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Improbable*
(20) Would	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Would not*

The likelihood of my *taking another course with the teacher* of this course, if I have a choice, is: (If you are graduating, assume you would still be here.)

(21) Likely	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unlikely*
(22) Impossible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Possible
(23) Probable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Improbable*
(24) Would	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Would not*

\*Items reflected for scoring.

# VITA

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### Positions

Communication Faculty, Moraine Park Technical College, Fond du Lac, August 14, 2012 to present, teach a variety of Communication courses for the General Education Department such as Oral & Interpersonal Communication, Occupational Communication, Written Communication and Technical Reporting, serve as a member of the Communication and General Education teams.

Adjunct Instructor, Marian University, Fond du Lac, August 2013 to present, teach a variety of Communication courses for the Adult & Graduate Studies (AGS) Program as needed such as COM 100 - Intro to Communication, COM 420 - Professional Presentations, and COM 302 – Intercultural Communication.

Associate Director, Sheboygan Center, Lakeland College, June 4, 2012 to August 3, 2012. Advised students in the Kellett Center aimed at serving adult students through BlendEd Instruction.

Instructional Academic Staff, University of Wisconsin Colleges, Department of Communication and Theatre Art Communication, August 2011 to present, teach Introduction to Interpersonal Communication (UW-Sheboygan & UW-Manitowoc campuses).

Student Success Coordinator, University of Wisconsin-Sheboygan, Student Services Office, July 1, 2010 to June 1, 2012, oversee the development and overall management of the Student Success Center, assist the Assistant Campus Dean for Student Services in the creation of a comprehensive advising program for use with all students from recruitment through graduation/transfer; supervise the Advisor program; advise at-risk students, coordinate Student Success Workshops, supervise the Student Success Center Tutoring Program, oversee the campus Accessibility Services Programs, provide supervision for all Testing Center services, supervise the selection and use of Self Exploration and Career Exploration assessments.

Adjunct Faculty, Moraine Park Technical College, Department of General Education, August 2010 to 2012, teach Written Communication.

Pre-College/Student Success Advisor, University of Wisconsin-Sheboygan, Student Services Office, 2009 to July 1, 2010, coordinate and execute all pre-college activities on campus, organize student success workshops and events, campus coordinate for Wisconsin College Access Project, advise students of all ages and backgrounds, work with transcripted credit students in area high schools, work with recruitment activities, placement testing, advising and registration events, new student orientation, and campus visits.

Interim Advisor, University of Wisconsin-Sheboygan, Student Services Office, 2008-2009, advise students of all ages and backgrounds, work with recruitment activities, placement testing, advising and registration events, new student orientation, and campus visits.

Admissions Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Waukesha, Student Services Office, 2005 to 2008, process all applications for admission, communicate with in-process and admitted students, recruit and meet with prospective students and their parents both on- campus and off-campus, advise all students in the Youth Options and High School Special Programs, all international students, and some new freshman.

## **Grants**

2007-2008, John Paul Jones Memorial Trust, \$100.

## Awards and Recognition

Top Student Paper, Training and Development Division, National Communication Association Convention, 2011  
 Top Panel, Training and Development Division, National Communication, 2011  
 UW-Milwaukee Graduate Student Travel Award (\$400) received for participating and presenting at NCA 2011 in New Orleans, LA.  
 Sheboygan County Top Young Professional “Making Their Mark” Award, 2011  
 UW-Sheboygan Dean’s Recognition Award, 2011  
 UW Colleges Award for Outstanding Achievement in Student Services, 2011  
 UW-Sheboygan Dean’s Recognition Award, 2010  
 UW-Milwaukee Department of Communication Award for Outstanding GPA, 2008.

## Publications

Mullane, R., Burrell, N., Allen, M., & Timmerman, L. (2014). Victim-Offender mediation: A meta-analysis. In N. Burrell, M. Allen, B. Gayle, & R. Preiss (Eds.), *Managing interpersonal conflict: Advances through meta-analysis* (pp. 106-124). New York: Routledge.

Allen, M., Bourhis, J., Burrell, N. Cole, A.W., Cramer, E., Dilbeck, K., England, N., Hawkins, J.M., Maier, M., Mullane, R., Omachinski, K., Omori, K., DeCloedt-Pincom, D., Victor, A., Willes, K.L., & Zmyslinski, A.N. (2013). Comparing communication doctoral programs, alumni, and faculty: The use of google scholar. *Journal of the Association for Communication Administration*, 32(2), 55-68.

## Publications in Preparation

Mullane, R. & Gonnering, R. (2011.) Training Student Employees to Effectively Apply Customer Service Principles to their Positions of Employment in Higher Education. Manuscript being prepared for journal submission.

## Presentations

Mullane, R. (2014, April). Understanding Conflict Concerning Childrearing in the Mother and Daughter-in-Law Relationship – Theoretical Review. Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association convention, Minneapolis, MN.

Mullane, R., Cramer, E.M., Schneider, S. (2013, November). "These experiences shape your life for good and bad": Integrating student and educator ideologies

into anti-bullying initiatives. Paper presented at the 99th annual convention of the National Communication Association, Scholar to Scholar, Washington DC.

Mullane, R. (2013, November). Integrating interpersonal communication theories with small group communication. Paper presented at the 99th annual convention of the National Communication Association, Great Ideas for Teaching Students (G.I.F.T.S), Washington DC.

Kim, S. Allen, M., Cole, A., Cramer, E.C., Ahn, S., Becker, K.A., Choi, C.S., Dilbeck, K.E., Gross, C.M., Hawkins, J.L.M., Jayroe, T.J., Kim, M., Mullane, R.R., Priddis, D.M., Smith, K., Victor, A.K., Willes, K.L., & Zmyslinski-Seelig, A.N. (2013, November). Testing the evidence effect of Additive Cues Model (ACM). Paper presented at the 99th annual convention of the National Communication Association, Communication and Social Cognition Division, Washington, DC.

Mullane, R. (2011). Improving Communication between Students and Academic advisors to Increase Student Success. Paper presented at the 97th annual convention of the National Communication Association, Washington D.C.

Mullane, R. & Gonnering, R. (2011.) Training Student Employees to Effectively Apply Customer Service Principles to their Positions of Employment in Higher Education. Paper presented at the 97th annual convention of the National Communication Association, New Orleans, LA.

Mullane, R. & Reitter, J. (2011). Building Campus Community & Promoting Student Success on Study Day. Project presented at the Engaging Students in the First Year (ESFY) Conference at the University of Wisconsin-Fox Valley, Menasha, WI.

Burrell, N., Gill, R., Timmerman, L., & Allen, M (2009, November). Victim Offender mediation: A meta-analysis. Paper presented at the National Communication Association Conference, Chicago, IL.

Gill, R. (2007). "Social Interaction in Online Classes and Students' Sense of Community." Paper presented at the Central States Communication Association (CSCA), April 9-13, Madison, WI.

Gill, R., Knutson, K., & Zilliox, J. (2007). Restorative Justice Independent Study. Project presented at the Global Health and Social Justice Conference: Violence as Disease, Milwaukee, WI.

## **Service**

Moraine Park Technical College, Quality Review Process, 2012-present

Moraine Park Technical College, Communication Faculty Member, 2012-present

Moraine Park Technical College, Curriculum Team – Development of Intro to Mass Communication – MPTC, 2013 – present  
Moraine Park Technical College, Faculty Academy, 2012-2013  
UW-Colleges Academic Staff Senator, 2009-2012  
Member, UW Colleges Senate Budget Committee, 2011-2012  
Member, UW-Sheboygan Campus Climate Committee, 2009-2012  
Member, UW-Sheboygan Engaging Students in the First Year (ESFY) Committee, 2009-2012  
Member, UW-Sheboygan Athletics Committee, 2011-2012  
Member, Young Women’s Conference (YWC) Committee, 2008-2012  
UW-Colleges Academic Staff Representative to the UW-System, 2009-2011  
Member, UW-Colleges Senate Steering Committee, 2009-2011  
Member, UW-Sheboygan Steering Committee, 2009-2011  
Member, UW-Sheboygan Appointments Committee, 2009-2011  
Member, Parking Committee, 2007-2008  
Chair, Student Life & Interest Committee (SLIC), 2006-2007  
Member, Student Services Staff Retreat Committee, 2005-2007