**The Relationship Between Teacher Personality, Attitude Homophily, and Student Motivation in the Student-Teacher Dyad**

**Study Synopsis**

**Purpose of Research:**

The purpose of this study is to determine a relationship exists between student temperament, teacher temperament, perceptions of attitude homophily (similarity), and student motivation in a particular course. In other words, student-teacher similarities may have an impact on students’ classroom motivation. Students will be asked to complete a survey consisting of four (4) short questionnaires. The first questionnaire will reveal the student’s temperament. In the second questionnaire, the student will be asked to evaluate the teacher’s temperament. This will show what temperament the student perceives the teacher to exhibit. The third questionnaire will determine whether the student perceives that they are similar to the teacher in attitude. Finally, the last questionnaire will reveal the student’s state motivation in that particular course. State motivation assumes that the student is extrinsically motivated and thus, there are certain behaviors a teacher can communicate to the student to increase classroom motivation.

Previous research has shown that there are certain behaviors (nonverbal immediacy, humor, etc.) a teacher can do to help motivate students and that student-teacher interactions play an important role in students’ motivation to learn (Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009). This study seeks to determine how students’ own temperament, their perceptions of their teacher’s temperament, and their perceptions of attitude homophily with the teacher affect their motivation in the class.

The primary researcher anticipates presenting the results at an accredited national or regional communication conference and publishing the results in a communication journal, most likely *Communication Education*.

**Subject Population Description:**

In order to obtain a sample size that is representative of the population of Texas State University, approximately 400 students ages 18 and older will be sought for this study. Both part-time and full-time students will be sought.

**Research Procedures/Methods**

1. **Recruitment and Selection of Subjects:** Students enrolled in introductory communication classes, specifically COMM 1310 at Texas State University-San Marcos, will be targeted for recruitment; however all college students are welcome to participate. During the middle weeks of the semester the principle investigator will announce to students in the large lecture Communication 1310 course, that a study is being conducted about students’ perceptions and classroom motivation. It will be stressed that all responses are anonymous, answers cannot be tracked back to students, participating (or not participating) will not influence their grade, and that students can terminate participation at any time. Later in the week, while students are in their labs, the students will be asked to participate.

Students will be reminded, both in written form and in oral survey directions, to base all answers about an instructor they had in a prior class. This is a widely used method in classroom communication research (citations available upon request). Importantly, it safeguards students’ concerns that their instructor will act punitively, or favorably, toward the student based on their responses to the classroom communication survey.

1. **Research Location(s):** Participants will complete surveys during the final 10-15 minutes of class time. If necessary, students will be able to take the survey home with them and return the survey in the next class period.
2. **Consent/Assent Process Description:** The survey begins by requesting students to give their name, the course in which they are taking the survey, and the instructor in that course. This information will be removed immediately to ensure that the data in no way can be traced back to any particular student. The sole purpose for this identifying information is so the teacher can be made aware of the student’s participation and award them extra credit, if applicable. Students enrolled in this course have many opportunities to gain extra credit and are able to earn up to 5 points total throughout the semester. If they choose not to participate they are still able to earn the five points doing various other activities.

All participants will be informed of their rights and responsibilities as research participants (see Appendix A – Informed Consent). If individuals elect to participate, they will simply complete the written surveys. Messages stressing the voluntary nature of this study will be reviewed, and these appear directly in the Informed Consent: “Do not put you name on this questionnaire to ensure anonymity…There is no right or wrong answer. Participation in this study is voluntary. You can terminate your participation at any time without penalty. Your performance in this study or your refusal to participate or withdraw from this study will in no way affect your class standing, grades, job status, or status in any athletic or other activity associated with Texas State University.”

Students who elect not to participate or withdraw from participation will be informed verbally and in writing, that they will not be penalized for not participating in the research. Also, if they choose not to participate, they will be able to leave class ten minutes early while the other students are taking the survey.

1. **Describe the nature and timing of the research activities**

All surveys, along with informed consent, and attached (see Appendix A and B).

Students enrolled in COMM 1310 will be invited to participate. During the middle weeks of the semester, students will be invited in their large lecture course and be asked in their lab section to complete the survey. Participants will physically complete the survey in their lab sections. Participants will be asked to complete the scale based on the instructor they had directly before their current class. The survey should take no more than 15 minutes. Upon completion of the survey, participants will be thanked for their participation.

1. **Procedures for Safeguarding Confidentiality of Information:**

***Who will have access to the confidential data?***

Only the primary researcher.

***For how long will subject identifying information be linked to the data?***

No identifying information will be contained in the actual survey responses.

***Where and how will the data be stored?***

Data will be stored, both physically and electronically, in the researcher’s locked office files. Computer files (SPSS) will only be accessed by the researcher, and the surveys will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

1. **Deception:** No deception will be used.

**Potential Risks and Discomforts:**

This study involves minimal risk. Survey questions inquire about normative behaviors and perceptions. The risk does not exceed that encountered in normal day-to-day activities. However, if students feel discomfort or risk, they may decline to participate at any time, speak with the primary researcher (whose name and contact information are included on the instrument, in which case they may make an appointment or be referred to the appropriate university personnel), or contact the campus IRB office/staff.

**Potential Benefits:**

There has been a great deal of research on what behaviors teachers can exhibit to increase their students’ motivation but none of these studies focused on the relationship between temperament (personality), attitude homophily (similarity), and student motivation. This study benefits the field of Instructional Communication by providing research to show the impact temperament and homophily have on student motivation and gives teachers greater insight on how their communication behaviors could increase their students’ state motivation in the class.

**Appendix A**

Consent Form

February 2, 2011

Dear Participant:

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Justin Maldonado (jm2270@txstate.edu; 512-245-1361) a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies at Texas State University under the guidance of Dr. Marian Houser (mh53@txstate.edu; 512-245-3137), associate professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Texas State University. The purpose of this research study is to explore the relationship between students’ perceptions of their teachers and their motivation in classes. Since you are currently a college student, you are being invited to participate in this study. To participate in this study, you must be *at least* 18 years old.

Do not put your name on this questionnaire. This will ensure that your survey cannot be linked back to you and, thereby, will ensure anonymity. In other words, no one will know which survey is yours if you turn it in without a name on it. Please be sure to read each section carefully and answer all questions honestly. Responses should reflect your opinion of a teacher you have had in another class. There is no right or wrong answer. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose not to answer any question for whatever reason. You can terminate your participation at any time without penalty. Your refusal to participate or withdraw from this study will in no way affect you class standing, grades, job status, or status in any athletic or other activity associated with Texas State University or your instructor. There are no known risks associated with participation in this study, and benefits include contributing to a body of research. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete this questionnaire and you will be given the appropriate time to complete this survey at the end of your lab section. For those who choose to participate, some instructors are offering extra credit; instructors will inform students of this prior to administrating the survey. This top sheet will be removed from the actual survey and be given to the proper instructor to make sure the student receives extra credit if applicable. These sheets with identifying information will be disposed of as soon as extra credit is rewarded. Participants will receive a copy of this consent form for their record keeping.

If you would like information about this research project, feel free to contact Justin Maldonado at 512-245-1361 or by email. Confidential data and surveys will be retained by Justin Maldonado for two years in a locked file cabinet in his office. This study has been acknowledged by Texas State University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB approval # \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_). Pertinent questions about the research, research participants’ rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3431; lasser@txstate.edu), or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512-245-2102). A summary of the findings will be provided to participants upon completion of the study, if requested by contacting Justin Maldonado.

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,

Justin Maldonado

Graduate Student/Investigator

jm2270@txstate.edu

**Please complete the following information:**

Participant name: ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Participant signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Course/Instructor name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B**

**Thank you for your participation in this study. Please answer all questions completely and honestly. Remember, all responses are confidential and this survey is voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time.**

Instructions: Below is a list of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement indicating the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

1 = Disagree strongly

2 = Disagree moderately

3 = Disagree a little

4 = Neither agree nor disagree

5 = Agree a little

6 = Agree moderately

7 = Agree strongly

I see Myself as...

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Extraverted, Enthusiastic

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Critical, Quarrelsome

3. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Dependable, Self-Disciplined

4. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Anxious, Easily Upset

5. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Open to New Experiences, Complex

6. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Reserved, Quiet

7. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Sympathetic, Warm

8. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Disorganized, Careless

9. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Calm, Emotionally Stable

10. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Conventional, Uncreative

**Instructions: For the following questions, think of the teacher you have IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THIS CLASS.**

Below is a list of characteristics that may or may not apply to the teacher you have immediately before this class. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to this teacher, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

1 = Disagree strongly

2 = Disagree moderately

3 = Disagree a little

4 = Neither agree nor disagree

5 = Agree a little

6 = Agree moderately

7 = Agree strongly

I see my Teacher in the previous class as...

11. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Extraverted, Enthusiastic

12. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Critical, Quarrelsome

13. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Dependable, Self-Disciplined

14. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Anxious, Easily Upset

15. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Open to New Experiences, Complex

16. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Reserved, Quiet

17. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Sympathetic, Warm

18. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Disorganized, Careless

19. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Calm, Emotionally Stable

20. \_\_\_\_\_\_ Conventional, Uncreative

**Instructions: On the scale below, please indicate your feelings about the instructor you have IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THIS CLASS (the same teacher as above). Circle the number that best represents your feelings. Numbers “1” and “7” indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers “2” and “6” indicate a strong feeling. Numbers “3” and “5” indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number “4” indicates that you are undecided or don’t know. Please work quickly. There are no right or wrong answers.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 21. Doesn’t think like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Thinks like me |
| 22. Behaves like me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Doesn’t behave like me |
| 23. Similar to me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Different than me |
| 24. Unlike me | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Like me |

**Instructions: On the scale below, please circle the number to the word that best represents your feelings about the Class you have IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THIS ONE. Numbers “1” and “7” indicate a very strong feeling. Numbers “2” and “6” indicate a strong feeling. Numbers “3” and “5” indicate a fairly weak feeling. Number “4” indicates that you are undecided or don’t know.**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 25. Motivated | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Unmotivated |
| 26. Interested | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Uninterested |
| 27. Involved | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Uninvolved |
| 28. Not Stimulated | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Stimulated |
| 29. Don’t want to study | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Want to study |
| 30. Inspired | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Uninspired |
| 31. Unchallenged | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Challenged |
| 32. Uninvigorated | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Invigorated |
| 33. Unenthused | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Enthused |
| 34. Excited | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Not excited |
| 35. Aroused | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Not aroused |
| 36. Not fascinated | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Fascinated |
| 37. Dreading it | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Looking forward to it |
| 38. Important | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Unimportant |
| 39. Useful | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Useless |
| 40. Helpful | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 | Harmful |

**Please answer the following questions about yourself.**

Sex: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Male or Female)

Race: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Classification in School: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior)

Major: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_