PRECONCEPTIONS, MISPERCEPTIONS, AND COMMUNICATION

INTERACTION OVER TIME IN THE MIXED-AGE CLASSROOM:

WHAT'S AGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

By

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DEDICATION

This thesis is the product of life experiences both in and out of the classroom. It is dedicated to three special people. My first teachers set no limits or boundaries on my aspirations. They encouraged and challenged me to put forth my best effort in all things and to ask questions, to join in conversations and discussions, to *communicate* with everyone regardless of age. To those teachers, my parents Betty Camp and the late W. B. (Bill) Camp, I will be eternally grateful for those early lessons about life, persistence, and belief in myself.

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A special "thank you" is extended to all the interview participants who trusted me to represent them fairly.

> Diversity in nature is a strength. So is diversity among college students. The challenge is how to harness that strength and to unleash the creativity and exuberance for learning that is present in all students who feel free to learn, free to be who they are and validated for what they know and believe. (Laura I. Rendon, Report to the National Center on Post-Secondary Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, 1993)

Becky Renée Camp Mostyn
Southwest Texas State University, August, 1998

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ABSTRACT

PRECONCEPTIONS, MISPERCEPTIONS, AND COMMUNICATION INTERACTION OVER TIME IN THE MIXED-AGE CLASSROOM: WHAT'S AGE GOT TO DO WITH IT?

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This qualitative study utilized expectancy violation theory to investigate student perceptions of others in the mixed-age classroom, expectations about classroom communication interaction, and perceptions of the resulting interaction and communication climate. Data were obtained from two large lecture sections of a basic communications course at a large state university. The subjects were fifty-nine students representing the age range of the university undergraduate population. The research design used two rounds of student interviews, participant observation, and an instructor opinion survey to answer the research questions.

Research studies have produced much important information regarding college students of various ages regarding such variables as academic achievement and perceptions of learning and satisfaction. However, most mixed-age classroom studies have been done from the perspective of one population or one population in comparison with another, such as "traditional" and "nontraditional". Studies using "traditional" and "nontraditional" as categorical age variables compartmentalized students into two arbitrary populations or "cultures". A few recent studies have begun to utilize different terminology such as "adult", "mature adult", "pre-adult" or "young adult" to identify specific age ranges. However, the numerical age range of each group remains unclear. This study substituted the terms "younger" and "older" in place of "traditional" and "nontraditional" to investigate whether students could actually be divided into two age

groups (or any age groups) based on perceptions of their verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors. The goal was to challenge the use of age as a categorical communication variable for research purposes.

RQ1 asked: What differences in perception concerning verbal and nonverbal communication do students have of each other according to age? Students were asked to describe "older" or "younger" students in relation to their own age. Content analysis of interviews revealed two distinct descriptions of "older" students. They are "attentive", "more articulate", "more respectful of the professor and of knowledge" and contribute positively to classroom discussion with "experiences and insights about life." They also "act like they know everything", "take up too much class time and hold the class back by asking too many questions" and "talk about things the younger students have never heard of". Two distinct descriptions also emerged of "younger" students. They are "open-minded", "very creative", "intelligent", "inquisitive", "excited about everything", and bring "a fresh perspective and outlook" to the classroom. They also are "loud", "profane", "obnoxious and inexperienced", "rude", "not motivated or focused", "not very respectful or friendly" and "don't care about what the professors or others have to say." The four descriptions confirmed that there <u>are</u> stereotypical preconceptions of "older" and "younger" students.

Students were also asked to identify an age range for "older" and "younger" students in relation to their own age. There was no consistent categorical age range of "younger" or "older". Some freshmen considered a senior an "older" student. Some twenty-one-year-olds thought of themselves as "older" because they were upper classmen. They identified students from seventeen- to twenty-year-olds as "younger". Students generally identified "older" or "younger" in relation to themselves. For instance, one thirty-seven-year-old identified "younger" as "younger than me." However, no specific age ranges for younger/older could be established based on the interview responses.

Students were asked their perceptions of where "older" and "younger" students sit in a classroom. Almost unanimously they positioned all "older" students at "the front" and all "younger" students at "the back". However, when the individual students were

asked their own seating preference, many of the youngest participants said they preferred near or in the front. Students also answered a question as to who talked more in the classroom, "younger" or "older" students. "Older" students were identified as talking much more. Again, when individuals were asked to give adjectives to describe their own communicative participation in the classroom, the perception of "older" students as always more talkative was refuted by their comments. The comments sorted into three general groups of "talkers", "listeners" and "moderates". Many of the youngest students said they were "talkers" and many of the older students said they "like to listen." Students of all ages made comments such as "I'll talk when I need to know something, or when I want to make a comment." Content analysis of interviews indicated that students identified themselves as "talkers", "listeners", or "moderates" regardless of their age.

Findings based on content analysis of the interviews indicated that there are stereotypical perceptions of both verbal and nonverbal behaviors according to age, but only insofar as "older" or "younger" in relation to the student. No categorical age divisions could be identified. The finding challenges the continued use of two age categories (traditional and nontraditional) as relevant communication variables.

RQ2 asked: How does expectancy violation theory (EVT) apply to verbal and nonverbal behaviors of students of various ages in the mixed-age classroom? EVT proved useful in this qualitative study to ascertain specific verbal and nonverbal expectations about students of various ages with regard to impending communication interaction. After an extended period of time the students elaborated on their own interpretations of the resultant confirmation or violation of their expectations. An added benefit in testing the valence aspect of EVT was that the students also stated in their own words how they felt about the positive or negative violations. EVT could not be completely applied in the instance of students who either did not report any substantial interaction or did not perceive age differences.

RQ3 asked: How does the mix of ages in the college classroom affect student interaction and the communication climate? This research question could not be fully

documented or tested as to mix of ages because of the random nature of class assignments. Some classes had no significant age range, while other classes had a large range of ages. However, by their own accounts classroom communication interaction was natural for some people and almost unthinkable for others, regardless of age. General comments from students pointed to the importance of the instructor in structuring the opportunity for interaction, while allowing the individual students to participate within their own comfort level. Findings indicate that age is an important demographic variable. However, individual student background and personality, along with instructor mediation, are more responsible for participation, interaction, and satisfaction with classroom communication climate. Comments from the participants revealed that rather than student-student interaction being of prime importance, the instructor plays an integral part in structuring interaction and student perceptions of the resultant communication climate. This finding supported other studies which identified the instructor is a key component in the joint creation of classroom climate. Student comments also suggested that the pedagogical/ andragogical preferences customarily attributed to traditional/nontraditional students should be re-evaluated.

Based on this study's findings, important for future research designs is the confirmation from the participants' own words that communication characteristics are not age-dependent. They are part of each individual's personality, background, and upbringing. Age therefore may not be a categorical defining variable for research studies, but rather an important piece of demographic background information. The combination of a range of ages mediated by an instructor sensitive to the background and experiences of all students is an integral component affecting the quality of communication interaction, the resulting classroom climate, and the individual student's affective perception of the students in that class.

Suggestions for future research included further investigation into perceptions of communication behaviors of students within the mixed-age classroom. Experimental studies could control for age ratio in the samples and for levels of instructor involvement in structuring interaction. Results of these studies could aid instructors across disciplines in better serving students of all ages.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The past twenty years have seen tremendous growth and change on college campuses and in student populations. Not only are students from many different ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, they span an age range from teens to senior citizens, all with their own diverse patterns of verbal and nonverbal communication. Brazziel (1989) noted that "adults are the fastest-growing segment of all the population groups in higher education" (p. 116). Andersen (1990) reported a jump in enrollment of "nontraditionals" from 33% in 1974 to nearly 40% in 1988. Recent estimates vary from one-third (Yarbrough & Schaffer, 1990) to forty percent (Kasworm, 1990) to almost half (Sheehan, McMenamin, & McDevitt, 1992) of college students who are 25 years of age or older. Citing National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 1992) Conrad (1993) states that adult learners constitute over one-half of all students enrolled in higher education courses. Stage and McCafferty (1992) cite numerous projections that by the year 2000 there will be over twenty million "nontraditional" students on college campuses. These numbers alone have important implications for student communication interaction in the college classroom.

The present study was designed to explore two areas of classroom communication interaction from a speech communication perspective. The first area of investigation was student perceptions of others in the mixed-age classroom based on their respective ages. Within this area the study explored student perceptions of communication interaction over time and resulting perceptions of classroom communication climate. The second area of investigation focused on the influence of age ratio within the mixed-age classroom. The intent was to compare results with research from other disciplines and challenge the efficacy of an arbitrary categorical division of students by age for research purposes.

Chapter I includes a statement of the problem, background information regarding the populations involved in the study, a statement of research questions, definitions, and significance of the study. Chapter II provides a review of literature, highlighting the most recent findings concerning classroom communication research and expectancy violation theory research. Chapter III discusses the subjects and setting, research design, researcher training, data collection, and method of data analysis. Chapter IV provides results of data analysis and qualitative content analysis from the interviews. Chapter V presents a discussion of the conclusions and implications, limitations of the study, and possibilities for future research as they pertain to communication interaction in undergraduate classroom settings.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to develop a qualitative descriptive analysis in order to gain insight into the communication interaction among students in the mixed-age

classroom. The first goal was to discover how students stereotypically or superficially perceive others based on their respective ages. The second goal was to ascertain how they perceive communication interaction over time with other students. The third goal was to discover how they perceive the resulting classroom communication climate. The information obtained was used to construct a descriptive matrix of the mixed-age classroom. Comments and perceptions from students in the mixed-age classroom were categorized and sorted to discover if students truly could be divided into two separate age groups or "cultures". The results were compared with previous studies reflecting attitudes and assumptions of one group about the other with regard to verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors. The goal was to test the efficacy of continued segregation of students in research studies using age as a criterion.

Background to the Study

The historical "traditional" path for a college student was to enter college directly from high school and obtain a degree in about four years, at an age of twenty-two or twenty-three. These students were likely to be similar in both appearance and communication style. Over time as students began returning to college at various ages, the label "nontraditional" came into customary usage to refer to anyone not following the traditional path. There is consistent research showing that nontraditional students display skills differently and have different knowledge bases, priorities, and outlooks (e.g., Absher & Crawford, 1995; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Conrad, 1993; Cross, 1980; Litterst, 1990; O'Keefe, 1993; Reppert, 1993; Valadez, 1993). Research studies report psychological difficulties including self-consciousness, performance anxiety, feelings of

intimidation, alienation, and frustration (Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1994; Rendon, 1993;

Valadez, 1993). Other research refers to apprehension about how they will be received

by younger students (Bishop-Clark & Lynch, 1992; Peabody & Sedlacek, 1982; Tindall

& McCarter, 1980). Still other research focuses on self-imposed pressure to succeed and

fear of failure or humiliation (Yarbrough & Shaffer, 1990). Nontraditional students

report varying feelings from anxiousness about being in class with younger students to

the advantages of maturity in being able to deal with those feelings (Litterst, 1990).

Possibly because of this maturity, recent studies have found lower communication

apprehension in nontraditionals (Poppenga & Prisbell, 1996; Zakahi, Jordan, &

Christophel, 1993).

Important to the current study is the fact that in addition to the "cultural capital"

(Valadez, 1993) that students of various ages bring to the undergraduate experience in the

form of skills, routines, and knowledge, it can be assumed that they possess a diverse

store of verbal and nonverbal cues due to age differences. These cues incorporate

kinesics, chronemics, proxemics, vocalics, and physical appearance, which cues

communicate meaning and influence perceptions of social interaction and how that

interaction will be structured (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1996). Hickson and Stacks

(1993) stress that "because physical appearance is the first nonverbal cue to be noticed, it

will have a profound influence on one's relationships with others" (p. 108). Further,

Burgoon et al. (1996) state that "receivers may consciously attend to nonverbal signs

when pigeonholing others into cultural, sociodemographic, and personality

classifications" (p. 216), including assumptions about communication behaviors.

The broad term "classroom communication interaction" encompasses verbal exchanges between and among individual students and between students and professors. The term also includes nonverbal behaviors such as choice of seating within the classroom, proximity to others, and personal decisions about the amount of communication that occurs. However, little research has documented the dynamics of classrooms containing students of various ages. Daly and Korinek (1980) pointed out that the classroom is a "microcosm of society" which incorporates all of life's communication situations. It includes academic and social relationships such as "peers interacting on essentially equal grounds, to the building and recognizing of status differences among peers, to true superior-subordinate exchanges between teachers and students" (p. 516). They stressed that communication interaction in the classroom is a topic "of both theoretic and practical utility for the communication scholar" (p. 516). More recently, Fassinger (1995) found that students' reactions to a class may depend more on the communication interaction with peers than with course structure or the instructor. Additionally, students play a fundamental role in creating overall classroom climates. This recent finding makes it even more critical for the speech communication discipline to take the lead in investigating communication interaction in the mixed-age classroom.

Statement of Research Questions

Much valuable information has been obtained from studies involving students of various ages. However, researchers often addressed the lack of information regarding age as a limitation of their studies. Although speech communication research has

investigated areas relating to classroom communication and student-teacher interaction

(e.g. Aitken & Neer, 1993; Collier & Powell, 1990; Comstock, Rowell, & Bowers, 1995;

Fusani, 1994; Nadler & Nadler, 1990; Pearson & West, 1991; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990;

West & Pearson, 1994), little research has been done relative to student-student

interaction in the mixed-age classroom. Further, no communication research has

investigated the expectations that students of various ages might have regarding the

classroom interaction which might guide or constrain their communication behaviors. In

order to investigate the perceptions of communication behaviors, communication

interaction, and the resulting classroom communication climate as perceived by the

participants within the mixed-age classroom, the following research questions were

posed:

RQ1   What perceptions concerning verbal and nonverbal communication do
students have of each other according to age?

RQ2   How does expectancy violation theory apply to verbal and nonverbal
behaviors of students of various ages in the mixed-age classroom?

RQ3   How does the mix of ages in the college classroom affect student
communication interaction and the communication climate?

Definitions

Classroom Communication Interaction:

Verbal exchanges between and among individual students as well as students and professors including question asking, group discussions, individual comments, and casual conversation.

Nonverbal behaviors including proxemics (such as choice of seating within the classroom, physical proximity to others), haptics (touching), kinesics (use of body, eye

contact, facial gestures), vocalics (vocal variety, any vocal sounds other than the spoken word), and physical appearance (natural features, clothing, and adornments).

Classroom Communication Climate:

Student perception of affective outcome resulting from a combination of communication interaction and the nonverbal cue of environment and artifacts (such as lighting, color, and spatial dimensions), "the physical objects and environmental attributes that communicate directly, define the communication context, or guide social behavior in some way" (Burgoon et al., 1996, p. 109).

Significance of the Study

A review of the literature points to several areas that deserve greater focus from the speech communication discipline. Results from this present study may point toward a new direction for interdisciplinary instructional communication research.

First, the bulk of mixed-age classroom research focuses on only two age classifications of students, traditional and nontraditional, thereby leading to compartmentalization of findings. Second, the focus of most prior research has been from the perspective of either traditional or nontraditional students, but not of various aged students together in the same classroom. Studies done using one group and excluding the other ignore the interactional nature of the classroom. For example, in an effort to organize the studies of adult undergraduate students Kasworm (1990) used qualitative content analysis to identify five "domains of reality" pertaining to the various areas of adult student research. Her meta-analysis provided the foundation for future research designs and identified critical issues with regard to adult undergraduates in a "traditional" environment. The meta-analysis also highlighted the interactive dynamics of the mixed-age classroom.

Little of the research over the past twenty years has focused on student communication within mixed-age classrooms. Two studies that did address mixed-age classroom interaction posed disturbing findings. Lynch and Bishop-Clark (1994) raised questions of how interaction in the mixed-age classroom should be structured. Responses from one focus group indicated nontraditionals were "less interested in working with younger students – inside or outside the classroom" (p. 10). Based on her observational study Confessore (1993) posed the question of whether "mixing students of different ages is an appropriate educational practice" (p. 69). More in-depth investigation must be done to evaluate how the students of various ages view and communicate with each other in mixed-age classrooms, and what preconceptions, misperceptions, and stereotypes might be at work. In fact, the conceptualization of only two populations, as if they were static entities like male and female, is restrictive and counterproductive. Kasworm (1993) pointed out that the term "nontraditional" may carry its own negative connotation to denote outsiders from the norm and may lead to stereotypical assumptions and less than equal treatment by others.

The mixed-age classroom is a reality. The percentage of students over the age of twenty-five is expected to increase each year. However, the exact ages of the students in communication research samples has been largely ignored. Studies have focused on such factors as student gender (Pearson & West, 1991), teacher gender (Nadler & Nadler, 1990; Rosenfeld & Jarrard, 1985), and student ethnicity (Gill, 1992). Other studies investigated student apprehension and motivation (Aitken & Neer, 1993; Daly, Vangelisti, & Weber, 1995), teacher immediacy (Comstock, et al., 1995; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990), and student-teacher interaction (Fusani, 1994; McGukin & Seiler, 1987;

West & Pearson, 1994). Some of the studies focused on classroom environment (Hayward, 1993), communication climate (Rosenfeld & Jarrard, 1985), and classroom communication satisfaction (Prisbell, 1990). Still other studies used a combination of these factors with specific outcomes (Bean & Kuh, 1984; Beebe & Butland, 1994; Collier & Powell, 1990; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Nussbaum, 1992; Plax, Kearney, McCroskey, & Richmond, 1986).

Research from other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and education has addressed age, but until recently most studies have treated "traditional" students (18-25 years old) and "nontraditional" students (over 25) as two separate populations (Butler & Markley, 1993; Johnson, Wallace & Sedlacek, 1979; Kuh & Sturgis, 1980; Richter-Antoin, 1986). Confessore (1993) and Bishop-Clark & Lynch, (1992) cite numerous studies in which traditional and nontraditional students are categorized as separate "cultures".

Perception of oneself and of others is a critical element in the classroom and may affect the interactional nature of communication in the classroom. Students at varying levels of cognitive development and at different ages may perceive the classroom climate and the students in it differently. Perceptions of the communication climate in the same classroom can differ from person to person, from male to female, and from one age group to another (see Absher, & Crawford, 1995; Anolik, 1980; Bee & Beronia, 1989; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Fink, 1993; Confessore, 1993; Kasworm, 1982; Kuh & Sturgis, 1980; Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1994; Mishler, 1983, 1984; Mishler & Davenport, 1983, 1984; Pike, 1991; Stage & McCafferty, 1992; Yarbrough & Schaffer, 1990).

The first area of concern regarding mixed-age classroom communication is the conceptualization of a "traditional" or "nontraditional" student. The operationalization of the two terms has varied over the past twenty years. Traditional students were customarily classified in early studies as eighteen to twenty-two years old. More recent studies use twenty-five as an arbitrary age cut-off point. Along with chronological age, the distinction between the two classifications of students has included such qualifiers as time between high school and college entry, marital status, full or part-time status, commuter or resident status, and whether or not the student has children (Dzindolet & Weinstein, 1994). Further complicating the definition of "nontraditional" for research purposes is the inclusion of immigrants and minorities (Rendon, 1993; Valadez, 1993). While some of the demographic information remains relatively stable, such as gender, marital status and ethnic identification, age is relative and changes over time and is gauged in reference to other age groups (Peabody & Sedlacek, 1982). When questions are asked of someone about an "older" or "younger" student, the answer is completely dependent on the respondent's age. While all students over the age of twenty-five are currently classified in one category, it seems reasonable to expect that there are differences and insights that may be obtained from students at various points along the age spectrum (see Kasworm, 1982). The prevailing customary division of the college population into two arbitrary segments may hide or skew valuable information.

The second area of concern is the contradictory findings from one study to another. While some studies find there are more similarities than differences, there do seem to be different socio-emotional and intellectual thought process orientations between the two populations (Absher & Crawford, 1995; Confessore, 1993; Hensley,

1986; Litterst, 1990; Reppert, 1993; Sheehan et al., 1992; Valadez, 1993). Some reports cover stereotypical findings with regard to traditional-age student attitudes toward nontraditionals such as the addition of older students creates communication problems that are not evidenced in traditional-aged classrooms, and older students have a slower learning pace and have a preferential relationship with instructors (Collette-Pratt, 1976; Jacobowitz & Shanan, 1982; Jacobs, 1989). Confessore (1993) found that older students monopolize the classroom communication and get more attention from the instructor. West and Lasky (1996) received comments from traditionals indicating they have nothing in common to talk about with older students who are sometimes from another generation. One study even suggested that traditional students may take prejudicial attitudes from comments made by instructors to nontraditionals (Stage & McCafferty, 1992).

Because of the relatively recent research into mixed-age classrooms, there have been few theoretical positions tested with regard to adult learners of different ages. In a classroom context initial student perceptions and preconceptions, if any, should be fairly stable since they will have had minimal or no opportunity to interact with each other (Prisbell, 1990). These initial perceptions and preconceptions include judgments about physical characteristics, sociocultural background, and psychological makeup (Burgoon et al., 1996). Over the course of the semester the amount of interaction may increase among students, with resultant confirmation or disconfirmation of expectancies. One theory that merits consideration is expectancy violation (Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, 1987).

Using a multicultural approach toward age advocated by Kasworm (1993), "traditional" college students in this study were operationally re-defined as young adults

from age eighteen through twenty-four. "Nontraditional" students were operationally re-defined as adults age twenty-five years and older. For purposes of this study the student sample was further subdivided into five age groupings (18-24, 25-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50 and over), thereby allowing for possible "multicultural" communication distinctions. Classroom communication climate was operationalized through perceptions of affective experiences and outcomes between and among students in the mixed-age classroom (Prisbell, 1990).

Summary

Chapter I provided an introductory overview of the statement of the problem, background to the study, statement of research questions, definitions, and the study's significance to the speech communication discipline. Chapter II will review relevant research dealing with classroom communication including younger/older student comparisons, "younger" students, "older" students, communication interaction, communication climate, mixed-age classes; and expectancy violation theory, which will support arguments for the study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

As stated in the Introduction, two aspects of most prior studies promote more confusion than clarification. The first area of confusion is the conceptualization of a "traditional" or "nontraditional" student. The second area of concern is the unilateral dimension of most studies. Not only is the terminology unclear as to who is contained within each population, but as Confessore (1993) points out, the studies are usually conducted on behalf of only one population as they regard the other in such areas as academic records, attitudes toward classes, and/or attitudes toward faculty.

One-population studies have focused on such areas as psychological and learning difficulties of older students (Chism, Cano, & Pruitt, 1989), problems with "integrated" classrooms (Collette-Pratt, 1976; Jacobs, 1989), attitudes of younger students toward older students (Peabody & Sedlacek, 1982; Tindall & McCarter, 1980) and older students toward younger students (Yarbrough & Schaffer, 1990).

To further confuse matters with regard to research, the term "nontraditional" has been applied to "women, ethnic and racially diverse groups, adult students, physical and learning disabled students, married and divorced students, students with children, students in specialty programs, part-time students, transfer students, and any student with experiences beyond the assumed normal life of the culture" (Kasworm, 1993, p.162).

She emphasizes that there are not two separate "cultures" of traditional (dominant) and nontraditional ("other") students. Age is not a cultural characteristic, but a "marker on a life journey" (p. 164).

With regard to students of varying ages, little research has focused on how those students view one another using subjects in the same mixed-age classrooms and what misperceptions and stereotypes might be at work. Studies which have considered both populations dealt with attitudes and/or needs regarding instruction, learning styles, satisfaction, anxiety, and class atmosphere (e.g., Bishop-Clark & Lynch, 1992; Bowman, 1989; Dzindolet & Weinstein, 1994; Kasworm, 1982; Klick, 1994; Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1994; Mishler, 1984; Mishler & Davenport, 1983, 1984; Mishler & Frederick, 1985; Sheehan et al., 1992; Sturtz, 1971; Yarbrough & Schaffer, 1990).

While a large body of recent research has addressed college undergraduates, the primary focus has been on outcomes such as learning and satisfaction on behalf of specific groups or in relation to the instructor. The age of the students and accompanying verbal and nonverbal communication cues have been largely disregarded. However, the age and accompanying behaviors of each individual in a classroom is an important part of structuring interaction and may facilitate or inhibit successful outcomes. The review of literature will include relevant classroom research studies regarding 1) younger/older student comparisons, 2) "younger" students, 3) "older" students, 4) communication interaction, 5) communication climate, and 6) mixed-age classes. The second portion will review research regarding expectancy violation theory. This review will then summarize areas of prior research that highlight the need for a comprehensive focus on student communication interaction in the mixed-age college classroom.

Classroom Research

<u>Younger/Older Student Comparisons</u>

Students of all ages have a need for interpersonal "validation," a confirming

supportive process that aids learning and feelings of self worth (Rendon, 1993). Butler

and Markley (1993) found that many of the differences among students are simply due to

life experiences. Similarities are usually due to specific growth opportunities that college

provides to both groups.

This being stated, classroom research does report some general distinctions.

"Older" students have higher cumulative GPAs, study more, are more serious about

classwork, less interested in academic and social activities (Bean & Metzner, 1985;

Kasworm, 1980, 1989, 1990; Metzner & Bean, 1987). They are more pragmatic about

why they are in school (Powers & Redding, 1995; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering,

1989; Werring, 1987), while younger students often are not yet as goal-oriented (Lynch

& Bishop-Clark, 1994). Kasworm and Pike (1994) reviewed comparative studies that

reported several findings, such as 1) older students score higher on verbal and

humanities testing, while younger students score higher in math and quantitative skills;

and 2) the two groups employ different listening and learning strategies. Traditional

students attend more, while nontraditional students ask more questions. Sheehan et al.

(1992) found that traditionals generally employ a pedagogical approach to learning, while

nontraditionals utilize a more andragogical approach. From a communication viewpoint

this highlights the fact that in an attempt to come to an understanding of the subject

matter for themselves, older students will "ask more questions and participate more in

classroom discussions" (p. 488).

Younger and older students provided comparative information regarding fourteen categories of intellectual and socio-emotional characteristics (Kasworm, 1980). The Omnibus Personality Inventory – Form F was given to a sample of "younger" (age 18-22) and "older" (age 26 and above) undergraduate students to determine intellectual and socio-emotional characteristics. The "older" category was further divided into three groups of 26-29 years, 30-39 years, and over 40 years. In contrast to characterizations of adults being more autonomous, religious and practical in life outlook, this study found contradictions. Younger and older students reported a number of similarities including levels of autonomy, religious orientation, practical outlook, thinking introversion, altruism, and commitment to learning and intellectual involvement. The differences were most evident in older undergraduates scoring higher on personal integration, theoretical orientation, and analytical problem solving. Younger undergraduates scored higher on extroversion, estheticism and complexity. Differences also appeared among the three age groups of older adults. Personal integration and lack of anxiety were higher for the over 40 group. Impulse expression was highest for 26-29 year olds.

"Younger" Students

Two early studies explored attitudes of younger toward older students. Tindall and McCarter (1980) conducted a study of undergraduates (age twenty-eight years or younger) using a questionnaire regarding attitudes toward their peers and toward older students. One form used "most students over 35 years of age" while the other used "most students under 28 years of age." Both males and females evaluated older students more favorably than they evaluated their own peers. Honesty and sense of responsibility

ranked at the top, while personal appearance was ranked last, that is, how the student looked was not important.

Peabody and Sedlacek (1982) explored ageist attitudes of male and female freshmen (17-20 years old) toward older undergraduates. The degree of ageist attitudes was dependent on the specific situation, with more positive attitudes in academic or nonintimate situations, and less positive attitudes in social or intimate situations. A revised version of the Situational Attitude Scale – Age (Celio, Sedlacek & Schlossberg, 1977) was administered to a group of freshmen at a summer orientation program. Form A was not age specific, while Form B gave actual ages within the wording of the questions. Results from Form B indicated that younger students held negative views toward older students in four of the ten situations involving close socialization. In another three instances, which were more academically focused, there were both positive and negative reactions. These situations included lab partner, study partner, and orientation advisor. Overall, females were more negative than males toward close socialization scenarios, but more accepting in academic situations. The study confirmed that younger students do have ageist attitudes, dependent on context. The next section discusses adult student research.

"Older" Students

Beder and Darkenwald (1982) found communication differences in adult classes in the use of more group discussion and more student input to course content and instruction. Kasworm (1990) used qualitative content analysis of ninety-six documents to identify five "domains of reality" governing the various areas of adult student research. "Implied deficiency" studies focused on age in an effort to "demythologize" opinions

about adult students in academic performance. "Student entry and adaptation" studies focused on three areas including perceptual differences of instructional environment, perceptual differences of needs, and comparative studies of mixed-age classes. "Description and characterization" studies addressed student satisfaction, psychosocial and intellectual orientations and needs, intergenerational attitudes, and programs and services. "Psychosocial development" studies involved gender roles, role expectation, role conflict, and role support. "Equity and outcome" studies focused on the impact of the undergraduate experience on adults. Kasworm found that most early research defined adult students as distinct from young adult students. The implication was that adult students were somehow categorically different. However, the meta-analysis of documents found differential adult intragroup characteristics along with similar intergroup characteristics with traditional-aged students. Kasworm suggested that research should address the undergraduate student "at any age – whether 18, 35, or 72 – and in any life situation" (p. 367).

Kasworm and Blowers (1994) conducted a qualitative case study inquiry of adult students in an examination of the complex relationship of experiences and meaning for those over twenty-five. They conducted interviews relating to student role vs. adult role, engagement in learning, and perceptions of involvement in the college experience. From their analysis it was determined that some adults found a "comfort zone" in classes with younger students. Other adults felt that a separation from the regular college community would be better. Some students admitted "disguising" themselves as younger students to avoid discrimination and to fit in better. Several commented that they tried to create the impression that they were younger to keep the instructor from grading them more harshly

than younger students. Most older students did not want to be treated differently or deferentially by either the students or the instructors. The study concluded that, based on the participants' own observations, adult students of various ages had disparate beliefs and experiences in both mixed-age and segregated-age classroom.

Bishop-Clark and Lynch (1992) used focus groups to investigate learning experiences of "older" students (age 26-56). These included positive and negative experiences in the classroom, their own strengths and weaknesses, and learning preferences. The study also investigated older student perceptions of relationships with each other, with instructors, and with younger students. Inductive analysis of all comments established links both within and between groups. Some of the difficulties reported by older students included feeling uncomfortable about technological and academic skills, different orientations to the professors, and the assumption of authority by younger students based solely on their age. One of the problems identified with regard to professors was that younger students may feel the professor is "friends" with the older student, while the older students may feel the professor is less interested in them. The comments implied that instructors may unintentionally communicate with students of different ages in ways that create more discomfort for both groups. Older students confirmed research that continually documents nontraditional students' preference for more realistic interactive learning, while many younger students are more content with a passive lecture format.

Responses from the focus groups suggested that hostility between younger and older students may come from older students' perception of younger students as immature, lacking motivation, and not appreciative of the educational environment.

Responses also indicated that younger students often made comments that the older students were more experienced and too grade conscious. As for adult students in the college classroom, Bishop-Clark and Lynch (1992) observed that some classes exhibited a "dynamic stimulation" in which students of various ages elicited better and richer communicative involvement, whereas other classes had the equivalent of physical segregation. The authors suggested the best way to address the differences would be directly through group discussions, question and answer sessions, or personality profiles. Their reasoning was that when students become focused on similarities rather than differences, age often becomes irrelevant. Their comment speaks directly to the importance of student communication interaction in the mixed-age classroom. The next section examines studies dealing with communication interaction.

Communication Interaction

The majority of classroom communication interaction studies have dealt with the interaction between students and instructors. Two studies used content analysis and observation to discover who was talking in class, along with the amount and type of communication. Pearson and West (1991) investigated teacher/student verbal communication behaviors based on student and teacher gender and teacher expectancies communicated through nonverbal behaviors. Content analysis of audiotapes revealed an average of 3.3 questions per hour, with more questions being asked of male teachers than female teachers. Female students asked fewer questions than male students in classes taught by male instructors, but no difference appeared in classes taught by female instructors. West and Pearson (1994) found that students asked an average of 3.6

questions per hour that grouped into six categories: classroom procedure, general inquiry-content, clarification, confirmation, general inquiry-teacher, and unknown/other.

Surveys were used in several classroom interaction studies. Prisbell (1990) investigated student perceptions of classroom communication satisfaction (teacher-student interaction) based on interpersonal communication satisfaction, teacher uncertainty, and course certainty. Surveys done at the beginning and end of the semester revealed that teacher uncertainty significantly declined over time. Class uncertainty and classroom communication satisfaction had no significant change.

Surveys were also used to identify student and faculty interaction in extra-classroom communication (Fusani, 1994) and student and instructor perceptions of classroom communication interaction (Fassinger, 1995). In Fusani's study the mean age of student (twenty-four) and mean age of faculty member (forty-six) was relevant to interaction. The comparison implied "substantial dissimilarity in education, life experience, and culture...(which) promotes disparate communication behaviors and perceptions as well" (p. 245). The "disparate communication behaviors" were not explicitly identified.

Fassinger's (1995) study showed that instructors and students differed in their perceptions of class participation and the reasons for participation. In addition, rather than instructor behavior, it was peer behavior that shaped classroom dynamics and classroom climate. This climate developed when "students are cooperative and supportive of one another and when they have a chance to make friends in class" (p. 32). An important finding from the comments was that students should be encouraged to feel part of a community rather than individuals learning with the aid of an instructor. Also

important was the finding that the professors indirectly shape classroom communication dynamics through joint creation of norms with their students. These joint norms constitute the classroom environment or climate.

Communication Climate

Rendon (1993) found that student cultural histories, life experiences, and multiple perspectives contributed positively to the classroom communication climate. Bowman (1989) and Klick (1994) investigated classroom environment and academic performance through administration of the Adult Classroom Environment Scale (ACES), Darkenwald and Valentine, 1986). Bowman investigated the influence of adult perceptions of age-integrated classroom social environment, defined as "a dynamic social system that includes not only teacher behavior and teacher-student interaction but also student-student interaction " (quoted from Moos, 1979, p. 138) on academic performance. An important mediating factor was the ratio of adult (30 or older), young adult (24-29), and pre-adult (23 or younger). Results showed that academic achievement was highest in predominately adult classes and lowest in predominately pre-adult classes. Klick (1994) investigated: 1) the effect of age ratio on perceptions of classroom social climate, 2) differences between adults (25 and over) and young adults (17-24) as to their real and ideal classrooms, and 3) gender differences. Social climate factored into four dimensions of involvement, affiliation, teacher guidance, and student-centered. Adults and young adults reported differences in perceptions of the actual classroom experience and their perceptions of an ideal class.

A final area of classroom research addresses the areas of mixed-age classroom discussion and question-asking, classroom satisfaction, and academic performance.

Mixed-Age Classes

Some studies affirmed that inter-generational discussion benefited both traditional and nontraditional students, with traditional students giving fresh insight to topics and nontraditional students contributing from life experiences (Sheehan et al., 1992; Stage & McCafferty, 1992). Dzindolet and Weinstein (1994) found that both traditional and nontraditional students preferred communication interaction with their own age group, but that nontraditional students also favored diverse age groups, with older men more accepting of younger students than older women.

Lynch and Bishop-Clark (1994) used focus groups and questionnaires regarding attitudes about the mixed-age class, each age group, and each other in relation to professors. Ninety percent reported that they found the communication interaction beneficial in providing different perspectives on issues and in facilitating learning. However, twenty percent preferred to work with their own age group on projects. Additionally, 11% of younger students and 17% of older students actually preferred being in class with just their own age group. As in Peabody and Sedlacek (1982) this seemed to indicate that some younger and older students may have more negative attitudes toward each other when close interpersonal contact or socialization is involved.

Mishler (1984) and Mishler and Davenport (1983, 1984) investigated similarities and differences between what students and instructors perceive about the mixed-age classroom. In general, most students reported positive attitudes about the mixed-age classroom, but there were subtle qualifications. For example, younger students had positive attitudes toward the mixed-age classroom, but preferred the "older" students to be between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five. They were less favorably disposed

toward adult students older than that. The more favorable responses came from humanities classes, classes with more women, with greater age mixes, and with smaller enrollment. Also, the age of the student affected survey responses in that the older the student the more satisfaction reported with mixed-age classes. The older students did not perceive negative points as much as younger students. A second factor contributing to favorable ratings of the mixed-age class was that the higher the ratio of older students in the class, the more benefits were reported. The third factor influencing results of the survey was each individual's history of mixed-age classes. The more classes a person had had with a mix of ages, the more favorable was the response. In interviews with faculty a few teachers commented that sometimes adults' background and verbal skills might intimidate younger students and that adults occasionally brought "irrelevant experiences" into discussions. However, student survey response totals did not support these statements.

Much of the mixed-age classroom research has focused on older students taking a larger role in discussions, question-asking, and general communication interaction in the classroom. Confessore (1993) used direct observation and content analysis that confirmed older students do dominate classroom discussion. In fact, although students aged twenty-years and older comprised a little over one-third of the participants, they were responsible for seventy-percent of the verbal interactions in class. The percentage of representation in class was in direct opposition to the amount of verbal interaction in each group. Another factor proving domination of discussions by older students was found in the type of interaction. Factual, conceptual, and negotiated interactions were all higher among older students. However, the cognitive level of discussion did not increase

as a result of older students being in the class. The study suggested that older student dominance may inhibit younger students from speaking. This may in turn affect the younger students' involvement and attitude toward the class.

Howard, Short, and Clark (1996) used nonparticipant observation, surveys, and interviews to discover if differences between traditional (under 24 years old) and nontraditional (over 24 years old) college students affected their verbal participation in the mixed-age classroom. Data analysis of observations showed that nontraditionals contributed substantially more to class discussions than did traditionals, and that male nontraditionals contributed the most overall. A "consolidation of responsibility" was found to exist wherein a few students (28%) accounted for eighty-nine percent of the comments. The interview responses indicated that most students felt little was expected of them. They allowed the more talkative students to take responsibility for classroom communication. Reasons given by students for not contributing included feelings of shyness in the form of inadequacy regarding the subject matter, large class size, and apprehension about how the other students and/or teacher would react. In survey responses students made distinctions between helpful comments and comments that were off-task or irrelevant. The researchers commented that "students find it easier to participate as they become more familiar with the instructor and classmates over the course of the semester...(G)iving them the opportunity to get acquainted...may increase familiarity and encourage discussion." (p. 22).

Summary

A few general statements can be made thus far with regard to classroom research literature. Younger/older student comparisons mainly involve environmental factors and

life circumstances outside of the classroom. Studies that identify differences among age groups generally focus on instructional, learning, and academic skills. One study (Kasworm & Pike, 1994) identified specific communication (listening and speaking) differences by age group in relation to learning preferences. A second study (Kasworm & Blowers, 1994), found that some adult students employ verbal and nonverbal communication "disguises" to blend in with younger students. Even so, students perceived differences in communication with the instructors based on the age of the student (Bishop-Clark & Lynch, 1992). Bowman (1989) and Klick (1994) found that communication climate is a contributing factor to academic outcomes as well as affective outcomes, with an interesting mediating factor being the ratio of ages within the class.

"Younger" student research has explored situational comfort levels, usually with two age categories (Peabody & Sedlacek, 1982). "Older" student research has focused on identifying areas of concern to adult students in an environment dominated by younger students. Communication interaction research has spotlighted student-instructor communication, counting student utterances during a period of time, taking note of which age-group or gender talks or questions more, and gauging student satisfaction with the instructor. However, a key piece of information that was not addressed in these studies was the actual age of those students who were talking.

Only in recent studies (e.g., Fassinger, 1995) has student-student communication interaction come into prominence with regard to classroom dynamics and climate, with the instructor providing a mediating role. Mixed-age studies (Mishler, 1984; Mishler & Davenport, 1983, 1984) pointed out similarities throughout several age groups having to do with both cognition and behavior. These studies reported generally positive results,

but with minor specific qualifications, such as gender mix, age mix, and class size or type.

Each area of classroom research points to the fact that different realities exist in the same classroom. These individual realities give meaning to the communication interaction and contribute to various outcomes of satisfaction, learning, and performance. Kasworm and Blowers (1994) specifically observed that adult students from the age of twenty-five and up experienced and perceived the classroom differently. Most of the recent studies speak directly to the perceptual differences about the communication climate and the students in the same classroom whether they are the same age or different ages (e.g., Bishop-Clark & Lynch, 1992; Bowman, 1989; Confessore, 1993; Fassinger, 1995; Howard et al., 1996; Kasworm & Blowers, 1994; Klick, 1994; Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1994; Mishler, 1984; Mishler & Davenport, 1983, 1984; Prisbell, 1990).

The foregoing studies emphasize that the results are based on perceptions, which are highly individual and subjective. The studies also reference the fact that people assume or perceive a group of individuals who are classified as different from themselves to have certain characteristics. Expectancy violation theory (Burgoon, 1978, 1983; Burgoon & Hale, 1988) addresses the situation of what people expect in relation to what actually occurs, and whether it agrees with (confirms) or contradicts (disconfirms) their prior expectations. The next section will address research utilizing expectancy violation theory.

Expectancy Violation Theory Research

Based on reports citing verbal and nonverbal interaction differences in class discussion participation, question-asking, listening, and instructor/student exchanges,

there are specific preconceptions that older and younger adult learners have about each other. These expectancies will be either confirmed or disconfirmed (violated) through verbal and nonverbal communication interaction in the mixed-age classroom.

Explanation of Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT)

Expectancy violation theory predicts that people evaluate others more extremely (more positively or more negatively based on the person's "reward value") when the other person's behaviors violate stereotyped expectations. Although developed with regard to nonverbal behaviors, it has been tested in both nonverbal and verbal studies. Expectancy violation theory (EVT) has been applied in a number of research areas. EVT has been tested in the evaluation of ingroup and outgroup members (Bettencourt, Dill, Greathouse, Charlton, & Mulholland, 1997). EVT has been applied to course and/or instructor rating (Coleman, Jussim & Kelly, 1995; Gigliotti, 1987; Koermer & Petelle, 1991; Swaffield, 1996). EVT has been tested by ratings of conversational involvement and credibility, attraction, and persuasion (Burgoon, Newton, Walther, & Baesler, 1989). EVT has been applied to nonverbal behaviors of touch, conversational distance, and posture in interpersonal situations (Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Burgoon & Walther, 1990; Stacks & Burgoon, 1979, 1980), physician-patient relationships (LePoire & Burgoon, 1994), small groups (Stacks & Burgoon, 1979), and job applications (Jussim et al., 1987; Jussim, Fleming, Coleman, & Kohberger, 1996).

In mixed-age classrooms the physical appearance of each student based in large part on age speaks loudly as a nonverbal cue which may influence subsequent interaction if the preconceptions are particularly strong. Burgoon et al.(1996) state that "nonverbal elements, like physical appearance, affect expectations for situations, and people with

whom we choose to interact, along with the degree and frequency of interaction" (p. 189). Burgoon et al. paraphrase Goffman (1959) in stressing that "physical appearance is one of the primary signals of the collective definition of a situation...It remains a stable frame of reference and provides a continuing nonverbal code which influences how interactants communicate" (p. 205, 213).

The types of expectancies that individuals have about each other include a number of communicator features such as gender, age, and personality. Expectancies of relationship features include familiarity, cultural similarity, status, and attraction or liking. Contextual features include the physical setting, type of interaction, and topic of conversation. Expectations can be predictive, in that they reflect what type of behavior is customary, or prescriptive, reflecting one's values of appropriate behavior. Different age groups function almost as subcultures, which include not only children and adults, but also adults of various ages. With regard to age, people can deliberately choose to conform or deviate from cultural and behavioral norms to appear younger or older (Burgoon et al., 1996).

In relation to classroom interaction, students of all ages probably have expectations about other groups of students and their behaviors, their personalities, and attitudes. Especially in a classroom of relative strangers, expectations may be largely based on generalizations and stereotypes. Burgoon et al. (1996) explain that "expectations shape the messages that are encoded and the interpretation of partner's messages. Expectations about strangers are based largely on stereotypes associated with the impressions we form about them...and are usually oversimplified and overgeneralized" (p. 413). Initial impressions can change over time with greater

communicative involvement and interaction. On the other hand, limited contact or involvement may leave the initial impression intact. Burgoon et al. confirm that "first impressions often serve as a template, guiding the interpretation of subsequent information" (p. 254). Violation of those expectations often results in either more favorable or unfavorable impressions of the violator. They "arouse and distract recipients, shifting greater attention to the violator and the meaning of the violation itself" (p. 420).

Nonverbal Expectancy Dimensions

Communication research on nonverbal expectancy identifies two dimensions of arousal: intensity and valence. Intensity involves increased bodily, mental, and behavioral excitement. The degree of positive (pleasant) or negative (unpleasant) arousal makes up the valence (Burgoon, Kelley, Newton, & Keeley-Dyreson, 1989). However, some people who have specific expectations about another person may hold onto those views even when the person's behavior contradicts the expectations. With reference to "expectancies" people can deliberately choose to adhere to nonverbal behavior norms or violate them with regard to acting "young" or "old" (Burgoon et al., 1996). Those with whom they communicate may in turn "consciously attend to nonverbal signs when pigeonholing others into cultural, sociodemographic, and personality classifications" (p. 216).

Expectancy and Evaluation

Several recent studies dealt with expectancies, communication behavior, and their resultant evaluations and responses. Burgoon and LePoire (1993) found that subjects who interacted with someone with high reward value and positive communication

expectations rated that person more favorably. Subjects who interacted with someone with low reward value and negative communication expectations rated that person more negatively, even with positive communication experiences. Jussim et al. (1996) found that African American job applicants were evaluated more favorably on personal appearance and communication style than were White applicants, regardless of positive or negative expectations. They attributed this phenomenon to "social conditioning".

Bettencourt et al. (1997) conducted three experiments using expectancy violation with ingroup and outgroup evaluations. The first experiment used football team members and speech team members who delivered a speech either skillfully or poorly. The football-team member was rated more positively than the speech team member in the skillful speech scenario. The speech team member was rated lower than the football team member in the poorly delivered speech scenario. Expectancy was found to have a mediating effect between the speaker's group membership and evaluations. The second experiment involved Black and White job applicants in three conditions of skilled, unskilled, and neutral who were rated by White evaluators. Blacks were rated higher than Whites in the skilled category. Whites were rated lower than Blacks in the unskilled category. These results showed the mediating effect of group membership on evaluations. The third experiment used categories of male and female sports writer and male and female fashion writer. Evaluators rated the female sports writer more positively than the female fashion writer. The male fashion writer was rated more positively than the male sports writer. The gender of the rater did not have any effect on the ratings. This study was useful in pointing out that category-based violations produce more extreme ratings, as do stereotype violations among ingroup and outgroup evaluators.

Expectancy and Classroom Interaction

A final example of EVT research involved verbal communication and classroom interaction, focusing on student expectancies of instructor communication, instructor evaluation, and course rating (Koermer & Petelle, 1991). The researchers hypothesized that incongruent violations would be different from congruent violations of student expectancy with regard to instructor evaluations. Results of the experiment did not fully support EVT. Students who had high expectations and high experiences gave higher teacher evaluations than did students who had low expectations and high experiences or students who had high expectations and low experiences. The study concluded that expectations and experiences that are congruent, as in the high/high condition would be more positive and satisfying than a violation or incongruent condition.

Summary

Expectancy violation theory has been used in a variety of research scenarios, predominantly in nonverbal distance, posture, and touch, but more recently in conjunction with verbal expectancies in experimentally manipulated situations. As Burgoon et al. (1996) pointed out, "communicators enter every interaction with expectations about the partner's personality, attitudes, and behavior. These expectations shape the messages that are encoded and the interpretation of the partner's messages" (p. 413). However, people may deliberately conform or deviate from what is expected in a specific situation, as in the comments from older students (Kasworm & Blowers, 1994) who hoped to "blend in" with younger students. This in turn results in either a more favorable or unfavorable impression and evaluation. Studies employing expectancy violation theory (EVT) have reported mixed results. No studies have yet been done

incorporating communication expectancies about students of various ages about each other in the mixed-age classroom and how those expectations may be confirmed or violated with interaction over time in the classroom.

Synthesis

The foregoing review of literature confirms that there are some general distinctions than can be attributed to students according to age categories defined by individual studies. Early studies (Peabody & Sedlacek, 1982; Tindall & McCarter, 1980) found that younger students have ageist attitudes toward older students dependent upon context. Focus groups and interviews (Bishop-Clark & Lynch, 1992; Kasworm & Blowers, 1994) elicited positive and negative perceptions from adult students twenty-five and over confirming that some of those students perceive differential treatment by younger students and by instructors. Observational studies and content analysis (e.g., Beder & Darkenwald, 1982; Confessore, 1993; Fassinger, 1995; Howard et al., 1996; Mishler & Davenport, 1983, 1984; Pearson & West, 1991; West & Pearson, 1994) documented that "older" students do account for a substantial portion of the communication interaction within the mixed-age classroom. In general the studies of mixed-age classrooms reported positive findings, but as mentioned in the discussion of each category, many of the studies had subtle qualifications.

While all of the foregoing classroom studies have contributed greatly to the body of research in college classrooms, the interactive nature of communication among the students within those classrooms is of paramount importance and deserves closer attention. Among the important pieces of information missing from the previous studies are the specific ages of students asking questions, making comments, and displaying

"disparate communication behaviors" (Fusani, 1994). Also missing are the age ranges and ratios in the classrooms under study. For instance, Pearson and West (1991) and West and Pearson (1994) did not include the age of the student questioners in the classroom as a factor, but this could have led to insights into who specifically was asking questions in the classroom. Fusani mentioned "disparate communication behaviors" between students and faculty, but the specific behaviors were not identified. Perhaps there are also "disparate communication behaviors" among students of various ages that influence the communication interaction in college classrooms. In line with this thought, Fassinger (1995) observed that "students' reactions to a class may have more to do with peers' behaviors than with course structure or a faculty member's actions" (p. 29). The next logical step would be to use the same reasoning to investigate interaction between students of various ages as called for in the present study.

The categorical division of students into "traditional" and "nontraditional" has become problematic. The study by Tindall and McCarter (1980) used age categories divided into "under 28" and "over 35" which left a seven-year gap and an inequality in age span between the two categories. As the authors pointed out, several specific age groups such as retirees or middle-aged students changing careers, rather than only two groups might have uncovered attitudes specific to certain age ranges that were not found in their study. This comment by the researchers lends weight to the argument for a lifespan continuum rather than a dichotomous reference frame for college students. Smaller age range groupings could also identify similarities and differences within age groups that have been overlooked by dividing students into only two age groups. A clear call for the present study came in Kasworm's (1990) observation that age reflects "certain

life experiences, educational experiences, sociocultural contexts, psychological beliefs, perceptual expectations, and a probable historical-generational effect" (p. 364).

Relevant to the proposed study are the findings of Bowman (1989) and Klick (1994) that young adult students' perception of "classroom social climate" which includes communication involving teacher-student interaction <u>and</u> student-student interaction, is influenced by the ratio of adult students in the classroom. However, a key piece of information not included in those studies regarding the age ratio is the individual ages of the adult students who might influence the communication interaction. Mishler (1984) reported that two-thirds of older adults felt that they were similar to younger students, but only forty-one percent of younger students felt that way. It seems that age is noticed, with younger students being more aware of it. However, the actual ages of the participants in that study were not included. Mishler and Davenport (1983, 1984) did not report either the effect that a higher ratio of older students had on the classroom communication participation of younger students or the ages of those "younger" and "older" students. While all of the classroom research findings provide valuable information, the studies continue to use artificial age divisions for the student population.

Summary

Current research on classroom communication continues to divide students into two age groups, even while acknowledging that there are specific differences within the same ages and specific similarities among various ages. Confessore's (1993) study suggests that educators should focus on bringing younger students into discussion in mixed-age classrooms. The implication that students in each age group are alike still ignores the possibility that some students of the same age may be very different in

classroom communication interaction while some students of dissimilar ages may be very much alike in their communication interaction.

The importance of understanding student communication interaction in the classroom has been acknowledged through research stemming from the education discipline (e.g., Bee & Beronia, 1989; Bishop-Clark & Lynch, 1992; Bowman, 1989; Confessore, 1993; Jacobs, 1989; Kasworm, 1982; Kasworm & Blowers, 1994; Kasworm & Pike, 1994; Kuh & Sturgis, 1980; Long, 1983; Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1994; Mishler & Davenport, 1983, 1984; Sheehan et al., 1992; Stage & McCafferty, 1992). Important research into classroom interaction has also come from psychology and sociology (e.g., Dzindolet & Weinstein, 1994; Fassinger, 1995; Gigliotti, 1987; Howard et al., 1996; McGukin & Seiler, 1987; Poppenga & Prisbell, 1996).

In 1980 Daly and Korinek drew attention to the dependence on research from other disciplines while calling for communication scholars to conduct more research into "observing interaction...and the applicability of findings about classroom communication to larger issues of communication and development" (p. 515). With college populations becoming more diverse, it is crucial to understand and maximize the communication interaction of individuals within the mixed-age classroom to help all students achieve their potential. This study will add to the body of communication research by focusing on student preconceptions of others in the mixed-age classroom, the effect of age ratio on student-student interaction over time in the classroom, and student perceptions of the resulting classroom communication climate.

Chapter II reviewed and synthesized the various areas of classroom research involving younger/older student comparisons, "younger" students, "older" students,

communication interaction, communication climate, and mixed-age classes; and research involving expectancy violation theory. The review of literature highlights an area of communication research involving mixed-age classrooms that could benefit from a different perspective. Research has found some specific differences and similarities with regard to undergraduate students of varying ages. However, the categorical division of students by age, whether into two, three, or any specific number of groups, only serves to point out the incongruity of compartmentalization.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The bulk of communication interaction research in the classroom has focused on one specific population, on attitudes, and/or relationships between students and either the course material or the instructor (e.g., Bean & Kuh, 1984; Beder & Darkenwald, 1982; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Fink, 1993; Collier & Powell, 1990; Comstock et al., 1995; Ford & Wolvin, 1993; Fusani, 1994; Gorham & Zakahi, 1990; Howard et al., 1996); Koermer & Petelle, 1991; Nadler & Nadler, 1990; Nussbaum, 1992; Pearson & West, 1991; Plax et al., 1986; Poppenga & Prisbell, 1996; Prisbell, 1990; Rosenfeld & Jarrard, 1985; Sanders & Wiseman, 1990). Much of this research has used surveys, questionnaires, and quantitative analysis. Several studies have included observation, interviews, and/or content analysis (e.g., Confessore, 1993; Howard et al., 1996; Kasworm & Blowers, 1994; Kasworm & Pike, 1994; Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1994; Mishler & Davenport, 1983, 1984; West & Pearson, 1994), but none has concentrated on specifically student-student interaction and perceptions. A qualitative approach that focuses on the communication interaction among students is called for to shed light on an area that has been overlooked by communication scholars. In order to address this issue a comparative analysis of student discourse from two sets of interviews was done. The first goal was to

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find patterns or themes from students to ascertain whether the nonverbal physical appearance cue of age is a defining factor with respect to expectancies of others. The second goal was to ascertain if student age has a direct influence on the communication interaction in the classroom. Participant observation by the research team and member-checking with instructors supplemented the interviews. This chapter describes the methodology and procedures involved in the study. The first section identifies the subjects and setting. The second section describes the research design. The third section describes the research team training and pilot study. The fourth section discusses data collection. The fifth section explains the data analysis.

Subjects and Setting

Ford and Wolvin (1993) emphasize that the basic course in communication is an integral part of the college curriculum. It is among the essential minimum requirements for a comprehensive undergraduate education. For this reason students in two large sections of the required basic communication class, which contains a possible range of all majors, were invited to participate in two separate interview sessions. Students chosen received extra course credit for participation. Researchers used a purposeful sampling strategy to approximate the demographic representation of the university as supplied by the registrar's office. The university undergraduate population as of the last available distribution records (Fall 1997) showed a total of 17,579 students. Slightly more than half (54%) of the undergraduate population in each classification were female. The distributions by classification, age range, and ethnic identification are listed on the following page.

Classification				Age Range		
Freshmen	3,769	21%		Under 25	13,899	79%
Sophomores	3,750	21%		25-30	1,694	10%
Juniors	4,053	23%		30-39	969	5.5%
Seniors	6,007	34%		40-49	450	2.6%
Total	17, 579	(Approx. %)		50 +	131	.75%
				Total	17,579	(Approx. %)

Ethnic Identification

Anglo	12,767	72.6%
Hispanic	3,350	19.1%
African American	849	5.0%
Asian	305	2.0%
Indian/Alaskan	134	.8%
Other	174	1.0%
Total	17,579	(Approx. %)

One large lecture section met two days per week in the afternoon. The other large lecture section met once a week on Monday nights. During the first week of the semester the researcher invited approximately 600 students from the two large lecture sections to complete a demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) prior to scheduling interviews. The demographic forms were sorted by age categories into five groups according to the demographic breakdown supplied by the university census information in an attempt to replicate the age distribution ratio of the undergraduate population in the sample. Only students who personally answered the telephone were scheduled for interviews. Calls answered by another party or by an answering machine were reprocessed until the interview schedule was filled.

The first interview sessions ran from January 28 through February 6, 1998. The second interview sessions were from March 23-31, 1998. Seventy-five interviews were scheduled with the age distribution coming close to the university percentage distribution. Fifty-nine students reported to their scheduled appointments, which affected the attempt

to replicate the general population percentages. The percentage of students under twenty-five was slightly lower than the general population and the 25-29 age group was over twice the general population representation. Distribution by classification, age range, and ethnic identification of the student sample is shown below:

Classification			Age Range		
Freshmen	18	30%	Under 25	38	64%
Sophomores	10	16%	25-30	13	22%
Juniors	15	25%	30-39	4	6%
Seniors	15	25%	40-49	2	3%
Other	1	1.4%	50 +	2	3%
Total	59	(Approx. %)	Total	59	(Approx. %)

Ethnic Identification		
Anglo	38	64%
Hispanic	14	23%
African American	4	6%
Asian	1	1.4%
Indian/Alaskan	1	1.4%
Other	1	1.4%
Total	59	(Approx. %)

Research Design

A qualitative case study approach to the mixed-age classroom was used to provide insight into the expectancies of different aged students about each other and how those expectancies are borne out through interaction in the classroom. The study was grounded in previous work and research involving expectancy violation theory (Burgoon, 1978, 1983; Burgoon & Hale, 1988; Jussim et al., 1987; Jussim et al., 1996). The qualitative research design employed naturalistic inquiry in an active interview process to produce a descriptive case study (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994). Participant observation, comments from an instructor opinion survey (Appendix B), and member checking supplemented the study in an attempt to follow the criteria set

out by Lincoln and Guba (1985) of trustworthiness, transferability, reflexivity, and confirmability.

To answer the three research questions interviews were conducted and audio-taped using interview protocols of open-ended questions concerning classroom communication interaction adapted from Kasworm and Blowers (1994) (Appendix C and Appendix D). The instructor opinion survey adapted from Mishler and Davenport (1984) was administered during the tenth week of the 1998 spring semester . Its purpose was to identify perceptions of the classroom climate and student interaction from the instructor viewpoint. This opinion survey served as a construct validity check to ascertain the lab instructors' perceptions of students of different ages and communication interaction in the mixed-age classroom.

Each participant in the case study was considered a hypothetical representative of a specific age range of undergraduates in order to construct perceptual narrative profiles of the mixed-age classroom and its communication interaction as seen from specific individuals' perspectives. The first round of interviews was conducted at the beginning of the spring semester 1998. Before the first interview each participant verified the information on the demographic questionnaire and signed a consent form (Appendix E) allowing the use of information obtained in the interview. The interviews were held in the lab instructor offices. Key portions of the interview included descriptive background data, classroom communication experience, and expectancies of the communication interaction in their current mixed-age classroom based on perceptions of characteristics of older and younger students. The researchers attempted to elicit answers to all of the protocol questions without prompting the participants. Participant observation was in the

form of qualitative field notes and audio-taped debriefings during and immediately after the first round of interviews to document interviewer perceptions of distinctive verbal and nonverbal communications of the interviewees. The interviews were transcribed within one week of the end of the first round.

The second round of interviews was held after mid-term, after completion of the small group communication unit, and after the students had had an opportunity to interact in lab. The second interview called for student impressions of the communication interaction based on expectations stated in the first interview and any expectancy violations that might have occurred. The interview location was the same as the first interviews in most cases. However, to accommodate the time frame set for the second interviews four of the students from the evening class were interviewed outside of their class locations. A total of fifty-two students reported for the second interviews. One student (age 25-29) withdrew from the class. The other six students (ages 18-24) scheduled but did not report for their second interviews. However, comments from all the students in the first interview sessions were included in the database for analysis as representatives of stereotypical expectations from students of various ages. The interviews from the second round were also transcribed within one week of the end of the interview period.

Researcher Training

Prior to the first round of interviews the researcher and two graduate student assistants conducted a training session and pilot interview session. The research assistants were given a copy of the interview protocol adapted from Kasworm and Blowers (1994) and explained the exact purpose of the interviews. The research team

then went through the interview protocol questions. Each item was discussed in detail for intent, purpose, and clarity. After discussion among the research team, the interview questions were revised slightly for clarity and sequence. Instructions for conducting the interviews included the following: 1) interview each person separately away from the hearing of other interviewees, 2) ask all questions in order if possible to facilitate transcription and without prompting the participants for answers unless the participant indicates confusion about the questions, 3) note nonverbal behaviors while interviewees are answering the questions, 4) allow time for responses and spontaneous comments from participants. After the first interview by each research assistant, which served as a pilot interview session, the questions were again revised and clarified. During the week of initial interviews the researcher and research assistants continually met to refine and clarify the questions while maintaining the overall content and order. The same procedure was followed prior to the second round of interviews.

Data Collection

The data set consisted of two rounds of interviews. The first interview was conducted during the first two weeks of the semester before any lab interaction occurred. At the beginning of each interview the researcher and research assistants introduced themselves and explained that the general purpose of the study was to explore perceptions about the mixed-age classroom. The interviewee was then asked to read over the consent form and ask any questions he or she might have about the interviews. To maximize response spontaneity, the three interviewers, one older adult (myself) and two younger adults, conducted the initial interviews, alternating between similar aged participants and dissimilar aged participants. The intent was to allow for candid

information that participants might feel comfortable revealing to the interviewers based on the respective ages of interviewer and interviewee.

Each interviewer sat at a desk with the interviewee chair positioned across from the interviewer. The audiotape equipment was placed on top and to one side of the desk. At the beginning of each interview the tape was cued with the participant's name and code number, interviewer name, the date and time of the interview, and the lab time and instructor's name. The researcher was present and monitored all interviews conducted by the research assistants. In an attempt to facilitate transcription the first interview protocol order was maintained as closely as possible. The first interviews averaged approximately fifteen minutes to one-half hour each. The original intent during the first interview sessions was to coordinate participants and interviewers of similar ages in the interviews along with interviewers and participants of disparate ages. After personally monitoring the interviews conducted by the research assistants and after transcription of the first round of interviews, it appeared from the responses that younger students were more candid and less guarded in their answers and vocabulary with both the younger and older researchers. However, as the participant's age increased, so did the apparent censorship of the answers with the younger researchers (both age twenty-three). The older researcher received equally candid answers from participants of all ages. However, the older researcher received more elaborate and more candid answers from participants who were older than the two younger researchers.

The first round of interviews consisted of approximately twenty questions (Appendix C) dealing with general background communication behaviors of the interviewee, communication within the mixed-age classroom, and expectancies of the

communication lab and the people in it. Conversations from the first round of interviews were transcribed within three days of the end of the round to allow the research team to clarify any obvious errors in transcription. Several interviews contained responses by interviewees that were inaudible or unintelligible due to background noise or interviewee vocal volume. One interview was cut short because of recorder malfunction (tape ran out and interviewer didn't notice). Both during and immediately after the first round of interviews the research team met to discuss individual interviews and to provide impressions of themes, metaphors, and similarities or differences among various aged individuals.

The second round of interviews was conducted after mid-term and the completion of small group communication lab exercises. The second round of interviews began with one of the younger researcher assistants conducting the first few follow-up interviews with the older researcher observing. However, it was deemed more appropriate to conduct the remaining second interviews personally for three reasons. First, because of the highly individualistic nature of the comments being made by the participants the questions could not be standardized. Second, in order to solicit the most information concerning each participant's comments with regard to expectations of younger or older students, the earlier interview responses which had been transcribed by the researcher needed to be interwoven with the current impressions. Lastly, the researcher wanted to personally hear and take note of the verbal and nonverbal responses by the participants in their resultant confirmation or violation of expectancies with regard to students who were younger, older, or approximately the same age.

The second round of interviews consisted of approximately twenty questions (Appendix D). The second interview protocol was customized based on responses from individual participants. If students reported no interaction or little age range, the questions were adapted to fit the situation. The interviews were transcribed within one week after the last interview. One participant was interviewed a second time due to microphone malfunction, which made his initial second interview unintelligible.

Data Analysis

Qualitative analysis of interviews incorporated criteria set out using recurring features of naturalist research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994). The transcripts were read with the intent of identifying communication themes and terms volunteered by the participants. The first interviews were organized into a matrix (Appendix F) in order to contrast, compare, and describe resulting patterns of meaning. Analysis and interpretation progressed within the theoretical base (EVT) for the study guided by the interview topics. These topics included general classroom background, classroom environment, and expectations of the mixed-age class communication experience. These were compared across age groupings, then by emergent global categories and themes. As in Kasworm's (1990) qualitative content analysis containing five "domains of reality" of research about adult learners, the matrix was constructed to allow for "domains of reality" to emerge for students of various ages. The interviews were first analyzed for comments about the classroom communication of "older" students, then analyzed for comments with regard to "younger" students. After these comments were sorted, they were again catalogued by age of the person making the comment and the age range of the students described as "older" or "younger" compared

with descriptions of their own age range. Because there are multiple realities and perceptions of students of all ages, it was assumed that the descriptive terms or themes throughout the interviews would provide some "domains of reality" regarding the communication characteristics of students in mixed-age classrooms.

The second round of interviews were sorted by comments indicating confirmation or violation of expectations with regard to students of various ages based on comments made by the participants in their first interview. The comments were catalogued for clusters of similar metaphors or descriptive terminology, then checked against the age of the person making the statement in order to apply a test of Burgoon's expectancy violation theory and to determine if some stereotypical beliefs are held even in the face of violations of those expectations. The results of the interview content analysis were then compared to other studies for conflicting, contradicting, or concurring findings.

Summary

This chapter has explained the methodology and procedures used in the study including subjects and setting, research design, researcher training, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter IV contains a discussion of the content analysis.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to develop a qualitative descriptive framework for

the mixed-age classroom using interview comments to answer three research questions.

First, what are student perceptions of the communication behaviors of "older" and

"younger" students based on their respective ages? Second, how does expectancy

violation theory apply to verbal and nonverbal behaviors of students of various ages?

Third, how does the age mix affect individual perceptions of classroom communication

interaction over time and perceptions of the resulting classroom communication climate?

The answers to these questions provided the foundation to challenge the efficacy of

previous and current studies that divide students into two categorical age divisions. The

orientation of this qualitative study followed a naturalistic inquiry design (Lincoln &

Guba, 1985). Qualitative analysis of interviews incorporated criteria set out using

recurring features of naturalistic research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994). These

analytic criteria included gathering a holistic overview of the case under study by asking

questions while suspending preconceptions and personal opinions. Next the analysis

progressed to identifying communication themes and terms volunteered by the

participants during the interviews and organizing the data from the interviews into a

matrix. The final steps involved content analysis in order to contrast, compare, and

describe resulting patterns of meaning, and to provide interpretation within the theoretical base (EVT) for the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Results of the analysis of the research questions (expanded into the two interview protocols) are described in this chapter. The individual tables that comprise the descriptive matrix (Appendix F) are provided at the end of this study (Tables, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8). Blank cells in each table indicate that no relevant comment was made in the specific category).

A comparison of the interviewees' expectations of the classroom communication interaction with the actual interaction and their individual perceptions of the resultant communication climate was examined. The final descriptive communication portrait was then compared to recent studies that continue to compartmentalize students into two populations or categories of traditional and nontraditional in the college classroom (e.g., Bishop-Clark & Lynch, 1992; Bowman, 1989; Confessore, 1993; Dzindolet & Weinstein, 1994; Fassinger, 1995; Howard et al., 1996; Kasworm & Blowers, 1994; Klick, 1994; Lynch & Bishop-Clark, 1994; Prisbell, 1990; Sheehan et al., 1992; Yarbrough & Schaffer, 1990).

The two sets of interviews were intended to allow students from a wide range of ages to describe their expectations of communication interaction and student behaviors within the mixed-age classroom. The second round of interviews provided an opportunity for students to describe their perceptions of the actual interaction over time and their perceptions of the communication climate. The goal was to challenge the practice of continued segregation of study participants using age as a criterion. The intent was to suggest a new direction for future research in which age is acknowledged to

be an important piece of demographic background information, but is not a categorical

variable which definitively correlates to any other communication variable.

RQ1 asked: *What perceptions concerning verbal and nonverbal communication*

do students have of each other according to age?

In order to answer this question, data from student comments during the two

rounds of interviews were compiled into an age-sorted matrix (Appendix F). Main

categories emerging from transcripts of the first interviews were abbreviated into column

headings which included description of "older" student (XofO), description of "younger"

student (XofY), description of self (XofSelf), and expectations of the mixed-age

classroom communication interaction (Expectations). The second half of the matrix was

constructed from information given by participants in the second round of interviews,

which included violation of expectations (Violation), confirmation of expectations

(Confirmation), general comments about the mixed-age classroom (GenComment), and

miscellaneous comments concerning the class and/or the instructor (Misc). All

participants were given number codes for each interview and are identified in this study

using pseudonyms. The findings will be presented in order of the categories as listed in

the matrix.

In the initial interviews the participants provided descriptive perceptions of

"older" and "younger" students, general descriptive data about themselves, and

expectations about the communication interaction within their upcoming classes. (See

Appendix C and Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4). Specifically, the participants were asked to

provide several adjectives to describe older/younger students and to describe themselves

as students. They were also asked to categorize the verbal and nonverbal communication

behaviors of "older" and "younger" students and their own verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors in the classroom. The participants were also asked to identify their preferred seating location within the classroom and how that location related to other aged students. In an effort to minimize any subconscious biases or opinions on the part of participants about "traditional" and "nontraditional" students, the interviewers never used these terms. Instead the interviewers referred to "younger" and "older" students in relation to the interviewee. The interviewees were asked to elaborate with regard to younger/older students as to who talked, how they talked, and how much they talked in classroom communication interaction. The interviewees were also asked to describe some nonverbal cues regarding physical appearance, such as how older/younger students looked and acted, and where older/younger students sat in the classroom.

Description of "Older" Students

The first category generated two descriptive portraits of "older" students in relation to the age of the interviewee (Table 1). Interestingly, several freshmen identified an "older" student as an upperclassman or senior. One 18-year-old said she would be "more intimidated by a senior" than by someone over thirty. Edward, age twenty, and Brandi, age twenty-three, referred to themselves as "older" students because they were upperclassmen. In general, the age range of "older" students was given as mid-twenties to thirty and up by participants aged eighteen to twenty-five. The participants in their late twenties and above varied widely in the age they considered "older." For example, one participant aged twenty-eight identified "older" as twenty-five and above, while another twenty-eight year old identified "older" as over forty. Most identified "older" merely as older than their own age, but some of those above thirty referred to older students as

twenty-five, twenty-eight, or thirty. The responses illustrated the confusion in students' own minds of what constitutes an arbitrary age-based dividing line for older/younger or traditional/nontraditional students. Their comments verified Kasworm's (1993) stance that age is merely the equivalent of a road marker, not a descriptive characteristic.

In answer to RQ1 regarding student perceptions of verbal and nonverbal behaviors of others, the participants' comments revealed two stereotypical portraits of "older" students (Table 1). The positive "older" student is one whose nonverbal behaviors indicate better focus, attentive listening, confidence, and enthusiasm. The student is "always prepared" and is "more studious" and "respectful of the professor and of knowledge". The student is "more articulate" and contributes to the classroom discussions with "experiences and insights about life". The student is "more polite and friendly", but also "more reserved" (self-monitoring). Several of the younger students commented that they valued older students' opinions and what they had to say more than that of their peers.

Ellie (18):	They have more experience with life that has to do with what we are learning, and we can relate to that.
Frank (20):	They can tell us how the world is, help us get a picture in our mind how it might work for us.
Desiree (22):	They take more active participation, they understand the importance of why they are here.

The emergent negative portrait of an "older" student came from numerous statements about "talking and explaining too much", "acting like they know everything", "taking up too much class time and holding the class back by asking too many questions", "complaining", and "always asking for clarification". This older student is "not as outgoing", "uses bigger and harder words", "talks about things the younger

students have never heard of", and "is not open to new things". The communication

descriptors referred to some of the same basic communication behaviors of the positive

older student, but worded in a negative way.

Denise (21):	You feel really dumb when the older ones look around like 'She doesn't know that?'
Anne (18):	They are closed minded, narrow and bitter, very pompous, conceited, and set in their ways. They don't want to hear what anybody else has to say. They just feel like they can spit out what they want to say and that should be enough and everyone should accept it as truth. I don't like that. I don't like them (the mixed-age classes).

A graphic nonverbal portrait of the "older" student came from Don (21): "Someone

around forty, wrinkles, gray hair, smells like cigarette smoke."

Description of "Younger" Students

In answer to RQ1 regarding perceptions of other-aged students, the first round of

interviews also captured two composite descriptive preconceptions of "younger" students

in relation to the interviewee. The age range of a "younger" student was given as

seventeen or eighteen to between twenty-one and twenty-five. The themes that

developed from these descriptions indicated two separate portraits of younger students

(Table 2). The comments came from students of all ages from eighteen to fifty-five. The

first portrait reveals a rather shy, quiet student, "open-minded", "very creative", bringing

a fresh perspective and outlook to the classroom. The most important topics of

conversation are high school reminiscences, parties, and dating. The student's

vocabulary is not well developed; however, the younger student is "intelligent", "bright",

"inquisitive", and "excited about everything".

Anne (18):	Younger students are usually bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, naïve and new to it all, accepting new information, immature, carefree, really open, like, to help other people.

Participants in their late teens indicated that younger students felt a need to surround themselves and communicate with others of similar interests, background, and age. Their comments referred to feelings of comfort and belonging.

> Barbara (18): Younger students are easier to talk to because you don't have to be something you are not, you can just be yourself.
>
> Christal (18): We all know what we are talking about. We're the MTV generation.

The other emergent descriptive portrait of a younger student revealed an individual who is "loud", "profane", "blunt", "rude", "bored", "not motivated or focused", with "a short attention span". This student "makes smart remarks", "talks and blurts out without thinking". The student is "not very respectful or friendly"," obnoxious and inexperienced", and "doesn't care about what the professors or others have to say".

> Alex (21): Younger students are headstrong, not there for actual learning, they just sit in class and talk about weird stuff. There are tons of cliques, lots of arguing, they don't consider other points of view.

More flattering adjectives describing "younger" students came from the upper age ranges. The more cryptic and critical comments describing "younger" students came from eighteen to mid-twenty year olds. Many students of twenty had already divorced themselves from those that they considered "younger" students. While current studies of mixed-age classrooms generally use twenty-five as the dividing age between two populations of students, this distinction at an earlier age was an indication that there are differences in communication noticed by younger students. For instance, several of the twenty-year-olds referred to eighteen and nineteen-year-olds as "they" or "the young kids" when describing differences in communication behaviors between themselves and the "younger" students.

Classroom Seating Perceptions

Two of the important nonverbal ingredients in structuring communication interaction in the mixed-age classroom are the physical environment combined with proxemic relation of individual students. Along with the four groupings of communication behaviors of older/younger students, the interviewees were asked two questions about seating placement in the mixed-age classroom. In answer to the question, "Where do older students sit in the classroom?" the almost unanimous answer was that all "older" students sit in front. Only one of the younger students actually felt he sat in front of older students. In answer to the question, "Where do "younger" students sit?" the resounding answer was "in the back."

Descriptions of "Self"

Two questions were posed to the interviewees in order to let them describe their own seating preferences within the mixed-age classroom and to describe their own communication behaviors based on their respective ages. In answer to the question "If I were to come into your classroom, where would you be sitting?" most of the participants identified a specific place from front to back and from side to side. In contrast to the perceived classroom seating division between older and younger students, the hypothetical classroom filled up with a variety of ages in an unusual seating pattern (See Diagram, p. 57). The oldest students did identify "close to the front" as their preference, but the front row also filled up with the younger end of the age range. Some of the very students who had said all "older" students sit in front were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one and chose "front center" as their preferred seating. As the diagram indicates, if students actually sat where they indicated they preferred to sit, the

hypothetical mixed-age classroom created by their seating preferences would be filled with students of all ages sitting next to each other. The stereotypical classroom placement of older/younger students was refuted by their own descriptions.

After describing seating preference the students provided adjectives for themselves. After describing themselves as students in general, they were asked, "In what ways are you involved in classroom communication, and how does your verbal or nonverbal communication behavior compare with other students in your own age range or other ages?" Based on adjectives supplied by the interviewees, the communication descriptors fell into three general categories: talkers, listeners, and moderates - those who only spoke occasionally (Table 3). Those classified as moderates used expressions such as "I don't just talk to talk," and "If I have a question I need answered I'll speak up" and "It depends on the class and how interested I am." As in the seating location chart, the label of "older" students as more talkative, asking more questions, and generally being more dominant in classroom communication was tempered by the interviewees' own descriptions of themselves. The diagram of the hypothetical mixed-age classroom seating chart that emerged was filled with students using the same descriptive terms about themselves regardless of age. There were talkers and listeners of all ages sitting next to each other in the first row. The second, third and fourth rows held a combination of younger talkers, listeners, and moderates in the center area with older listeners on the side. The remainder of the classroom held a range of ages, with most of those students preferring to listen to others. Those students portrayed in the diagram without a descriptive initial above the age did not identify themselves in any of the three specific communication categories.

DIAGRAM

HYPOTHETICAL SEATING CHART OF MIXED-AGE CLASSROOM

Front ↑

Row 1	M L T	L T T T M T M T L	L L

21,18,23,23,23,19,28,20,22,33,18,29,19,25,28, 25,26,27,29,32,26,23,37,39,45,48,18

Row 2

L L M T   L
18,22,18,18,   52,55

Row 3

L L T
18,21,20

Row 4

T L
18,18,19

Row 5	M	L	T
	26	19	23

Row 6

28,18,28,21

Row 7	L L	L L
	22, 26	19, 23, 25

Row 8	L L	L T	L
	20, 18	18, 21	23

T =   Talker
L =   Listener
M=   Moderate
(n) =   Age of Student

RQ2 asked: *How does expectancy violation theory apply to verbal and nonverbal behaviors of students of various ages in the mixed age classroom?*

Expectations of Classroom Communication Interaction

In order to set a baseline for RQ2 regarding expectations about the impending classroom communication interaction, the interviewees answered the prompt, "Describe some of your expectations about the communication behaviors of older and younger

students." To supplement their comments the interviewees were asked, "In what ways do you perceive that younger and older students differ in their verbal and nonverbal communication?" The comments indicated students of all ages had specific and varied expectations about the impending classroom communication interaction. Comments with regard to "older" students' communication included expectations that older students would "ask more questions", "be more involved in discussions", "try to take charge", and "keep things organized". Frances, age 18, illustrated comments made by several of the students:

> Frances: It's neat, but it (having older students) may slow the class down, asking stupid questions, like we've already gone over that, like 'Turn your hearing aid up!'"

Three groupings emerged from the matrix regarding student contemplation of interaction with others of various ages: those who were looking forward to it, those who were apprehensive or unsure about what to expect, and those who felt it would be uncomfortable. Thirty-six of the students from along the age continuum felt excited and eager about the anticipated communication interaction. Fifteen students from eighteen to thirty-nine were ambivalent about their expectations. Only three students, ages eighteen, twenty-three, and twenty-seven had real reservations and apprehensions about the upcoming communication interaction.

Representative statements from various aged participants reflect the range of expectations about pending communication interaction. Some of the positive comments include:

> Andrea (18): I think the older students have a lot to offer in their experiences that you might not learn in the books or just from the professor. I think they are a little bit more interesting than young people are. They are more willing to discuss things and more open about things.

Barbara (18):	The older ones will be more mature about questions, have a higher maturity level. The younger ones just want to get the work done and move on…older students ask more questions and want more elaborate answers, and that helps me out because I'm too intimidated to ask a question.
Ellie (18):	It will be beneficial to them and us because they will relearn what it's like to be a freshman, and we will get an idea of what it's like to be their age and gone through the real world. We can get lots of different perspectives and opinions.
Brandi (23):	It will be interesting to see those who are 18 coming in with older people to see whether they will listen or just blow them off. It's interesting because you always have something to learn whether it's somebody older or younger than you are.
Delores (23):	It will be more challenging. I have to try harder. The young ones are funny and it takes me back. I don't know if the older ones are going to feel like it's more challenging with us in there, but it will be for me to have older students in there.
Emily (26):	It will be interesting. Older people and young kids help balance things out in preparing for the real world where there is nonstop mixed ages.
Tricia (55):	I don't see any problems with the mixed-age classroom. We know what we want. We're going to try to make it. We have to consider the young people who work and go to class and appreciate them.

Also in answer to RQ2 regarding expectations, below are representative comments from students who felt apprehensive or ambivalent about the impending interaction:

Carol (18):	Older students are not as social, don't talk to many other people. They are always at attention, they can't relax. Younger students are more relaxed and more willing. It will be a challenge. Older people make me want to rise up to their level. I don't know if it helps them or not, I haven't talked to them.
Cathy (18):	If it's just younger students we are not going to participate because we are scared our first year. Older students would start conversations and communication in the classroom, then we would participate. They would encourage us to participate more.
Nancy (19):	Older students will have more experiences or words of wisdom, be more comfortable talking to all ages. Younger students will stick to their own age groups.
Warren (20):	It will be easier for people the same age to communicate and they are going to tend to ban together a little more. Actually I communicate better with older people.
Georgio (21):	The nontraditionals will try to take charge, keep things organized and on task, and try to get the most out of class. The younger ones will be joking, talking about last weekend, and won't pay attention.
Don (21):	If there are more older students, I don't know if I would be more inhibited.

Christal (22):	Older people are more aware of nonverbal and verbal skills and can adapt to different situations. It will be negative if older people think we are all stupid and don't know anything, but good when they are open and enlighten us, just depending on the person.
Hal (26):	The older students will be more serious and involved, more technical reserved answers. The younger ones will be squawking because they broke a nail or something. But, there are some older people who communicate well and some who don't and the same with younger people.
Mona (39):	If they don't perform right away and live up to minimum participation I might start making judgments based on age…some eighteen year olds are extremely mature and have lots of experience.

A final grouping of answer to RQ2 regarding expectancies of interaction are listed below. The three students who felt most negative about mixed-age interaction had specific concerns.

Anne (18):	I don't like them (the mixed-age classes). I just see the big gap. People get so set in their ways, then they go back to school where they are with 18 year olds that have done pot and acid, and then they discuss with these people who grew up in the fifties, like about teen pregnancy or whatever, it's just real different. I don't know if it will be an eye opener or just suck them more into their own little world because they don't want to hear it. But why go back to school if you are going to be like that, you know?
Gary (23):	I don't think it's going to work well…if there's older students the younger students may not want to talk and may want to use profanity some or say how they see it, and they may not tend to participate with older students in there…and older people drag out discussions and try to use life experiences. They try to relate something like lots of analogies and stuff.
Steve (27):	(I expect) a real reluctance to talk and communicate. I envision some resentment in younger students about the older ones asking questions that don't seem as important as dorms or clubs.

Contradicting stereotypical descriptions made earlier, several of the participants commented that the younger students would be more vocal and outspoken and more comfortable and relaxed speaking, while older students would be quieter and "not as social". (This could have resulted from the classes having met one or two times prior to the interviews, and some students had already formed preliminary judgments of the interaction). Eight students expressed expectations that related directly to classroom

communication interaction among various ages and provided background information for

Research Question 3 (RQ3), which asked how the mixed of ages in the classroom

affected student interaction and the communication climate. (RQ3 will be discussed in

more detail later in this chapter.) Representative answers are below.

Lucas (19):	Everybody just tries to find one kind of language. Some people might not say the same things, so you try to find a combination, just meet up the middle, just try to get along. Everybody is here to do the same thing, to learn. Some people bring experiences they have gone through already, and the younger ones can bring some ideas that they have thought of and other people don't know.
Phil (23):	It depends on personalities and stuff. Some students don't like when an older student asks a question. They sigh and just wish they wouldn't, like they are holding up the class or something, and some students don't mind. I don't mind because they seem to ask more intelligent questions.
John-Peter (28):	A big challenge will be to get people to open up. Often people won't speak out because they are shy. Older students may not feel comfortable sharing experiences with younger ones, and the younger ones may not feel comfortable...but the experiences I have had so far, it's really good as far as I can see.
Kadi (33):	Different age groups and experiences will benefit everybody. Your personality, style, how comfortable you are...if they are shy they are not going to speak up whether they are 40 or 18. I don't think age has anything to do with it.
Renee (45):	It depends on the people and the activity. Some are more open and outgoing. Others are more introverted. I have a tendency to be more motherly than student-student. Talking depends on the subject and how much you know about it. Some younger students don't want to hear from experiences but others really do want to hear.

Many of the positive comments made by students between eighteen and twenty-

two related to previous classes in which they felt they communicated better with older

students. The comments referred to older students' communicative maturity level,

talking about life experiences, and their general comfort level in communication. Those

students were looking forward to more interaction in the classroom as a growth

experience. In general, the less positive comments made by students at the younger end

of the participant pool reflected a need for comfort, security, and communicating with

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others like themselves. Several of the youngest participants had had minimal or no prior communication interaction in a mixed-age college classroom. Students in the early- to mid-twenties mainly spoke of anticipating communication interaction that addressed challenges, growth, and new experiences. They wanted to hear about what to expect "out there" in the real world. Students in the later twenties and older expressed a real desire to "hear other perspectives" and to "get fresh outlooks", from both older and younger classmates.

Expectancy Violation Theory Results

Burgoon's expectancy violation theory provided the theoretical basis for RQ2 to compare student expectations of communication interaction with the resultant actual interaction. Table 5 presents confirmation of expectations. Table 6 presents violations of expectations. The participants provided their own interpretation of the confirmation or violation of expectations in positive or negative terms.

Confirmation

Many of the students encountered exactly what they expected (Table 5). Comments about the positive "older" student included the confirmation that the older student does talk more, asks more questions, has more to say and communicates "with more wisdom and life experiences". While commenting on the good communication points of "older" students, two of the younger students included themselves in their comments about communication interaction of older students.

> Christal (22): In groups the older person and I were trying to get things done, maybe because we are more serious students or something, but the other ones (younger) had these side conversations and kept talking.

Harry (28):   It has stayed truer to the older student being a little more active. Older students seem to catch on, the way they communicate with each other. The younger ones weren't real sure of the answers but the older ones would talk among themselves and try to figure it out. We (older) were really hard-driven to figure out the right answer and they (younger) were just like kind of doing the exercise.

Don (21) illustrated the few negative "older" student communication expectancy confirmations with the comment that they "talk a lot, sometimes too much. It's very distracting and irritating."

Communication generalizations of "younger" students were likewise confirmed through interaction during the semester. The positive description of "younger" student communication included bringing a fresh outlook and more energy to discussions, while at the same time being a little shy and hesitant to speak. However, more negative comments came out of the second interviews from all ages regarding "younger" students. Four major communication areas that emerged from the comments were listening skills, speaking skills, general vocabulary, and nonverbal behavior. Comments illustrating the perception of communication deficiencies included Desiree (22): "The majority of class is freshmen. A lot of them don't care about the course and it makes it hard for those of us that are actually interested. They aren't as dedicated to learning or to participate". Kadi (33) spoke for those who identified listening deficiencies in that "younger students don't have the experience, when people are trying to talk, hearing what they say before interjecting what thoughts are on the tip of their tongue. They are more focused on what they are thinking; they are not hearing." Several of the students in their late twenties who identified themselves as "older" had the harshest words for "younger" students.

Carlo (25):   The younger ones joked around a lot more. We got right down to it. My group had mostly seniors so we didn't have as many "dysfunctional" members. Having older students did have an influence on our group work. Younger students' attention span is smaller.

Jenny (26): The young students talk more, different content, like Spring Break.
With older students it's more content, explanations and detail. When
I hear an older student speak it's like they have thought about it,
whereas with the younger student they just start babbling and
throwing things out and it doesn't sound like they know what they are
going to say or what they are going to answer.

Russ (29): My impressions were that young people are kind of inexperienced.
The class has reinforced that. The young kids and their views – I was
more turned off by that.

Violations

While many of the students experienced exactly what they expected from students

of various ages and the communication interaction of the mixed-age classroom, forty of

the students admitted that what they had expected in both communication behaviors of

others and the interaction itself did not happen. They experienced expectancy violations

(Table 6). Some of the students who experienced positive violations were pleasantly

surprised. For instance, Anne (18) had the most negative perception of "older" students

and the mixed-age classroom. Although previous class experiences had been unpleasant

for her, this semester allowed her to re-evaluate her opinion. She was still wary but

willing to believe there are benefits to the mixed age classroom.

Anne (18): The older women seem to be pretty easy to work with except for one
who is really stuck in her ways, she won't listen to anyone else. I
guess it just varies from class to class. The two older students in
there, you get a different perspective from them. I've really learned a
lot in there. They are like that (p. 53, earlier comment was very
negative), but not to such extremes. The lab with people of different
ages, it's kinda fun.

A cluster of comments emerged with regard to attitudes and perceptions about

"younger" students that were also positive violations of expectations. Several students

from various ages had said they expected "younger" students to communicate and behave

immaturely. They felt younger student would be quiet and would not participate in

classroom interaction. Their second interview comments acknowledged that in the

beginning the younger students had been quiet but were now "talking up a storm". Carlo

(25) found that the freshmen "actually have quite a bit to say...They have a high level of

maturity; some more than I am, really mature for their age. I was really impressed by

that." Another positive violation of expectations came from Steve.

> Steve (27): I found that more (communication) apprehension came from me and the two older students in revealing things or in talking. It's been mostly the younger students who have been very eager to talk and answer questions out loud.

Frances (18) had expected that "older" students (ages 24-35) would be hard to

make friends with because they are "different, not like us." In her second interview she

identified the difference and admitted that were different, but in a good way. She

experienced a negative violation of her expectations that she and her peers would have a

much easier time communicating, and a positive violation of her expectations of the

interaction with older students.

> Frances (18): It was harder for us to come up with a little song because we were like, we care what everybody thinks about us, like our friends and stuff might think we were stupid, but the older people would come up with silly...like they didn't really care what people think. They are more experienced, really calm, not as nervous, and more creative. They are more comfortable because they are older and don't really care what other people think. I think we can learn from the older people.

Several of the students who had commented that "older" students would talk

more, start conversations, and take charge of class communication admitted that had not

happened in their classes. Confirming Hickson and Stacks' (1993) comment that

physical appearance is a powerful initial nonverbal cue, three of the youngest participants

admitted they were initially intimidated just by the physical appearance of "older"

students in their classes. However, during the course of the semester the younger

students observed that some of the older students "hardly spoke at all". Comments from

two of the younger students illustrate their views of the interaction.

Cathy (18):   I thought because they are older they are going to speak more, be wiser and know more, but <u>no</u>...it depends on their personality. At first I was intimidated by the older lady because she reminded me of my mother, and thought that she was going to think what I said was dumb, and that she would tell me what I'm doing wrong. I thought because she was older she would take charge and just go in there and tell everyone what they should do! But she's a really sweet lady, and she's very shy because she is the only older person.

Jeremy (20):   When I first got into the class I expected that the age difference would make a difference, that older people would put in more input, but I realize that it's more personality than age. In past experiences the older people would speak out more, but the older lady in class doesn't speak hardly at all. So I think it's just a personality thing. Young people are more outspoken.

Several of the students were negatively affected by violations of expectancies

about "younger" students. This cluster of comments dealt with what they judged to be

inappropriate language and behavior, including cursing, personal topics of conversation,

and rude or sarcastic comments made to others. Several students from a range of ages

mentioned the language of younger students as an unpleasant jolt of reality.

Carla (18):   Young students use cuss words, profane language. That's not appropriate as adult language.

Steve (27):   The girls who are 18-19 are <u>way more</u> comfortable speaking out about things that I never...I never heard from girl my age at that time. The vocabulary, the content, <u>ev-er-y-thing</u>! I never knew girls to be this way.

Tom (28):   Some young students are more outgoing than expected, real pushy, they blurt out their emotions, use foul language. That's really a negative point with me.

Renee (45):   The younger students are more outspoken, don't stop to think, no inhibition. They have to speak out immediately. One of the young girls took over the group. And the curse words...at first it offends me. Then I stop and think that is how they talk and not take it as a personal offense. I try to be respective of their opinion whether I agree or not. I need to work on being more comfortable, saying my opinion and not worrying about what they say or think.

While several of the younger students had stressed the importance of having like-age classmates to communicate with and sit with, a number of instances negatively violated their expectations. For instance, Barbara (18) had said in her first interview that students of the same age were "easier to talk to" and "just be yourself." She reported a very different reality in her lab of all young students.

Barbara (18):	Even in our groups we are just too intimidated to ask questions about each other. I thought it would be more open and talkative, but it's not...If we had had some older people in there to ask more questions...

A number of comments emerged as expectancy violations regarding the classroom communication interaction. Many seemed to think that the communication interaction in their lab was a special, isolated case and that the stereotype of "older" or "younger" students in relation to themselves was probably apparent in other classes. Several comments from students of varying ages illustrated a real dissonance between what they expected from the communication interaction and the actuality.

Christal (22):	It's really weird, because it's just basically the type of person you are dealing with. One class the older ones are really helpful and use their experience in a positive way. My other class they always just jump in and think they know it all. So I think it's just the type of person you're dealing with, not necessarily because of their age. But they (older) do seem to be insightful and know a lot more, and they can use it positively or negatively.
Lee (28):	In my lab there didn't seem to be a difference, but I'm sure there are some where the older students go to one corner and try to avoid mixing in with others. I'm a little different from others because I have always been shy about speaking.

Students of various ages had looked forward to the mixed-age interaction, but did not experience what they had hoped for and reported negative violations of positive expectations.

Buddy (19):   I expected more interaction. A lot of us are working alone so the group process has been eliminated for the most part. It's not as comfortable an environment. People are hesitant to disclose and get to know each other.

Phyllis (35):   I'm really struggling to find something that they could relate to.

Alternative comments revealed students who had expected that "older" students would provide insights and knowledge and "younger" students would provide fresh outlooks and energy, and that did not happen. They too had experienced negative violations of positive expectations. However, they still held on to their original beliefs even in the face of these violations of their expectations.

Casey (22):   I still believe the mixed age classroom is good, but when people go on and on it's like "Oh, them again?"...like people aren't listening to them any more. In other classes I have only come across outspoken ones who are irritable, it's like they don't even listen when other people have points of view. It's annoying.

Several of the students in their late twenties who classified themselves as "older" and "more comfortable within a mixed-age class" were surprised to find that they were more uncomfortable in a room full of "younger" students.

Tom (28)   I felt nervous in front of the 27 students even though I'm used to speaking in front of 54 people every month at work. That was really something new to me.

Another student, age twenty, expected minor differences in communication between himself and "younger "students, but was still surprised at the difference two years could make.

Edward (20):   All the young people tend to be loud and proud. I expected I was going to be in class with a bunch of young students, but it's only two years so that shouldn't make too much of a difference...but it does, because they are all talking about partying and stuff and I'm like "Come on, I've been through all that!" It's real different.

Interaction Perceptions

A third type of comment emerged from some of the participants during the second round of interviews, which created a new category. Rather than experiencing either confirmation or violation of expected communication interaction, these students reported that they had minimal interaction with students of other ages either because of the class itself or the activities and groupings within the class. More surprising was that some of the students said they did not notice any age differences, although the class rosters indicated differently.

Summary

Some of the descriptive communication expectations of other students' behaviors were confirmed through the positive/negative portraits of younger and older students developed in the first interviews. However, many of those expectations were violated, both positively and negatively. Most important for stereotypical preconceptions and expectations is that there was no age at which students can be definitively categorized as a talker or listener, as sitting in front or back, or having specific negative or positive communication characteristics. The descriptions revealed that some younger students do speak out more, and some older students tend to keep quiet, but there is no absolute age range at which a "communication transformation" takes place to allow for categorical age divisions. The final research question addressed student interaction and communication climate.

RQ3 asked: *How does the mix of ages in the college classroom affect student interaction and the communication climate?*

Student Interaction and Classroom Communication Climate

Comments from students supported findings from Howard et al. (1996) that some students depend on other "older" students to ask questions that they themselves are hesitant to ask, and that students do make distinctions between relevant comments and distracting comments. Kasworm and Blowers' (1994) finding that some adult students "disguised" themselves to blend in with younger students also found support in comments made by students of various ages. Kadi (33) said "I don't like letting people know exactly how old I am just because sometimes I feel alienated, so I don't really let on that much. I've been real hesitant."

Several of the participants spoke for the variety of viewpoints that personality and individual background are major contributors to each person's communication behaviors in the mixed-age classroom. There emerged three clusters of comments about the relationship between student age and student communication interaction. The first cluster of comments indicated a complete disregard of age, while a second cluster indicated that each person's age was a vital component of classroom communication interaction and the resulting classroom climate. The third cluster emerged from comments containing two-part answers. The first part of their answers indicated that age was not really relevant to classroom communication interaction, while in the second part of the answers age was identified as a crucial factor contributing to the richness of communication interaction.

Students of various ages responded to the question: "In your opinion what does age have to do with classroom communication interaction?" Over one-third of the participants commented after communication interaction throughout the semester that individual personalities and upbringing were more important than age.

Cathy (18):	It depends on your personality and how you were brought up, what you did in high school, how your parents talked to you.
Lucas (19):	I wouldn't categorize by age. Everybody is here to do the same thing, to learn. Some people bring experiences they have gone through already, and younger ones can bring some ideas that they have thought of and other people don't know.
Edward (20):	I think it would be hard to classify or label certain age groups as behaving a certain way, stereotype them, because it's more of an individual thing. I've seen younger students are ten times more talkative than the older ones.
Roseann (26):	It's not whether they are younger or older but the extroverts are going to be more spontaneous and more vocal. I don't think that has much to do with age. I feel intimidated sometimes, like I'm not young enough or not old enough so I kind of feel awkward. I get along with both age groups, but I still feel awkward.
John-Peter (28):	I guess it takes them (younger) a while to get over their first fear. Toward the end I was sitting back and listening and not really saying much to participate, just to hear the other ideas, to listen to the way they would build on the ideas we had put out originally. There isn't as big a difference as I thought. Everybody is contributing. I know what the younger ones are going through because I've been through it. I still consider myself one of them. I don't think age necessarily has a factor in it. It's more of your experiences while you are growing up, if you have had that opportunity in your family to kind of say what you want and you don't get in trouble for it.
Frank (29):	When we first started they (younger) were real quiet and didn't hardly say anything...toward the end it's almost argumentative. It's like they say "Now I've got something to say!" So just getting comfortable with one another in the smaller groups.

The second viewpoint that emerged from the interviews was that age is a key contributor to classroom communication interaction for a variety of different reasons.

Christal (22):	The age factor definitely changes the experience that people have. It makes things rounder and changes our own perspective on things.
Phil (23):	When I'm in a class full of people my age...I feel less open, I may be judged more...students your own age look at you closer as opposed to the older students. You don't have to worry about them looking at you or judging you. It's a lot easier to do the work you re supposed to do when there's older students in class.
Carlo (25):	Younger students have great ideas. We should work on decreasing criticism of the younger ones. Intimidation was factor in that we were older and more experienced, but the younger ones positively reinforced us. The younger students enjoyed participation as much as we older ones did.
Keith (25):	One of the best parts about college is just to expose people from different environments, and age is definitely a factor in that.

Wayne (age 20) voiced the viewpoint of several individuals illustrating the dual-sided

realization that age is and is not relevant to classroom communication interaction.

> Wayne (20):   It's really more of the individual...there's a whole bunch of other
> variables involved in the communication process...the interest you
> have in a subject, the physical aspects, and possibly the culture too.
> But age might be a factor, like you might feel intimidated and not
> want to communicate, like if I were the only person in a room of 50-
> 60 people over thirty, I might feel out of place. But if it's mixed, you
> know, if you have someone in there with you, you'll be OK.

Summary

In the various classes the interaction itself triggered a surprise for many of the

students who had the opportunity to interact with those they saw as different age-wise.

Some of the older students (from twenty-three and up) were pleasantly surprised by the

younger students' fresh ideas, while others were surprised at their lack of originality and

tendency to just follow along with others. Several of the youngest participants admitted

to being intimidated just by the appearance of "older" students, which they identified

anywhere from "senior" and up. Those who had an opportunity for close communication

proximity with "older" students felt a positive violation of expectation in most cases.

However, although Anne (18) had fairly positive experiences this semester, based on her

personal background she still felt that students of different ages need to step lightly

around each other to keep from triggering some cataclysmic communication experience

in the classroom. However, Buddy (19) who was encouraged to speak his mind as a child

finds the chance for an argumentative atmosphere in the mixed-age classroom energizing.

He eagerly anticipates opportunities to "get it on" with students of all ages to hone his

communicative skills.

Instructor as Facilitator in Structuring Interaction

The second round of interviews elicited general comments from the participants

regarding perceived benefits and deficiencies in classroom communication interaction

and climate, as well as suggestions for improvement (Tables 6 and 7). An area of

research not specifically targeted in this study was the relative importance that the

instructor might play in the mixed-age classroom communication interaction.

Comments from students both prior to class interaction and during the second

interview provided testimony to the importance of the instructor in structuring the quality

and amount of interaction in the college classroom, regardless of the student ages

represented. Those students who did not have the opportunity to interact with a variety

of others noticed and identified the lack of interaction as a deficiency in their classroom

experience.

After reviewing the comments again with the Matrix sorted into the participants'

respective classes rather than by age, the comments they made regarding communication

interaction and their satisfaction with the outcome referred to in RQ3 as "communication

climate" became clearer. Classes that had both very narrow age ranges and wide age

ranges had discrepant reports about the communication climate (Table 8). On closer look

the students who had been in classes where the interaction was structured in novel and

varying ways had more positive comments about the class, the communication

interaction, and the instructors regardless of student age mix. Although the study was

designed to investigate student-student interaction, the comments regarding deficiencies

and benefits that students felt about the interaction positioned the instructor as an

essential part of the communication environment and resulting perceptions of the

communication climate. Comments clustered around phrases such as "better than I

thought it would be" and "I expected more interaction." The positive comments are

represented below.

Ellie (18):	It's a good experience for us as young students who haven't interacted with adults on the same level rather than them being above us and teaching us. It's really good just having to speak with someone who is older but not any better than we are. It's a really good thing.
Leah (19):	I thought the lab was going to be a pain, but it's active and we do stuff. I really don't even notice the age difference.
Brandi (23):	The instructor chose groups for us and I really liked that because it allowed us to meet everybody and have different kinds of communication.
Maureen (25):	Everybody has been treated equally in the class. It's been really relaxed, and blended in so you can't tell there is that age difference.

Negative comments incorporated the class structure, activities, and instructors.

Barbara (18):	I thought it would be more open and talkative, but it's not...it's usually the same groups because we just turn our desks toward each other.
Don (21):	We haven't had as much group communication as I thought there would be.
Hal (26):	Our lab has a lot of integration. Everybody is taking their own initiative to interact with other people. The only down side is that some older ones don't want to interact with younger and some younger ones don't want to interact with the older ones. They like to stick with their own. But that's just 10-15 percent.
Russ (29)	I guess I didn't get it. I just figured it could be better, more challenging, more fulfilling for everyone.
Mona (39):	The age groups seem to have migrated toward each other. There were very brief activities at the beginning, then nothing since then.
Tricia (55):	Maybe it's me. There is something about me that withdraws...the professor is able to carry on with the younger ones and laugh with them and relate to them. I see the differences, but I don't think she has anything against me.

Most comments for improvement dealt with suggestions for the professors or lab

instructors to act more as a facilitator for structuring the interaction either in arrangement

of the physical environment of the classroom or in spatial proxemic placement of

students so that different ages would have the opportunity to interact. Many of the

comments included "getting different perspectives", "more group projects" and "mixing

the age groups more".

Cathy (18):	Sitting in a circle or something and have everybody have to look at each other and not just sit beside each other every day, but sit beside somebody different, and everybody could sit by this older person and get to know her. I think we young adults should be the ones to approach the older people because they may be afraid to communicate with us because we are young. We as young adults should make the attempt to interact with everybody in the classroom.
Harry (28):	Make sure all the students know that their opinion and their voices are necessary in the class, and that no one has a bad idea. Help the listening skills and understanding where people are coming from. Just listening I think is the big key...the most important thing in communication.
Mona (39):	Initiating interaction would help. The young ones don't tend to do it, and I don't tend to do it, and so it just doesn't happen. It would be beneficial to have more mixed groups and to actually ask that people change groups more often. Even though it's really comfortable in not making a change once you are in your little niche, it would be a growing experience.
Sue (48):	It's good for people my age to be in groups with younger students. It helps you see things in a different way and communicate more easily. Sometimes if you have all people in the same age groups there is no diversity in there.

Bill (23) commented, "Mixing the age groups, that's great. Once they get back

into the classroom with younger and older...they're not afraid to sit by somebody who is

say 35. It won't freak 'em out any more." The one student, Anne (18), who had had the

most negative experiences and expectations suggested that interaction would need to be

tempered by communication topics, and still felt that "There is just a big generation gap.

Maybe we could just talk about things that aren't so confrontational."

Instructor Opinion Survey Comments

The Instructor Opinion Survey (Appendix B) was completed by eight lab

instructors. Five of the instructors were in the eighteen to twenty-four age category. One

instructor was in the thirty to thirty-nine age category. The other two instructors were in

the forty to forty-nine age category. Answers to the first question indicated that in general instructors believe that the presence of adult students results in more sophisticated, mature discussions. They did not feel that the presence of adult students inhibits communication by younger students. Opinions were evenly divided as to whether there is tensions exhibited through verbal and nonverbal communication between younger and older students. The majority of the instructors did not feel that older students' communication skills are noticeable better than those of younger students. The instructors agreed that there are few problems presented by the diversity of ages in the classroom. Again opinions were evenly divided as to whether age composition influences student communication behaviors.

Question 7 asked for comments about the biggest communication challenge with mixed-age classes. The comments confirmed some of the observations that the students had made regarding structuring interaction, while confirming some of the stereotypical characterizations of "older" and "younger" students. Similar comments came from all the instructors who returned the survey. Three clusters emerged from the instructor comments. The first cluster of comments involved helping or encouraging "older" students to feel comfortable contributing and participating in class. Instructor comments indicated that rather than being more talkative, many of the "older" students appeared more insecure and nervous than "younger" students. A second cluster of comments referred to those "older" students who felt more experienced or qualified and tended to dominate discussion. The implication was that sometimes the younger students appeared to be intimidated or inhibited by the older students. The third cluster of comments spoke directly to the instructor role for structuring interaction. Comments included "be careful

about what we assume everyone in the class values or has experience with." Discussion topics "like Spring Break and parties leave out the older students, so the instructors must vary discussion topics so that both older and younger students have the opportunity to participate." One comment cautioned that "younger students are often inhibited from speaking openly by the older students' scope of knowledge and life experience. They have to work a litter harder by questioning, paraphrasing to fully understand each other."

Question 8 asked for comments about communications strengths in the mixed-age classroom. Again, the comments could not be categorized according to the age of the lab instructor. Their comments supported student suggestions to enhance interaction and improve the communication in the mixed-age classroom. Some of the communication challenges also appeared in comments about communication strengths in the mixed-age classroom. For instance, one instructor commented that "The types of communication examples vary between older and younger students. The older students talk about their marriage and children, while the younger students discuss dates, parents, and friends. This allows the class to examine things from various perspectives. It also makes talking about perception very interesting". Another instructor commented that a strong point in having a range of ages is that there is an "increased breadth of communication, varied viewpoints and experiences, and different frames of reference. They "can learn a lot from each other and provide a balance between 'too serious' and 'too immature' ". The instructor comments also supported the argument that there are no absolute distinctive communication behaviors that can be attributed to specific age groups.

Other Research Findings

Some general comments made by students prior to extended communication

interaction in their labs had to do with instructors in previous classes where there was a

range of ages. These comments confirmed studies in which students perceived

differential treatment on the part of the instructor. Two participants, both age 18,

commented that professors talked to older students in a "more intellectual way", while

younger students got a "watered-down conversation". They expressed resentment at

professors who put down "younger" students in front of the rest of the class, while

communicating in a more personable and more respectful manner with older students.

Leah (19) felt that professors "reach out to the older students because that's who is

listening and that's who cares". Two students, ages 19 and 20, commented that

professors did communicate differently with older students, but, as Edward (20) said,

"It's a subtle difference. I can't put my finger on it, but there is something." Professors

talking to older students "with more respect" came as a comment from all ages, but

especially from participants above twenty-five. Renee and Mona had had prior classes

with a majority of traditional-age freshmen and sophomores. They perceived a difference

in how professors talked to those classes.

Renee (45):   The professor is more distant with younger students, not as personable.
               They are treated more like teenagers. I don't think they do it on purpose,
               it just happens.

Mona (39):   The professor treated the younger students like little children and treated
               older students like adults. The professor even put a "N" on our tests to
               designate nontraditional.

These comments support prior research studies that reported differential treatment by

professors of students based on the students' age. Unfortunately, a couple of students

confirmed the Stage and McCafferty (1992) study that a few instructors actually communicated negative behaviors toward older students which were perceived by the younger students. These behaviors included the instructor "rolling his eyes" while an older student was talking or "cutting off" an older student's comments.

The interview comments regarding perceived classroom interaction benefits and deficiencies also support studies positioning the instructor as a mediator for communication interaction among students. The inability to establish any clear age division for any of the communication variables, with the possible exception of self-monitoring skills, contradicts studies which list numerous communication differences between "traditional" and "nontraditional" students and supports the challenge to a categorical division of students in the college classroom by age.

Summary

The theoretical mixed-age classroom developed from student generalizations of "younger" and "older" students was found to contain students as described in the first round of interviews. However, many of the preconceptions and stereotypical generalities about communication behaviors were not supported over the course of the semester and extended opportunities for interaction.

RQ1 investigated student perceptions of others in the mixed-age classroom according to their respective ages. Results provided the descriptive basis for positive and negative stereotypical perceptive portraits regarding verbal communication and nonverbal communication cues of "older" and "younger" students, which agreed with other research studies using "traditional" and "nontraditional" categories. A clear contradiction of the categorical age division was found in the inability of students of various ages to set a

dividing point at which a student ceases being younger (traditional) and becomes older (nontraditional).

RQ2, which investigated the application of expectancy violation theory in mixed-age classes, provided the students an opportunity to establish expectations for communication interaction in the mixed-age classroom, then to describe the resulting confirmations and violations of expectations in their own words. Students in general expected that "older" students would bring positive communication interaction in that they would talk more, show respect for the professor and other students, ask questions that younger students might be too shy to ask, and bring insights and experiences to the classroom. In a negative communication interpretation "older" students would talk too much, ask too many questions, and take over discussions. "Younger" students were expected to bring fresh outlooks, insights, and energy to the communication interaction. "Younger" students would also make rude and irrelevant comments, blurt out without thinking, and communicate disrespectfully with the professor and others.

RQ3 investigated how the mix of ages affected student interaction and the communication climate in the mixed-age classroom. Responses from students concerning RQ3 indicated that close communication interaction with students of various ages allows them get past many of the preconceptions and misperceptions that they identified in the first interviews. Further, interaction over time allows individuals within the mixed-age classroom to discover communication similarities and discuss communication differences at a richer level. The second interview questions relating to RQ3 also elicited responses that indicated lack of interaction or the lack of opportunity

for interaction leaves students feeling a deficiency in their communication experience and in the communication climate of the classroom.

An important finding from the present study challenges current and prior classroom research which categorizes students into traditional (under 25) and nontraditional (over 25) populations or "cultures". Analysis of the interview comments documented that students refer to "older" and "younger" only in relation to themselves, not on an arbitrary bifurcated scale. The numerous communication descriptors contributed by the interviewees could be applied to any age student. This finding supports this study's argument that the custom of bi-cultural age grouping is an artificial division and is counterproductive for research purposes. The interview transcripts revealed that a transformation begins to take place somewhere from eighteen to the early twenties. During this time period the mindset of a college student changes from the need for communicative comfort and to be surrounded with others who communicate similarly to anticipating the future and wanting to communicate more with those who have experiences to share. Some eighteen-year-olds come into college as freshmen with this mindset. Some see themselves at twenty-one or twenty-two looking back on their naivete and identifying a difference between themselves and younger students in the way they communicate, while still seeing themselves as different from those in their later twenties and on.

Individual students' home environment and amount of encouragement to communicate on a level with elders at an early age seemed to have influenced attitudes and preconceptions toward "older" students. Those who were encouraged to speak up as youngsters admitted to being outspoken "talkers" coming into college. Several of those

students were also among those who did not notice a difference in the amount of communication coming from various age groups, perhaps because they were also talking and interacting. Those who were more reticent as children and described themselves as "listeners" could not imagine ever speaking up in class or taking a large part in the actual classroom communication in other than a supportive listening role.

The second important finding was that the role of the instructor in structuring classroom communication interaction is crucial to the affective and cognitive outcomes of the students. Physical arrangement of the classroom, placement of students in varying configurations of small groups within the classroom, and providing the opportunity and encouragement for all students to participate are areas that deserve more investigation. The grouping of student interview responses by instructor clearly indicated that classes with instructor-facilitated interaction among students were perceived by students of all ages as more enjoyable, more productive, and more educationally relevant – regardless of age mix. Student comments also suggested that studies (e.g., Sheehan et al., 1992) which found different learning preferences (i.e., pedagogical vs. andragogical) by age group should be re-evaluated. Comments regarding the desire for more "relevance" or more "interactive learning" came from a range of ages, not just from older students.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study investigated three research questions regarding perceptions of students in the mixed-age classroom, application of expectancy violation theory, and the effect of age mix on perceptions of student interaction and communication climate within the mixed-age classroom. This chapter discusses the research conclusions and implications, limitations of the study, and suggests possibilities for future research.

Conclusions and Implications

The purpose of this study was to develop a qualitative descriptive analysis of the mixed-age classroom in order to gain insight into student perceptions of others in the mixed-age classroom, the communication interaction among students over time in the mixed-age classroom, and perceptions of the communicate climate. The goal was to challenge the categorical division of students by age and to suggest a new heuristic direction for future research studies.

Research Question One (RQ1) asked what preconceptions or differences in perception concerning verbal and nonverbal communication students had of each other according to age. From participant observation during two rounds of in-depth interviews conducted with students ages eighteen to fifty-five, it was apparent that there are many

individual personalities and backgrounds represented in college. Along with other

demographic factors such as ethnicity, gender, ranking in college, and marital status, one

of the important demographic factors in that multi-culturality is age.

As stated in the Introduction, research on classroom communication has generally

been conducted using two age categories of students, either separately or together, but

still divided into two arbitrary groups by age. The most recent studies of the mixed-age

classroom (e.g., Absher & Crawford, 1995; Bishop-Clark & Lynch, 1992; Bowman,

1989; Buerkel-Rothfuss & Fink, 1993; Butler & Markley, 1993; Confessore, 1993;

Dzindolet & Weinstein, 1994; Fassinger, 1995; Howard et al., 1996; Klick, 1994; Lynch

& Bishop-Clark, 1994; Pearson & West, 1991; Prisbell, 1990; Sheehan et al., 1992; West

& Pearson, 1994) reporting stereotypical student attitudes and assumptions of one group

about the other with regard to classroom communication behaviors were supported by the

four separate portraits of "older" and "younger" students that emerged from comments

during the first round of interviews. The descriptive terms and phrases identified in other

studies were borne out by the comments in this study concerning preconceptions and

stereotypical generalizations of "older" and "younger" students. However, the emergent

descriptive data matrix which included adjectives describing "self" revealed that the most

commonly used communication descriptors have more to do with individual traits than

age. That finding led to the conclusion that the continued compartmentalization and

segregation of students into two artificially demarcated categories or cultures of

"traditional" and "nontraditional" is irrelevant other than for demographic tabulation.

The students themselves in the current study identified communication changes

that take place in some students from the first through the fourth year of college. There is

a shift from preferring communication with students "like me" to appreciating and anticipating communication with students of various ages and attributions. The differences and similarities that emerged from student comments in the descriptive matrix regarding communication behaviors had more to do with individual student backgrounds or personalities than with age. For example, students who said they were shy as children remained shy as college students. Students who mentioned in their interviews that they had been encouraged to "speak up" as children admitted that they came into college talking. Students said they sat where they felt comfortable or for specific physical reasons such as better hearing or visibility, not because they were younger or older.

Research Question Two (RQ2) investigated the use of expectancy violation theory in the mixed-age classroom as it applied to verbal and nonverbal behaviors of students of various ages. Methodology regarding mixed-age classroom research generally has included self-report questionnaires, focus groups, and observational counting of different variables. Expectancy violation theory has customarily been tested in experimentally manipulated settings (e.g., Burgoon & LePoire, 1993; Burgoon, Newton, Walther, & Baesler, 1989; Burgoon & Walther, 1990; Coleman et al., 1995; Comstock et al., 1995; Jussim et al., 1996; Koermer & Petelle, 1991; LePoire & Burgoon, 1994). The use of expectancy violation theory (EVT) was beneficial in this specific qualitative study because the design allowed students to establish their own baseline descriptors for older/younger students and their expectations regarding communication behaviors and the classroom communication interaction. After an extended period of time the students were then allowed to elaborate on their own interpretations of expectancy confirmation or

violation. An added benefit in testing the valence aspect of EVT was that the students also stated in their own words how they felt about the violations. The students provided a conversational naturalistic interpretation of their perceptions of the interaction, the students involved, and the communicate climate in their individual labs.

Interesting emergent findings were "two-sided" violations, such as the eighteen-year-old student who expected the communication interaction to be more comfortable among younger students and less comfortable with older students. Her own age range (the high reward people) violated her positive expectations, while the older students (the low reward people) were given the attribution of positively violating her negative expectations, even though there were no older students in her lab!

Research Question Three (RQ3) asked how the mix of ages in the college classroom affected student interaction and the communication climate. By their own accounts classroom communication interaction was natural for some people and almost unthinkable for others. The emergent finding from general comments made during the second round of interviews pointed to the centrality of the instructor in structuring the opportunity for interaction, while allowing the individual students to participate within their own comfort level. These findings were confirmed through comments contained in the instructor opinion survey. The most recent studies involving academic achievement based on age ratio (Bowman, 1989), age as a determinate of classroom communication participation (Howard et. al., 1996) and perceptions of classroom environment/climate (Klick, 1994), did not specifically address the mediating role of the instructor in structuring student-student interaction. Comments from students in the current study supported a recent study of peer-peer interaction (Fassinger, 1995) which found that

"even though professors do not directly affect class participation, it seems likely that they shape classroom dynamics indirectly through class norms and structures they help create with their students" (p. 33).

Limitations of the Study

While the descriptive stereotypical portraits provided a rich base for expectancy confirmation or violation after interaction over time in the mixed-age classroom, several limitations should be mentioned. These limitations prevented full investigation into RQ3 regarding the influence of age mix on interaction and communication climate. First, because of the totally random assignment to labs from the general lecture sections, some classes actually a very narrow range of ages. Several of the labs had a fairly high ratio of students older than twenty-three or twenty-four. This provided a completely natural environment for interaction, but the fact that one lab with all very young students was also a very "quiet" lab could have been due the individual students, the lab instructor, or a combination of factors. Likewise, the more "talkative" labs whose students identified the communication climate as very energetic, interactive, and productive may have had talkative individuals, the lab instructor may have been more involved in structuring interaction, or a combination of other factors.

While there was a wide range of majors represented, the student sample came from a communication course, which by definition is more active and requires a degree of participation. The fact that there were thirteen lab instructors conducting sixteen labs in various time formats may have influenced the student-student interaction as well as the teacher-student interaction and classroom communication climate. The sample contained students who were taking either two 1-1/2-hour day classes or one 3-hour night class.

Factors such as the location, size, and time of the lab sessions and the comparative length of the sessions may have affected individual perceptions of the class communication interaction and the resulting communication climate within each class, which factors were beyond the scope of this study and cannot be determined.

Future Research

The fact that communication scholars have not focused on this fertile area of classroom research indicates a need for further investigation. While student-teacher interaction (Beebe & Butland, 1994; Comstock, Rowell, & Bowers, 1995; Fusani, 1994; McGukin & Seiler, 1987; Pearson & West, 1991; West & Pearson, 1994) is definitely an important area, student-student interaction (Bowman, 1989; Howard et al., 1996; Klick, 1994) is critical to classroom cognitive and affective outcomes. Daly and Korinek (1980) pointed to the fact that "classroom interaction is clearly a major concern for communication scholars. It is surprising and disappointing that so few who identify with the communication discipline are found on the rolls of researchers" (p. 528). Current communication researchers could lead the way into an important new research design for instructional investigation by acknowledging a multicultural or continuum approach to age in the classroom. Future communication research could document the crucial role of the instructor as facilitator/mediator for communication interaction among students of all ages.

Suggestions for future research include the use interviews and focus groups to further investigate perceptions of students in the mixed-age classroom. Focus groups and interviews could further pursue student perceptions of differential treatment by professors identified in the current study. Experimental research could include classes in which the

lab instructor is an informed participant in structuring levels of interaction. Other experiments could control for age ratio in the classroom samples, such as classes with no age range, a large range, and varying numbers of students of various ages.

The use of expectancy violation theory provided a viable avenue for future research studies. As stated in Burgoon et al. (1996) the mere physical presence of others affects the way interaction develops. Not explicit in this theory regarding communication interaction is how a third person, such as an instructor, might positively or negatively mediate that interaction and the resulting communication climate of the classroom. Future communication studies could investigate this question. Experimental and observational studies could investigate various levels of instructor involvement with students to test the perceptions of students with the actual interaction in the mixed-age classroom.

Conclusion

This study examined student perceptions concerning verbal and nonverbal communication of students of various ages using Burgoon's expectancy violation theory as a theoretical base. The purpose was to construct a descriptive portrait of the mixed-age classroom. Interview responses documented the multicultural aspect of age in the college classroom, provided a challenge to current research studies using age as a categorical variable. The descriptive matrix constructed from two rounds of interviews indicated that there are stereotypical assumptions about the communication behaviors of "older" and "younger" students. These assumptions are often refuted by descriptions of the students themselves. Further, extended interaction allows students of all ages to

experience and interpret their own expectancy confirmations or violations with possible resultant changes in attitude toward others.

Based on this study's findings, important for future research designs is the confirmation from the participants' own words that communication characteristics are not age-dependent. They are part of each individual's personality, background, and upbringing. Age therefore may not be a categorical defining variable for research studies, but rather an important piece of demographic background information. However, the combination of a range of ages mediated by an instructor sensitive to the background and experiences of all students is an integral component affecting the quality of communication interaction, the resulting classroom climate, and the individual student's affective perception of the students in that class. Communication scholars can build on this research by taking a leading role in this new direction and working with other disciplines to test these findings.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTION OF "OLDER" STUDENT

Age	
18	Like my dad – 30s, late 20s; O more comfortable asking questions, more experienced more intent; sit there and listen; more respect for knowledge the teacher has. More experienced, married.
18	O=30.; Sit in front; ask more questions
18	Senior..
18	Communicate better, more mature, more knowledgeable
18	35+; closed minded, narrow and bitter, very pompous, conceited, and set in their ways, don't want to hear what anybody else has to say. They just feel like they can spit out what they want to say and that should be enough and everyone should accept it as truth, and I don't like that.
18	O=24-35, talk more; asking lots of questions, slows our learning (40s, 50s); use harder words, higher vocabulary, act like they know everything, raise their hands a lot
18	30-40; sit closer to the front; argue more with Pr and what other people say; they challenge and discuss more.
18	O=28 and up, 20s; not as outgoing; associate with other people
18	30-40, all focused, prepared, all perfect
18	O=25 and up; Sit on front, talk more; know more about material, more into lecture; ask more questions
18	35 and up; they know more than we do; they bring in new ideas; pay attention
18	O =30s- 40s; sit in front; use big words, talking about things I'd never heard of, annoying because I just wanted to hear what the teacher had to say.
18	Late 20s, early 30s; more up to date with news, politics; more confident in your abilities
19	Over 20, upper classmen; I value an older person's opinion and what they have to say more.
19	25-40; adult is 30+; not as shy, more outgoing, don't have to prove anything or impress anyone; more mature, won't make stupid comments like some people.
19	Early 30s, Sit in front, more studious, talk more and give more examples
19	Late 20s-30s, Older than 21, Forties Participate more in learning; more interested in subject matter
20	O=30 and up.
20	O=30 and up, tend to speak up, have more experience, better grasp of subject matter; O are more centered, quiet, laid back Rely on experiences, tell how the world is for them, helps us get a picture in our mind how it might work for us. Sometimes talk too much.
20	30 and above; talk more; more focused; longer attention spans
21	O=30s, moms and dads, sit up front because they want to learn. Late 20s sit in between.
21	Talk more, 35 and up. One lady keeps going on and on way too much. More serious, more into learning
21	Over 35; NT do most talking, sit in front
21	40s and up; Wrinkles, gray hair, smell like cigarette smoke Talk more – explain too much; More into class; More willing to put forth ideas
22	O=35 and up, talk more. Are more articulate.
22	Older than me; Involved; Attentive; Mature; Focused; Sit in front
22	O=35; know it all, talk a lot; trying to really be there and learn and stuff
22	NT not straight from h.s; 30 and up; take more active participation, understand importance of why they are here

TABLE 1 (Cont.)

23	O=30-40; talk more; more political knowledge
23	Older than me; 50 is one of the older; more direct, blunt; more focused
23	Some are more outgoing and forward.
23	O=30s. Sit middle to front. Take lots of notes. Point them out by the way they look. More prepared.
23	Older talk more, the NT, late 20s, early 30s; sit closer to front; ask more questions; are more respectful; act more like they are at a job
23	Over 28; ask questions, more mature, concerned with helping other students
23	O=26-30 and up; verbal is less jivey talking, more focused
23	O=35-45, talk more; sit closer to Pr. Take things more seriously.
25	Sit toward front; late 20s, 30s and up; have priorities set; sense of patience; 25 and up NT; larger vocabulary, short and to the point
25	Older students talk more; late 20s, 30s and up; very friendly, enthusiastic; sometimes too much into it, hold the class back by asking too much
25	O tend to sit together
26	Over 23. Older 40s, 50s sitting there philosophizing about life.
26	O=25 and up
26	30s – jump out and ask questions. More here for education, paying attention, taking notes, reading books; know when to talk or shut up and appropriate tone of voice or topic
26	27 and up.
27	25 and older talk more
28	Over 25; more confident, know their goal
28	40-ish, 25 and up; write lots of notes
28	O=25-40, sit in front; more experienced, talk more; articulate more
28	O=25-30 and up. Give more input, seem more from the outside world
29	Over 30; Talk more, more dedicated, serious, on the ball.
29	30ish, more reserved; older older students communicate among themselves (40 and up)
35	O=mid-30s. Sit in front; participate more
33	O = 25 and up. O contribute to discussions, give broader experiences
37	35 and up
39	Older than me – 50, 55, 60
45	O=28 and up. Pay more attention
48	Over 30. More studious. Express opinion based on experience; tend to sit together, hang around; more verbal
52	40-50
55	50s

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTION OF "YOUNGER" STUDENT

Age	
18	18-21; come to class and doze off
18	Sit in back
18	Easier to communicate with students your own age.
18	Forget what they were about to say, just blurt things out, really go off the subject.
18	Y are usually bright eyed and bushy tailed, naïve and new to it all, accepting new information. Immature, carefree, don't think; really open, don't care, say anything, help other people.
18	Y are always in back
18	18-24; Sit in back; not as motivated; talk and sit different.
18	Quiet in class; have to be with people their own age and have a good time, even in class Easier to talk to because you don't have to be something you are not, you can just be yourself
18	Relaxed, willing
18	
18	We take a lot of things for granted. They want to be right, have their say
18	
18	Clique-ish, argue with Pr over stupid things; talk about dates. More free to speak out in class, willing to learn and ask questions
19	Ask more questions, loud, outspoken.
19	18-25
19	Sit middle to back, more shy. Open-minded, very creative, straightforward, opinionated
19	Bored; Worrying about party on Saturday night
20	O and Y both ask questions. Y use more slang, jargon. My age group (19-21) have a lot in common, on the same level, it's a lot easier to communicate.
20	Y=17-20, look and act real young.
20	Not really want to get on track, ban together; 18-24 or 29 and below; more laid back and informal talk Y attention span not as long, don't want to communicate and get involved.
21	You feel really dumb when O look around like "she doesn't know that?" Y talk about stupid stuff.
21	Not there for actual learning, just sit in class, talk about weird stuff, 17-22
21	Sit in back, frat groups together
21	Act like still in high school; 18-29 and think they know what they are talking about but not really
22	Y use more slang, cuss more Divide 18-21. There's a big difference between 18 and 24.
22	18-20; Sit in back; Not as focused; Don't think about what they're saying, more verbal; More free-flowing; clique-ish
22	Sit in back, casual attitude, feel frustrated when O get longwinded and we just let them to it, and we don't do much. We all know what we are talking about, the MTV generation, it's easier to communicate.
22	T is somebody who has not had any experience in the real world. T came to college because parents expected them to.
23	Y=under 25. 25-35 are "ideal..career students".
23	Quieter; 18-20
23	O make more abstract comments
23	Not as serious, ask irrelevant questions, silly. Sit in back.
23	Y kids sit and back and talk, not pay attention; 18 to 24-25; more immature

TABLE 2 (Cont.)

23	16-17; 18-20 socialize together, very clique-ish, 21-27 communicate more
23	Not as committed as O, lots of talking; aggressive, not very respectful or friendly; want to look cool and be cool, want to exude this whole image
23	18-20;Sit on back row, don't care about what Pr has to say; don't want to hear what O have to say, just want to get on with what Pr has to say.
25	Ready to get out of class and do the next thing; Y ramble on most of the time.
25	20 and younger; More immature, not together, late to class
25	Talk more among selves and sit together, talk about parties; talk with O about class
26	Talk more in class; more animated, nonverbal, energetic; go into mid to late 20s.
26	Y more open in expressing themselves
26	In class because of friends, more concerned with what they are wearing and hanging out with; eager to impress the Pr., sit on the front row; young person not as aware when to talk or shut up
26	Younger than me. Some classes Y participate more depending on subject matter. Definite distinction 18-21 high school is still fresh, parties.
27	Sit in back; lack of experiences being around different types of people they tend not to communicate
28	19-25 are younger and do most of the talking; seek help of other people
28	Y=under 27; have that confidence already
28	18-24, Sit in back; more shy, more reserved
28	Y talk more; aren't intimidated as O who may feel out of place. Just blurt things out w/o knowing what they are saying.; are in their own little world, parties, real outgoing. Some reach maturity before 25 and some much younger.
29	More social, talking to friends, seem real bright, 18-19. the slang and they talk a lot
29	Obnoxious, inexperienced.
30s	Sit in back. 18-24 are partying, socializing.
33	Y is fresh out of high school. Y different viewpoint of what is important; everything is a crisis, it's distracting
37	18-20; Anyone younger than me
39	18-20; sit in back and talk; they treated me like an old person, rolling eyes, way they were sitting, I wasn't one of them, I felt horrible.
45	18-22,24. Varies on maturity level. Talk about last night, personal things, get bored easily
48	Y=18-19. Intelligent, more carefree, get stressed out easily. Very inquisitive. Divide 20-30 into middle – some are more mature and others not.
52	Late teens; acting crazy
55	Young man made me feel comfortable; no age gap there; young people not thinking as seriously. More lively, don't have a care in the world

TABLE 3
DESCRIPTION OF SELF

Age	
18	Serious-minded, studious, **don't talk much**; like to **listen** Sit close to front
18	**Interactive**, good notetaker. Sit in back on the side
18	Outgoing, fun, **talkative**. Sit near front
18	Procrastinator. **I think about what I'm going to say** and whether it relates to the topic, not just say whatever comes into my head. Sit between front and middle.
18	Tenacious, enthusiastic, interested. Sit in the middle center.
18	Positive attitude, studious. Sit 3rd row middle
18	Procrastinator; energetic, pretty direct.
18	Punctual, hardworking, **don't talk**. Sit front row right.
18	Hardworking, outgoing, **talkative; focused.** Sit in 2nd row
18	Attentive, motivated, hardworking. Sit middle to front
18	Procrastinate, like to learn; a **listener.** Me personally I don't like to speak at all. Sit in middle to the front.
18	Hardworking, interested, **not talkative**, afraid I'll say something stupid. Sit in back.
18	Shy, not outgoing, **like to listen**. Sit front row on side
19	Responsible, **a listener**. Sit middle center
19	**Shy, listening;** Sit in middle to front
19	Good student, good **listener**. Don't pay much attention to who asks questions. I'm trying to learn by everybody else asking questions. Sit in middle to back.
19	Very organized, really dedicated, studious. Sit front row.
19	Dedicated; **Speak up if I have a comment or question** Sit in front.
20	Inquisitive, like to participate, **listen.** Sit in front center.
20	Hardworking; look around and **observe. I don't talk just to talk** like a lot of other people are doing. Sit back left. *(In lab he says one of the older people because most are freshmen!)*
20	Hardworking, over-achiever, procrastinator; **talkative**. Sit toward the front.

TABLE 3 (Cont.)

21	Eager, outgoing, **talkative**; more comfortable with my age, you can talk and not pay attention. Sit in back.
21	Commuter; serious, patient; concerned more about grades and how we perform in class, finally realizing what college is all about. Sit near the front to one side.
21	Works alone, commuter, good grades, **don't talk much.** Sit 3rd row middle.
21	Good student; **Say anything** and sometimes doesn't come out like it sounds. Sit in middle.
22	Procrastinator, good **listener**, shy, like to blend in. Sit in back side or middle.
22	Mature for my age; punctual; studious; outgoing; **talkative**
22	Take notes, **observe**. (I'm kind of on the edge, some Y are just here and haven't seen the seriousness of what they are doing in school, don't pay attention. You can't depend on them to get stuff done) Sit 2nd row middle.
22	Serious, studious, open to other people and ideas. Sit near front center.
23	Above average, easygoing; **don't talk much.** Sit in front left. O sit behind me.
23	Knowledgeable, persistent, more of a **listener.** Sit front row, left of center
23	**Quiet**, calm, analytical. Sit in back in the corner.
23	Hardworking, **observant**, outgoing. Sit in front side.
23	Hardworking, good quitter, undecided, **talk as little as possible.** Sit in back or middle.
23	Organized
23	Intense, hardworking, not always consistent. Sit on front row.
23	Serious, cautious, studious, **talkative** in small groups; Not like my age. I'm more settled than people my age, don't have a lot in common with them. I'm a senior now and I take things more seriously. Sit middle side.
25	Studious, hardworking. Sit in front.
25	Hardworking. Sit near the middle and back.
25	**Not very talkative**; one of the older ones Sit in front.
26	Motivated, interested, **don't participate much**; See myself as an O student Sit middle to back on the side.
26	Motivated, **quiet**; sometimes feel out of place; assertive. Sit in front.
26	Dedicated, tired, "born-again student." **Don't talk much**; "an older student" Sit in middle side.
26	Good student, motivated. Sit in front side.
27	Goal-oriented; I'm one of the O people. Sit in front.
28	Studious, dedicated, hardworking; tend to be bossy Sit in middle
28	Diligent, inquisitive, straightforward. Sit middle front row.

TABLE 3 (Cont.)

28	Procrastinator, intelligent, good student, willing to learn. **I listen and speak up when I think there is something to be said**, take everyone's feelings into consideration in a communication situation. Sit in the middle.
28	Keep informed, take good notes. **Listen** and pay attention Sit in front side
29	Active; talk more to the point, **sit and think about what I'm going to say** before I say it. Sit in middle close to front.
29	Hardworking, persistent, attention to detail; **ask a lot of questions.** Sit in front.
30s	Good student, good GPA, dedicated. Sit 1st or 2nd row.
33	Hardworking, high GPA, dedicated, focused, **talk a lot.** Sit front and center.
37	Scared. Sit in front.
39	Dedicated, committed, extroverted. Sometimes you feel left out in a class full of younger people. Sit in front.
45	Dedicated, committed, like to learn, **not very talkative.** Sit to the front on the edge.
48	Interested, excited about what I'm doing, aggressive. Have a tendency to be more of a mother. Sit in front right.
52	Frightened and nervous; shy. I like thinking young. I don't want to get old. I enjoy acting crazy just like them.
55	Nervous. Know what we want in life.

TABLE 4
EXPECTATIONS

Age	
18	If everybody is willing to listen to everybody else's thought and opinions, it will work well.
18	Middle aged ladies in late 20s are conceited; Older people don't like that. O have a lot to offer in experience. O are more interesting than Y; more willing to discuss things and be more open about things
18	
18	
18	The big gap.
18	O will be hard to make friends with Y because they are O and different, not like us. I just want to go to class and sit there. O ask lots of questions (upper 20s and 30s). Good point is better understanding for both. It's a new thing and I think it's neat. BUT it may slow the class down, ask stupid questions, already gone over that "turn your hearing aid up"
18	Going to be interesting. Maturity has a lot to do with it. Y aren't as motivated sometimes One lady (earlier class) disgusted me because she could not listen to anything without having to talk about it, she always talked so much it was really hard to get through the lesson and to get anything done. It's not a bad thing for students to talk, but it was frustrating.
18	O will be more mature about questions, higher maturity level, want an explanation about things. Y just want to get the work done and move on. O ask more questions and want more elaborate answers, and that helps me out because I'm too intimidated to ask a question.
18	O not as social, don't talk to many other people, always at attention, can't relax; Y more relaxed and more willing. Will be a challenge. O make me want to rise up to their level. Don't know if it helps them or not, haven't talked to them.
18	O totally different generations, sit closer and interact more; Y may be apprehensive at that and feel uncomfortable.
18	O more involved, Y communicate as well but learn more from O. If it's just Y we are not going to participate because we are scared our first year, O would start conversations and communication in classroom, then we would participate; they would encourage us to participate more.
18	O will ask more questions. "Maybe when I get older I'll get a little more used to people and be able to communicate better."
18	
19	O will ask more questions and be more interested in learning.
19	O are more mature and won't say stupid things
19	Everybody just seems to get along. Everybody just tries to find one kind of language. Some people might not say the same things, so you try to find a combination, just meet up the middle, just try to get along.
19	O will have more experiences or words of wisdom, more comfortable talking to all ages. Y will stick to own age groups.
19	Lab is for people who like to interact, I prefer to sit back
20	Everybody will pretty much participate the same, but O people will put in more input.
20	Y don't like to speak up.
20	It will be easier for people the same age to communicate and they are going to tend to ban together a little more.
21	We're all the same age so it's just different personalities.
21	Will be good if everyone does their share

TABLE 4 (Cont.)

Age	
21	NT will try to take charge, keep it organized and on task, try to get most out of class. Y will be joking, talking about last weekend, won't pay attention
21	If there are more older students I don't know if I would be more inhibited
22	The Y are definitely going to be more vocal, really outspoken. O would definitely talk less.
22	Will be fun; Beneficial all the way
22	O (35-40) more aware of nonverbal and verbal skills and can adapt to different situations. Negative if O think we are all stupid and don't know anything, but good when they are open and enlighten us, just depending on the person.
22	Going to be different in the way people relate because the T are coming from different perspective. There's not much diversity in my lab, it is not going to benefit the students as much because people learn from different situations.
23	Don't think it's going to work well. O and Y different vocabulary; Y profanity, O drag out discussions and use life experiences, a lot of analogies and stuff.
23	O are not going to have a problem, Y will get used to it; O ask more questions, will probably even out
23	We should interact, get along, have a sense of humor, didn't notice any age differences
23	More challenging, I have to try harder. Y are funny and it takes me back. I don't know if O are going to feel like it's more challenging with us in there, but it will be for me to have O in there.
23	It depends on personalities and stuff. Some students don't like when an O student asks a question, they sigh and just wish they wouldn't, like they are holding up the class or something, and some students don't mind.
23	
23	Want the environment to be about learning, not just about grades.
23	It will be interesting to see those who are 18 coming in with O people to see whether they will listen or just blow them off. It's interesting because you always have something to learn whether it's somebody O or Y than you are interacting with. From 22-25 there are lots of changes. Y need to speak up more and give opinions, and O should sit back and give quieter students a chance.
25	Y more childish, 22-24 more mature, adult students won't talk much, just go in and sit down
25	O students make you....sometimes the Y are kind of ostracized, but for the most part I've always enjoyed having O students, they understand more about things like trying to make a living, etc. (Refers to self as "older" student)
25	Looking forward to it
26	O will have more technical reserved answer and Y will squawk because they broke a nail or something. (But...) There are some O people who communicate well and some who don't and the same with Y.
26	O more serious and involved. Over 35 might be uncomfortable, different cultural things, awkward.
26	Good – learn a lot from older students, interesting. Older people and young kids help balance things out, preparing for the real world where there is nonstop mixed ages.
26	The younger ones are still talking about high school stuff they did.
27	A real reluctance to talk and communicate. I envision some resentments in Y about O asking questions that don't seem as important as dorms or clubs...
28	Younger will be very comfortable speaking, will help everybody.
28	Everybody seems to contribute, pretty equal; two ends of the spectrum. A big challenge would be to get people to open up.
28	I wouldn't think age would matter, it would be the amount of interaction a person has had. Some people of 22 have more interactions than some people of 35, so I don't think age would be a factor. Like listening to older, have more to say. I hope I can give as much as I am saying that the O group has given in the past, and I hope I can be that way in my classes..
28	Expect lab to run smoothly, only one other student is shy like me. Don't believe it's the age, it's just individually. If a person is afraid to speak it doesn't matter if they are teens, 33, 25. They are still going to be afraid.
29	It's more of a class system, lower class and snobs..more to do with fraternities and cliques.

TABLE 4 (Cont.)

Age	
29	It depends on the people, if they have some kind of hangup, having to deal with younger people. It's good because you get a lot of points of view like what you get out there in the real world. It would just be a benefit to everyone to get that kind of mixed input from different age groups.
35	Think it will work well because everybody brings different perspectives, variety of ideas. Same challenges you see in the real world.
33	Different age groups and experiences will benefit everybody. Your personality, style, how comfortable. If they are shy they are not going to speak up whether they are 40 or 18. I don't think age has anything to do with it.
37	I have more experience, so it will be interesting. We can come out of our shells as well as the young kids and we can do it just like they can; they are just like we are
39	If they don't perform right away and live up to minimum participation I might start making judgments based on age.
45	Depends on people and activity. Some are more open, outgoing; others are more introverted. Tendency to be more motherly than student-student. Talking depends on subject and how much you know about it; some Y don't want to hear from experiences but others really do what to hear
48	I sit back and see where everyone is coming from and try to bring the shy ones out. I've always done that. Y have a limited view, not as sensitive to how other people will react. O try to communicate a little better. Comm depends on the personality, how at ease they feel.
52	Some of the Y might be working hard just like us but we don't know, and others are just quiet, they don't talk about things.
55	We know what we want. We're going to try to make it. We have to consider the young people who work and go to class and appreciate them.

TABLE 5
CONFIRMATION

Age	
18	The O is good at getting us to communicate. I enjoy having O people in class, different perspectives, opinions, never had any problems interacting with them
18	
18	
18	It's a little awkward. If I were an O student I would feel strange. It's better now we're more mature. They don't make us feel dumb for being Y and we don't make them feel different for being O. So it goes away...the age thing really goes away.
18	
18	This other class there's an O guy and it's kinda annoying, because they think they know everything and they are so much better than every one else, like "Why are you even in here" Maybe you should have a job or something."
18	O try to get more out of the lecture, ask a lot more questions, want to know more background. Y tend to keep quiet. O are more serious about education. Y ones right now are just kind of there, not really taking time out to learn stuff.
18	Even in our groups we are just too intimidated to ask questions about each other. If we had had some O in there to ask more questions...it's like an inspiration that pushes me to want to do more, like they are pushing themselves and I can push myself and do that and get motivated.
18	Got to know more people, talk more about class and in general, better than I expected.
18	
18	
18	
18	
19	
19	
19	I really don't see the difference with different age groups in the class. Everybody is there to learn.
19	O do talk more. O are more influential, have more to say, come with more wisdom, life experiences.
19	O speak up and seem more interested, will ask questions
20	
20	
20	But age might be a factor, like you might feel intimidated and not want to communicate..like if I were the only person in a room of 50-60 people over 30, I might feel out of place. But if it's mixed, you know, if you have someone there with you you'll be OK.
21	
21	At first nobody wanted to respond, but now it's more open and everybody is more comfortable giving thoughts and opinions
21	No lab age interaction, but it would be helpful, wiser, coming back who have been working in the field and stuff.
21	O talk a lot, sometimes too much. It's very distracting and irritating. Couple of Y really talk a lot.
22	Lab has been very vocal and Y cuss more. The one guy looks older and more mature, he definitely helped with the group project, he contributed to the group, but he wasn't overbearing or anything. That's the only close interaction I've had.
22	O is very focused
22	It's really weird, because it's just basically the type of person you are dealing with. One class the O are really helpful and use their experience in a positive way. My other class they always just jump in and think they know it all. So I think it's just the type of person you're dealing with, not necessarily because of their age. But the O do seem to be insightful and know a lot more, and they can use it positively or negatively. In groups the O person and I were trying to get things done, maybe because we are more serious students or something, but the other ones (Y) had these side conversations and talking.

TABLE 5 (Cont.)

Age	
22	Majority of class is freshmen; a lot of them don't care about the course, makes it hard for those of us that are actually interested in it. Not as much dedication to learning or to participate. I respect other people's opinions and comments and it facilitates discussion a lot. In classes with a wider range of age the discussion is a lot better.
23	
23	The O sometimes have a lot of questions and Y are like "I wish that guy would shut up" but the different viewpoints, life experiences, it integrates and works really well. Everybody talks, good interaction. Upperclassmen have a chance to share experiences and help the Y out. If it was just a class of freshmen there would probably still be some quietness.
23	
23	
23	I knew I was going to be nervous when I was talking, the self-fulfilling prophecy thing.
23	
23	Y are less task oriented, but some are really interested in what has to be done. Being different ages..it doesn't really matter so much, just if they are good students.
23	
25	Y joked around a lot more; we got right down to it, my group had mostly seniors so didn't have as many "dysfunctional" members. Having O did have an influence on our group work. Y attention span is smaller.
25	Sometimes there is a little intimidation from O and Y and vice versa. You relax and communicate better with your own age because you have that thing in common.
25	Everybody has been treated equally in the class. It's been really relaxed, and blended in so you can't tell there is that age difference.
26	O and Y should interact more in social things, clubs, campus events.
26	O are more quiet in some respects, sometimes more cynical
26	
26	Y talk more, different content, like Spring Break. With O it's more content, explanations and detail. When I hear an O student speak it like they have thought about it, whereas with the Y student they just start babbling and throwing things out and it doesn't sound like they know what they are going to say or what they are going to answer.
27	
28	
28	
28	I'm a little intimidating in my appearance but I will always listen to the Y ones because they have so much to say on so many things that are important. Sometimes they are stubborn as to newer ideas, not thinking through the whole scope of ideas. It has stayed truer to the O student being a little more active. O seemed to catch on, the way they communicate with each other. The Y weren't real sure of the answers but the O would talk among themselves and try to figure it out. We were really hard-driven to figure out the right answer and they were just like kind of doing the exercise.
28	I'm a little different from others because I have always been shy about speaking, If I had been Y and in the same situation it would have been the same.
29	
29	My impressions were that Y people are kind of inexperienced; the class has reinforced that. The Y and their views – I was more turned off by that.
35	That's the way it's going to be out in the world, all ages, races, their own life experience. Everybody has so much to bring. It doesn't matter what your age group. I enjoy talking to someone that's 18 and I think they enjoy talking to me, and I also enjoy talking to someone who is 50 or 60.
33	It has helped me be more patient, and realize that they've got great viewpoints too. Getting the Y viewpoints and different cultures. It's been better than I expected.
37	

TABLE 5 (Cont.)

Age	
39	The age groups seem to have migrated toward each other, very brief activities at the beginning, then nothing since then.
45	Groups are very interactive, everybody participating, a couple of Y have their own opinion, definitely a difference between them and me. I've been working toward more of a student-student interaction. I brought a different perspective to the groups and what they were thinking
48	I'd like to encourage the barriers with Y and my age group. They look at me at times like "You're not in my age group" and they are real quiet around me. If we could be allowed to interact and share...my experiences could relate to them, to things they might not have given any thought to yet, and I could say "You know, she's got a point there."
52	The Y – I don't feel different just because I'm O. I feel very comfortable.
55	

TABLE 6
VIOLATIONS

Age	
18	
18	
18	Y use cuss words , using profane language, not as appropriate as adult language.
18	
18	I don't really like the M-A class room. I don't like them. The O women in my class seem to be pretty easy to work with except for one who is really stuck in her ways, she won't listen to anyone else. It just varies from class to class. The two O students you get a different perspective from them. I've really learned a lot in there. They are like that, but not to such extremes. The lab with people of different ages, it's kinda fun.
18	It was harder for us to come up with a little song because we were like we care what everybody thinks about us, like or friends and stuff might think we were stupid, but the O people would come up with silly...like they didn't really care what people think. They are more experienced, really calm, not as nervous, and more creative. They are more comfortable because they are O and don't really care what other people think. It's not as much in this class. I think we can learn from the O people. With the M-A it's more interesting. I like it so far. It keeps you on your toes.
18	
18	I thought it would be more open and talkative, but it's not.
18	
18	
18	Thought because they are O they are going to speak more, are wiser and know more, but NO it depends on their personality. At first I was intimidated by the O lady and thought that she was going to think what I said was dumb. Because she was older she would tell me what I'm doing wrong, but she's really open-minded. I think most O people are and we should be open-minded to what they have to say too. I thought they would show us more of what they had learned out of experiences. But she's just as outgoing, a procrastinator just like us. She's just like us. Age doesn't matter at all. I was very intimidated by her. I thought because she was O she would take charge, and just go in there and tell everyone what they should do! But no, she's a really sweet lady. She sat right next to me and I never talked to her until this one activity. I think the other Y think maybe she'' mean or something because they haven't taken the time to get to know her.
18	
18	I expected more about speaking, more insight into what people do and what's effective for public speaking. It's been more class interaction, getting into groups, discussing experiences.
19	Beginning of class was more intimidating because no one really knew each other. Everybody seems more friendly and more open. Ones more genuinely interested participate actively regardless of age and sit in front, and I can hear them discussing
19	
19	
19	That has changed, this semester as far as communicating within groups, I don't think I treat anyone differently because of their age. I think we are on an equal basis, everyone is here to get an education.
19	I expected more interaction. A lot of us are working alone so the group process has been eliminated for the most part. It's not as comfortable an environment; people are hesitant to disclose and get to know each other.
20	I now believe that it's the personality, not the age that makes a difference. In past experiences the O people would speak out more, but the O lady in class doesn't speak hardly at all. So I think it's just a personality thing. But Y are more outspoken. When I first got into the class I expected that the age difference would make a difference, that O people would put in more input, but I realize that it's more personality than age.
20	All Y tend to be loud and proud. I expected I was going to be in class with a bunch of Y students, but it's only 2 years, that shouldn't make too much of a difference...but it does, because they are all talking about partying and stuff and I'm like "Come on, I've been through all that!". It's real different.

TABLE 6 (Cont.)

Age	
20	It's really more of the individual and what their interests are...there's a whole bunch of other variables involved in the communication process...the interest you have in a subject, the physical aspects, and possibly the culture too. There's 2 or 3 who are active and have been active throughout the semester
21	
21	
21	All Y have things in common, but not a wide range of information
21	So far I don't think it inhibits younger students not to talk or older students to talk more. Haven't had as much group comm as I thought there would be
22	I still believe the M-A is good, but when people go on and on it's like "Oh, them again?", like people aren't listening to them any more. O in other classes – I have only come across outspoken ones (30s) who are irritable, it's like they don't even listen when other people have points of view. It's annoying.
22	Y have opened up much more
22	
22	Thought there would not be as much interaction with other students.
23	
23	I didn't expect to do so much group work and interaction. That exceeded my expectations. The Y were quiet at first and now talking up a storm.
23	I expected it to be a lot more socializing than there has been. It hasn't filled out the range of what I thought it would be.
23	
23	Don't think the older ladies are that much different from the other students. Everyone is pretty much the same.
23	
23	It turned out a lot better. I surprised myself at being able to have confidence in that big group of people.
23	A sophomore girl was very outspoken and had a leader role. I usually find that O tend to speak a lot more, but she was really outspoken.
25	I was real naïve.. Y who are freshmen actually have quite a bit to say. I've really been surprised by a lot of them; high level of maturity, some more than I am, really mature for their age. I was really impressed by that. Girls are more mature than guys.
25	This group moves more together than usually. It seems like there's not anyone who asks too many questions. There's not really anyone who wants to race ahead either. It's just more of that everyone is unified in their activity.
25	The one O lady didn't speak as much as the rest of the class, but she did say things, not as much as others perhaps.
26	You kind of characterize each individual student rather than by the age group. The 2 or 3 O students tend to take more time to think about what they are going to talk about, but there are some Y students who do that too. I think it's a characteristic of the way they learn and their upbringing.
26	I don't give enough credit to Y, like making a judgment and find out it isn't true. Actually I've been really impressed with a lot of the Y people in my class.
26	
26	Everybody still wants to apeak at once. I expected more working toegher and there hasn't been a whole lot of that. Everybody is just in such a rush to get out of there.
27	I found that more apprehension came from me and the two O students in revealing things or in talking. It's been mostly the Y students in class who have been very eager to talk and answer questions out loud. The girls who are 18-19 are way more comfortable speaking out about things that I never heard from girls my age at that time. The vocabulary, the content, ev er y thing! I never knew girls to be this way.

TABLE 6 (Cont.)

Age	
28	Some Y are more outgoing that expected, real pushy, blurt out their emotions, use foul language – really a negative point with me. Don't think the class has opened up as much as it should. I felt nervous in front of the 27 students even though I'm used to speaking in front of 65 people every month at work. That was really something new to me.
28	I guess it takes them a while to get over their first fear. Towards the end I was sitting back and listening and not really saying much to participate, just to hear the other ideas, to listen to the way they would build on the ideas we had put out originally. There isn't as big a difference as I thought; everybody is contributing. I know what the Y ones are going through because I've been through it, I still consider myself one of them. I don't think age necessarily has a factor in it. It's more your experiences while you are growing up, if you have had that opportunity in your family to kind of say what you want and you don't get into trouble for it.
28	We've had some real outgoing Y students that are different from the norm, more and more are coming out and talking more. Y are more educated, more confident among themselves in smaller groups, and quiet in the larger forum. I think they have some really good ideas, the Y kids, and we don't hear as many of them . It's been different that what I expected, and more pleasing. I thought I was going to be really nervous going up and speaking. The class has got a pretty good chemistry together and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.
28	In my lab it didn't seem to be a difference, but I'm sure there are some where the O students go to one corner and try to avoid mixing in with others.
29	When we first started they were real quiet and didn't hardly say anything… toward the end it's almost argumentative. It's like they say "now I've got something to say". So just getting comfortable with one another in the smaller group.
29	Wasn't as involved in class as I thought I would be.
33	I expected it to be a little more formal. Y don't have the experience, when people are trying to talk, hearing what they say before interjecting what thoughts are on the tip of their tongue. They are more focused on what they are thinking, they are not hearing.
35	I'm really struggling to find something that they could relate to.
37	Thought it was going to be hard, but I'm not that far away agewise from them. Communication-wise we all speak about the same, at least from my side.
39	Thought it would be lots of real Y and I'd be in a class where no one could identify with me. It has not turned out that way at all. I anticipated some immature students who weren't serious about their work, were just there for the grade or the roll check, and that hasn't been the case.
45	
48	I felt apprehensive, yet we communicate and laugh and feel more comfortable about it. The personality and attitude are more important, and their background. Most converse very well.
52	
55	Maybe it's me. There is something about me that withdraws. I feel it's in my mind that they know more about the subject than what I do. I'm not very open in class and I try not to talk if I don't have to. I'm not myself. It's another person being there besides myself. It's like I have gone into a shell. (clamps hands together like an oyster shell). This course has made my self-esteem go down, way down.

TABLE 7
GENERAL COMMENTS

Age	
18	In your mid-20s you attitude toward life and other people starts to change. You think more about what you are going to do for the rest of your life. When you are 18 to 21 it's like you are just out there to have fun.
18	Pr.communicates better with O because they have had a lot of the same experiences and have families and stuff, and are on the same level. It's easier for him to communicate; he puts forth more of an effort to try to communicate with Y students.
18	They are just here to learn so they should be treated equally
18	One class has 3 O people and they aren't different and that's weird because I didn't think it would seem that way, but I forget they are older and everybody just interacts. It's a good experience for us as Y students who haven't interacted with adults on the same level rather than them being above us and teaching us. It's really good just having to speak with someone who is O but not any better than we are. It's a really good thing.
18	There is a big generation gap. Improvement – maybe talk about things that aren't so confrontational.
18	
18	
18	
18	Didn't have any O but most of the time in class they all have something to tell us that we didn't know in the beginning.
18	
18	We need to communicate as equals. She's very shy because she is the only older person. I think we Y adults should be the ones to approach the O people because they may be afraid to communicate with us because we are Y and they may be afraid to communicate with us because we are Y. We as Y adults should make the attempt to interact with everybody in the classroom.
18	Different age groups is nice because you hear different ideas and questions. "It's like interesting to hear what they have to say.
18	It has helped to get used to other students; it provides a diversity and allows you to interact with people who are different ages from you.
19	I really don't even notice the age difference. Everyone there is students.
19	
19	
19	
19	Some of us think we know it all and we should just sit back and get feedback from others.
20	
20	I thought the lab was going to be more group oriented. I think it would be hard to classify or label certain age groups as behaving a certain way, stereotype them, because it's more of an individual thing. I've seen Y who are ten times more talkative than the O. But I would tend to listen more to an O person than I would a Y students, especially when they are relying on experience.
20	
21	
21	Shy/outgoing all depends on the person, not whether they are older or younger. The ones who didn't talk a lot are still the ones who don't talk.
21	
21	

TABLE 7 (Cont.)

Age	
22	It was better than I thought it was going to be. Improvement – more group projects so you get used to the people around you. You get people who've had children, more education, you get a different perspective on life.
22	
22	More variety, different aspects from different people. The age factor definitely changes the experience that people have. It makes things rounder and changes our own perspective on things.
22	When I was 18 I probably wouldn't have wanted O students in class, but now I look forward to having them. They are a lot of fun to have in there.
23	
23	Y bring a fresh outlook. Some of us have been here for 4-5 years and are kinda tired; they bring some energy to it.
23	I like M-A, they are more able to share their experiences, give a different view or opinion. Students will be more competitive and will be more able to give their best if they are slacking off.
23	
23	Didn't have personal interaction with other-aged students that I noticed. (Wasn't there for small group night.)
23	Y could be more respectful, more patient, more creative, not belittling people.
23	When you are a student, you are there to do one thing. Talking more is not based so much on age, just based on the individual.
23	Just because you may be the same age doesn't mean that...some people act different than what they really are. Some people act O and just because some one's Y or a freshman doesn't mean everyone wants to party and that's all they think about. Or if you are O it doesn't mean you know everything. I think having that mix lets students learn some thing about everybody
25	Y have great ideas, we should work on de-creasing criticism of the Y. Intimidation was a factor in that we were O and more experienced, but the Y positively reinforced us. Y enjoyed participation as much as we O did.
25	One of the best parts about college is just to expose people from different environments, and age is definitely a factor in that.
25	
26	Our lab has a lot of integration, everybody is taking their own initiative to interact with other people. The only downside is that some O don'' want to interact with Y and some Y don't want to interact with O. They like to stick with their own, but that's just 10-15%.
26	It's not whether they are Y or O but the extroverts are going to be more spontaneous and more vocal. I don't think that has much to do with age. I feel intimidated sometimes, like I'm not Y enough or not O enough so I kind of feel awkward. I get along with both age groups, but I still feel awkward.
26	
26	I like the range of ages. It kind of pulls things together. I don't know what the age necessarily has to do with it. Sometimes it just comes from the individuals themselves.
27	The Y see their peer audience as being more judgmental where there is a more relaxed communication with us O students. It's cool seeing all types of ages of people in class. I've always thought that if you wake up every day of your life and you don't learn something, then you didn't have a very good day.
28	Y have no problem complaining; very seldom do they express communication when they want to do something. Sometimes I feel like I'm being shunned to the side. I feel I might have grown out of touch with Y
28	It seemed like they (Y) new it all, this attitude like "I know this" and I'm like "I've lived it". They didn't want to change. Need to be more open-minded.
28	O really don't care what anyone else thinks about what they say, so they are confident in what they are saying. Y always want to fit in and don't want anyone to think they are silly or stupid. (Older is over 25).

TABLE (Cont.)

Age	
28	
29	Between my age group and their group…say you assume something about them and after you talk you realize you are totally wrong, like you assume they like one kind of music and they like something totally different.
29	Some groups are just young and their views are whatever. Some would have a creative mix but that's just like the lottery.
35	You communicate and get to know them…Last week I was terrified about doing the speeches, but I looked out there at the class at people that I had worked with in groups and wasn't as terrified as I thought I would be.
33	Like to seek out Y up to my age to talk with. I don't like letting people know exactly how old I am just because sometimes I feel alienated, so I don't really let on that much. I've been real hesitant.
37	I'm starting to enjoy it now because I feel positive that I can make it in this class, that I can become somebody. The beginning was hard. I feel like I have aged many years, but with the help that I have from my teachers I feel I'll do all right. I've accomplished a damn lot.
39	Rather than a specific age it's students who feel at ease talking, usually it's women; level of comitment and interest and it could be any age
45	I try to be respective of their opinion whether I agree or not. Need to work on being more comfortable, saying my opinion and not worrying about what they say or think. The O the student gets, the more intense they are in what they are doing, whether it's because they have waited longer, it's taken longer, or just learning the experience of life itself and learning about different values and things.
48	It's good for people my age to be in groups with Y students. It helps you see things in a different way and communicate more easily. Sometimes if you have all people in the same age groups there is no diversity in there.
52	
55	

TABLE 8
MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Age	
18	
18	
18	
18	
18	I just wish we could be doing something useful, better exercises, more relevant.
18	I liked the lecture a lot better than lab. I have a few friends in there that we can all talk and stuff.
18	What we do in lab is really irrelevant to what we need to be doing. I don't feel we get a lot done
18	LI just tells us what to do, it's usually the same groups because we just turn our desks toward each other.
18	P talks to O more intellectual way; Y (18) more watered-down conversation. I kind of resent it like treating us as if there's a big gap, but there may not be. Our LI is younger and can identify with most of us.
18	I don't appreciate Pr putting down Y in front of class; more personable with O
18	Sitting in a circle or something and have everybody have to look at each other and not just sit beside each other every day, but sit beside somebody different and everybody could sit by this O person and get to know her.
18	
18	
19	Pr reach out to the O because that's who is listening and that's who cares. Thought lab was going to be a pain, but it's active and we do stuff.
19	
19	Pr teach at same level, no difference
19	Pr relates more to O
19	Subtle differences in Pr talk to Y and O. Having somebody preach at you for 1hr-15min. is unacceptable – give us a chance to participate.
20	We haven't done as much as I thought we would be doing. It's real rushed. The groups, we don't get to fully develop ideas and stuff like that. It should be more task oriented
20	Pr talk to O different. I can't put my finger on it, but there is something. LI is great, which helps a lot.
20	Don't think it makes too much of a difference because everyone is there pretty much for what they want to do, and it's really the Pr who gets involved more than it is the mixed age.
21	
21	
21	Some P try to get response from O, and others try not to talk to them because they have something to say about everything.
21	
22	
22	Pr encouraged interaction
22	Pr treat Fr. harder, more serious, trying to shock them into reality; upper level are more relaxed. LI made it cooler, classroom setting more relaxed, learned more than I thought I would.
22	
23	Pr more casual with O and takes them more seriously, more authoritative with Y.
23	Pr. Mixed O and Y in groups for discussions, everybody really learned a lot. Mixing the age groups, that's great. Once they get back into the classroom the Y and used to the O and not afraid to sit by somebody who is say 35. It won't freak 'em out any more.
23	
23	

TABLE 8 (Cont.)

Age	
23	When I'm in a class full of people my age…I feel less open, I may be judged more..students your own age look at you closer as opposed to the O students..you don't have to worry about them looking at you or judging you. It's a lot easier to do the work you are supposed to do when there's older students in class.
23	Pr seems more patient with O. There was good communication provided by the instructor.
23	LI knows my name, it's pretty personal, easy to communicate in there, open. Improvement: keep things more of a task-oriented level.
23	Pr talk more calm with O, more energy to get attention of Y. LI chose groups for us and I really liked that because it allowed us to meet everybody and have different kinds of communication. It's given me a variety in that class.
25	Pr shows more respect to O. We have a great TA
25	
25	Pr more respectful of O; can't really classify it. LI treated everyone equally, made everyone speak every class.
26	
26	Age probably has to do with the majority of whoever is in the class as far as the comfort level. The more comfort, the more verbal you are going to be. Whatever age is the majority will be more comfortable.
26	
26	Poor LI, they give him a guilt trip to get out early or blow things off, but he stands his ground.
27	I've learned from the Y too, like don't take everything so serious, don't be such a dork all the time, lighten up just a bit! It's cool seeing older older people, middle aged people, people my age who got out of college, got their feet wet a little bit, and then have gone right back in, to re-align what they were going to do. It says something for the kind of people we live around. It says something for the amount of colleges that we have, that people aren't limiting their learning to the first third of their lives.
28	Pr tries to make fun of O by making them laugh.
28	Pr would roll his eyes every time the O would go on about something. Sometimes he'd just cut him off.
28	LI really good at getting on our level. Improve – make sure all the students know that their opinion and their voices are necessary in the class, and that no one has a bad idea, help the listening skills and understanding where people are coming from. Just listening I think is the big key…the most important thing in communication.
28	O talk to Pr more comfortably. Improve – Not be so intimidated by the Y students. They tend to learn easier than we do. The other guy was not as inhibited as I had expected him to be.
29	
29	I thought the labs would be more in depth, more challenging. I guess I didn't get it. I just figured it could be better, more challenging, more fulfilling for everyone.
35	Pr treat fr. Classes differently.
33	Pr are irritating when they are condescending to class; like being treated more like adults and give us respect. Small group help getting to know students on a personal level; that makes me more comfortable
37	Pr has been open to my feelings and is willing to help me 100%.
39	Discussing view and the different impression of what is going on – age has a lot to do with that; Pr treated Y like little children and O students treated like adults, put NT on tests; It's a process and there are some 18 year olds that are extremely nature and have lots of experience. Didn't know LI name "not a lot of name exchanging in there". Initiating interaction would help. Y don't tend to do it, and I don't tend to do it, and so it just doesn't happen. Would be beneficial to have more mixed groups and to actually ask that people change groups more often. Even though it's really comfortable in not making a change once you are in your little niche, it would be a growing experience.

TABLE 8 (Cont.)

Age	
45	Pr is more distant with younger, not as personable. Classes with more Y than O. Interaction has turned out well, due to the person in charge. He's done a very good job in making sure everybody has that opportunity to speak and encouraging everyone to speak out and not be afraid to say something. I would have felt more comfortable if there had been a few more O students in there.
48	Pr approach O with more respect, Y treated more like teenager. Don't think they do it on purpose, it just happens. Important for Pr to make everybody feel comfortable, view everybody as a group, not different age groups.
52	
55	Pr is able to carry on with Y and laugh with them and relate to them. I see the differences, and I don't think she has anything against me. I feel like I just clam up into a shell.

APPENDIX A

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. **Please circle the appropriate choice:**

    a.   Male   Female

    b.   Married   Single   Other

    c.   Afro-American   Asian   Caucasian

          Hispanic   Native American   Other

    d.   Freshman   Sophomore   Junior   Senior   Other

    e.   **Age:** 18-24   25-29   30-39   40-49   50+

    f.   **Work**: Full-time   Part-time   None

Lab Instructor:_____

Lab Time: _____

Phone No: _____

Name: _____

APPENDIX B

INSTRUCTOR OPINION SURVEY

Below are some statements about communication in classes composed of students from different age groups. The statements are designed to measure perceptions; they do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the surveyors. For the purpose of the survey, the phrase "adult student" refers to a student aged 25 years or older. Please mark the response which most nearly matches your reaction to the statement.

1 = Strongly agree
2 = Agree
3 = Undecided
4 = Disagree
5 = Strongly disagree

1. The presence of adult students in class results in more sophisticated, mature class discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The presence of adult students in class frequently inhibits communication by younger students.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Tension (exhibited by verbal and nonverbal communication) frequently exists between younger and older students in class.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Adult students' communication skills are noticeably better than those of younger students.	1	2	3	4	5
5. A diversity of ages in class presents few special communication problems.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The age composition of a class has little influence on student communication behaviors in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5

7. What do you see as the biggest communication challenge with mixed-age classes?

8. What do you see as the greatest communication strength with mixed-age classes?

Instructor Name _____

Instructor age range   18-24   25-29   30-39   40-49   50+

APPENDIX C

STUDENT CONSENT FORM

Subject No. _____   Class _____

      I acknowledge that I have been adequately briefed about the research study "Communication Interaction Over Time In The Mixed-Age Classroom" which is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts for Becky Renée Mostyn.

a.   I understand the purpose of the study and my role in providing my perceptions during the interview.

b.   My participation is voluntary. My involvement in the interview indicates my consent to participate and that, if I so choose, I can refuse to continue the interview process at any point.

c.   My responses will be made anonymously and that at no time will my identity be revealed in reports of the research findings. I give my permission for the investigators to anonymously quote selected responses when publishing results in scholarly journals and proceedings.

d.   Following the study, feedback regarding the finding will be furnished at my request.

_____

Subject Signature   Date

_____

Interviewer Signature   Date

I wish to receive a synopsis of the study findings.
Please send a copy to:

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – FIRST INTERVIEW

I. Descriptive background data

A. Describe yourself as a student.

B. How much do you talk your classes? How would you describe your communication style and type of interaction?

C. Think about one of your first classes and talk about your communication with other students.

D. Who did most of the talking? (Age range in relation to interviewee.) What do you consider an older/younger person?

E. What was your level and kind of participation?

F. Think about one of your first classes and talk about your communication with the instructor.

G. In what ways did the instructor encourage or discourage student interaction and discussion?

H. What are some positive communication experiences that you can recall regarding your classroom interactions?

I. What are some negative communication experiences that you can recall regarding your classroom interactions?

II. Classroom communication experience

A. Recall a good professor/instructor in a previous class. Now recall the communication style and techniques of the instructor and describe them.

B. Recall a good student in a previous class. Now recall the communication style and techniques of that student and describe them.

C. If I were to observe you in a classroom, where would you be sitting? Why there? In relation to you, where are other age groups sitting?

D. What would you be doing? That is, describe your communication within a classroom.

E. In what ways are you are involved in the classroom communication? How is your verbal and nonverbal communication different from other students in your age group? In other age groups?

F. Whom do you classify as "older student" or "younger student"? Describe them.

G.   In what ways does your instructor communicate differently with older/younger students in conversations and classroom interaction?

H.   How comfortable are you with the general interaction of the mixed-age classroom?

III.   Expectancies of mixed-age classroom experience

A.   Describe some of your expectations about the communication behaviors of students of various ages?

B.   In what ways do you perceive that students differ in their verbal and nonverbal communication according to age?

C.   Do you communicate differently with students of different ages? How so?

IV.   Final comments

Are there any general comments you would like to make about the communication within the mixed-age classroom based on your experiences so far?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL – SECOND INTERVIEW

I. Expectancies of mixed-age classroom experience – confirmed or disconfirmed/violated

Now that you have been in Lab for half of the semester, have your feelings about the communication behaviors of students of different ages in the mixed-age classroom changed in any way? Describe your impressions.

II. Descriptive judgment of classroom experience (LAB)

1. Describe some <u>positive</u> aspects of <u>your age group</u> regarding communication in the classroom.

2. Describe some aspects of <u>your age group</u> regarding communication in the classroom that could be improved.

3. Describe some <u>positive</u> aspects about <u>other age groups</u> regarding communication in the classroom.

4. Describe some aspects about <u>other age groups</u> regarding communication in the classroom that could be improved.

5. Describe how your <u>prior</u> expectations of other age groups' verbal and nonverbal behaviors compare with the <u>actual</u> interaction in the mixed-age classroom (Lab).

   What differences were there? What expectations were confirmed/violated?

   <u>(If needed - use their first interview sheet to refresh their memory)</u>

6. In your opinion, what does age have to do with communication interaction in the mixed-age classroom?

III. Final comments

Are there any general comments you would like to make about the verbal and nonverbal communication of students in the mixed-age classroom based on your experiences this semester?

Are there any general comments you would like to make about the classroom interaction based on your experiences this semester?

APPENDIX F

DESCRIPTIVE MATRIX

APPENDIX F
(Cont.)

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
13-5	18	Like my dad – 30s, late 20s; O more comfortable asking questions, more experienced more intent; sit there and listen; more respect for knowledge the teacher has	18-21; come to class and doze off	Serious-minded, studious, don't talk much; sit close to front; like to listen	If everybody is willing to listen to everybody else's thought and opinions, it will work well. Age range 18-25	The O is good at getting us to communicate. I enjoy having O people in class, different perspectives, opinions, never had any problems interacting with them		In your mid-20s you attitude toward life and other people starts to change. You think more about what you are going to do for the rest of your life. When you are 18 to 21 it's like you are just out there to have fun.	.
5-2									
2-4	18	O=30.; Sit in front; ask more questions	Sit in back; don't pay attention	Interactive, good notetaker; sit in back on the side	Middle aged ladies in late 20s are conceited; Older people don't like that. O have a lot to offer in experience you might not learn in books or from the prof. They are a little more interesting than Y people are..more willing to discuss things and more open about things. O are more interesting than Y; more willing to discuss things and be more open about things				Pr.communicates better with O because they have had a lot of the same experiences and have families and stuff, and are on the same level. It's easier for him to communicate; he puts forth more of an effort to try to communicate with Y students.
N.S.									
2-1A	18	Senior		Outgoing, fun, talkative sit near front	I'd be more intimidated by a senior than someone over 30.		Y use cuss words , using profane language, not as appropriate as adult language.	They are just here to learn so they should be treated equally	
16-10		Adults seek out information more than students do, ask questions. An adult asks ten	Easier to comm. with students your own age.		No experience with O student in any				

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
		times more questions than a student who is shy or introverted.			classes				
2-1B	18	Communicate better, more mature, more knowledgeable		Procrastinator; sit between front and middle	It will be beneficial to them and us because they will relearn what it's like to be a freshman in college and we will	It's a little awkward. If I were an O student I would feel strange. It's better now we're more mature. They don't make us feel dumb for		One class has 3 O people and they aren't different and that's weird because I didn't think it would seem that way, but I forget they are older and everybody just interacts	
16-9		More experience with life that has to do with what we are learning, we can relate to that.	Forget what they were about to say, just blurt things out, really go off the subject.	I think about what I'm going to say and if it relates to the topic, not just say whatever comes into my head.	get an idea of what it's like to be their age and gone through the real world and we can get lots of different opinions.	being Y and we don't make them feel different for being O. So it goes away…the age thing really goes away. (28, 30, 40s)		It's a good experience for us as Y students who haven't interacted with adults on the same level rather than them being above us and teaching us. It's really good just having to speak with someone who is O but not any better than we are. It's a really good thing.	
11-2	18	35+; closed minded, narrow and bitter, very pompous, conceited, and set in their ways, don't want to hear what anybody else has to say. They just feel like they can spit out what they want to say and that should be enough and	Y are usually bright eyed and bushy tailed, naïve and new to it all, accepting new information. Immature, carefree, don't think	Tenacious, enthusiastic, interested.; sit in the middle center.	The big gap. ..don't know if it's an eye-opener or sucks them more into their own world.

Lab age 18-43. | I don't really like the M-A class room. I don't like them.

The O women in my class seem to be pretty easy to work with except for one who is really stuck in her ways, she won't listen to anyone else.

It just varies from class to class. The two O | There is a big generation gap. Improvement – maybe talk about things that aren't so confrontational. | I just wish we could be doing something useful, better exercises.

The LI makes it so hellish. She comes in and has this pissy mood, blames her whole day on us, and takes it out on us, like we're sitting there under her wrath. | |
| 18-1 | | everyone should accept it as truth, | Really open, don't care, say anything, help other people. | | | students you get a | | | |

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
		and I don't like that.					different perspective from them. I've really learned a lot in there. They are like that, but not to such extremes. The lab with people of different ages, it's kinda fun.		
10-2	18	O=24-35, talk more; asking lots of questions, slows our learning (40s, 50s); use harder words, higher vocabulary, act like they know everything, raise their hands a lot	Y are always in back	Positive attitude, studious; sit 3rd row middle	O will be hard to make friends with Y because they are O and different, not like us. I just want to go to class and sit there. O ask lots of questions (upper 20s and 30s). Good point is better understanding for both. It's a new thing and I think it's neat. BUT it may slow the class down, ask stupid questions, already gone over that "turn your hearing aid up"	This other class there's an O guy and it's kinda annoying, because they think they know everything and they are so much better than every one else, like "Why are you even in here" Maybe you should have a job or something."	It was harder for us to come up with a little song because we were like we care what everybody thinks about us, like or friends and stuff might think we were stupid, but the O people would come up with silly...like they didn't really care what people think.		I liked the lecture a lot better than lab. I have a few friends in there that we can all talk and stuff.
24-5			We're all on the same level; have more in common.				They are more experienced, really calm, not as nervous, and more creative. They are more comfortable because they are O and don't really care what other people think.		
							It's not as much in this class. I think we can learn from the O people. With the M-A it's more interesting. I like it so far. It keeps you on your toes.		
13-2	18	30-40; sit closer to the front; argue more with Pr and	18-24; Sit in back; not as motivated; talk and sit	Procrastinator	Going to be interesting. Maturity has a lot to do with it.	O try to get more out of the lecture, ask a lot more questions, want			

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
24-1		what other people say; they challenge and discuss more.	different. Easier to relate to them. Make smart remarks, talking without regard to what anyone else might be saying, always the same people over and over.	Energetic, pretty direct.	Y aren't as motivated sometimes One lady (earlier class) disgusted me because she could not listen to anything without having to talk about it, she always talked so much it was really hard to get through the lesson and to get anything done. It's not a bad thing for students to talk, but it was frustrating. (Lab age 18-27)	to know more background. Y tend to keep quiet. O are more serious about education. Y ones right now are just kind of there, not really taking time out to learn stuff.			What we do in lab is really irrelevant to what we need to be doing. I don't feel we get a lot done
13-1-1	18	O=28 and up, 20s; not as outgoing; associate with other people	Quiet in class; have to be with people their own age and have a good time, even in class	Punctual, hardworking, don't talk, sit front row right.	O will be more mature about questions, higher maturity level, want an explanation about things. Y just want to get the work done and move on.	Even in our groups we are just too intimidated to ask questions about each other. If we had had some O in there to ask more questions...it's like an inspiration that pushes me to want to do more, like they are pushing themselves and I can push myself and do that and get motivated.	I thought it would be more open and talkative, but it's not.		
16-5			Easier to talk to because you don't have to be something you are not, you can just be yourself.		O ask more questions and want more elaborate answers, and that helps me out because I'm too intimidated to ask a question. (No O in lab.)				LI just tells us what to do, it's usually the same groups because we just turn our desks toward each other.
10-1	18	30-40, all focused, prepared, all perfect	Relaxed, willing	Hardworking, outgoing, talkative; focused; sit in 2nd row	O not as social, don't talk to many other people, always at attention, can't relax; Y more relaxed and more willing.	Got to know more people, talk more		Didn't have any O but most of the time in class they all have something to tell us that we didn't know	P talks to O more intellectual way; Y (18) more watered-down conversation. I kind of resent it like treating us as if there's a big gap, but

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
5-7		Oldest one in lab gets the point quicker.	It's been real relaxed, everyone between 18-22, understand each other. We beat around the bush, don't talk as educated.		Will be a challenge. O make me want to rise up to their level. Don't know if it helps them or not, haven't talked to them. (No O in lab.)	about class and in general, better than I expected.		in the beginning.	there may not be.** Our LI is younger and can identify with most of us.
20-1A N.S.	18	O=25 and up; Sit on front, talk more; know more about material, more into lecture; ask more questions		Attentive, motivated, hardworking; sit middle to front	O totally different generations, sit closer and interact more; Y may be apprehensive at that and feel uncomfortable.				Pr putting down Y in front of class; more personable with O
20-2 18-3	18	35 and up; they know more than we do; they bring in new ideas; pay attention O lady is very shy; it's cute	We take a lot of things for granted They want to be right, have their say	Procrastinate, like to learn; sit in middle to the front; a listener Me personally I don't like to speak at all.	O more involved, Y communicate as well but learn more from O If it's just Y we are not going to participate because we are scared our first year, O would start conversations and communication in classroom, then we would participate; they would encourage us to participate more.	Thought because they are O they are going to speak more, are wiser and know more, but NO it depends on their personality. At first I was intimidated by the O lady and thought that she was going to think what I said was dumb. Because she was older she would tell me what I'm doing wrong, but she's really open-minded. I think most O people are and we should be open-minded to what they have to say too. I thought they would show us more of what they had learned out of experiences. But she's just as outgoing, a	It depends on your personality and how you were brought up, what you did in high school, how your parents talked to you. We need to communicate as equals. She's very shy because she is the only older person. I think we Y adults should be the ones to approach the O people because they may be afraid to communicate with us because we are Y and they may be afraid to communicate with us because we are Y. We as Y adults should make the attempt to interact with everybody in the classroom.	Sitting in a circle or something and have everybody have to look at each other and not just sit beside each other every day, but sit beside somebody different and everybody could sit by this O person and get to know her.

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
							procrastinator just like us. She's just like us. Age doesn't matter at all. – I was very intimidated by her. I thought because she was O she would take charge, and just go in there and tell everyone what they should do! But no, she's a really sweet lady. She sat right next to me and I never talked to her until this one activity. I think the other Y think maybe she" mean or something because they haven't taken the time to get to know her.		
10-3 N.S.	18	O =30s- 40s; sit in front; use big words, talking about things I'd never heard of, annoying because I just wanted to hear what the teacher had to say.		Hardworking, interested, not talkative, afraid I'll say something stupid; sit in back.	O will ask more questions. "Maybe when I get older I'll get a little more used to people and be able to communicate better."			Different age groups is nice because you hear different ideas and questions. "It's like interesting to hear what they have to say.	
12-3 17-6	18	Late 20s, early 30s; more up to date with news, politics; more confident in your abilities Questions are thought-out, more insightful	Clique-ish, argue with Pr over stupid things; talk about dates More free to speak out in class, willing to learn and ask questions	Shy, not outgoing, like to listen; from row on side		Lab age 18-31	I expected more about speaking, more insight into what people do and what's effective for public speaking. It's been more class interaction, getting into groups, discussing experiences.	It has helped to get used to other students; it provides a diversity and allows you to interact with people who are different ages from you.	

APPENDIX F
(Cont.)

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
2-2 26-3	19	Over 20, upper classmen; I value an older person's opinion and what they have to say more.	Ask more questions, loud, outspoken.	Responsible, a listener; sit middle center	O will ask more questions and be more interested in learning.		Beginning of class was more intimidating because no one really knew each other. Everybody seems more friendly and more open. Ones more genuinely interested participate actively regardless of age and sit in front, and I can hear them discussing	I really don't even notice the age difference. Everyone there is students.	Pr reach out to the O because that's who is listening and that's who cares. Thought lab was going to be a pain, but it's active and we do stuff.
1-2 5-1	19	25-40; adult is 30+; not as shy, more outgoing, don't have to prove anything or impress anyone; more mature,	18-25	Shy, listening; sit in middle to front	See X of O; O are more mature and won't say stupid things. O won't make stupid comments like some people.				
3-4 24-6	19			Good student, good listener; sit in middle to back. Don't pay much attention to who, just who asks questions and I'm trying to learn by everybody else asking questions.	Everybody just seems to get along. Everybody just tries to find one kind of language. Some people might not say the same things, so you try to find a combination, just meet up the middle, just try to get along. I wouldn't categorize by age. Everybody is here to do the same thing, to learn. Some people bring experiences they have gone through already, and Y can bring some ideas that they have thought of	I really don't see the difference with different age groups in the class. Everybody is there to learn.		Pr teach at same level, no difference

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
					and other people don't know.				
21-2	19	Early 30s, Sit in front, more studious, talk more and give more examples	Sit middle to back, more shy	Sit front row. Very organized, really dedicated, studious.	O will have more experiences or words of wisdom, more comfortable talking to all ages. Y will stick to own age groups	O do talk more. O are more influential, have more to say, come with more wisdom, life experiences.	That has changed, this semester as far as communicating within groups, I don't think I treat anyone differently because of their age. I think we are on an equal basis, everyone is here to get an education.		Pr relates more to O
25-3		More polite, more respectful.	Open-minded, very creative, straightforward, opinionated						
13-8	19	Late 20s-30s, Older than 21, Forties Participate more in learning; more interested in subject matter	Bored Worrying about party on Saturday night	Dedicated Sit in front Speak up if I have a comment or question	Lab is for people to like to interact, I prefer to sit back Comfortable with interaction; rather work with older	O speak up and seem more interested, will ask questions	I expected more interaction. A lot of us are working alone so the group process has been eliminated for the most part. It's not as comfortable an environment; people are hesitant to disclose and get to know each other.	Some of us think we know it all and we should just sit back and get feedback from others.	Subtle differences in Pr talk to Y and O

Having somebody preach at you for 1-15 is unacceptable – give us a chance to participate. |
16-11		When O speak it's from experience and people are willing to listen to that. I really don't see any negative responses to O speaking out in class							
3-5A	20	O=30 and up.	O and Y both ask questions. Y use more slang, jargon.18-25, 36-35, 35 and up.	Inquisitive, like to participate, listen; sit in front center	Everybody will pretty much participate the same, but O people will put in more input.		I now believe that it's the personality, not the age that makes a difference. In past experiences the O people would speak out more, but the O lady in class doesn't speak hardly at all. So I think it's just a personality thing. But Y are more outspoken.		We haven't done as much as I thought we would be doing. It's real rushed. The groups, we don't get to fully develop ideas and stuff like that. It should be more task oriented
5-8			My age group (19-21) have a lot in common, on the same level, it's a lot easier to						

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
		communicate.					When I first got into the class I expected that the age difference would make a difference, that O people would put in more input, but I realize that it's more personality than age.		
B-1 25-8	20	O=30 and up, tend to speak up, have more experience, better grasp of subject matter; O are more centered, quiet, laid back Rely on experiences, tell how the world is for them, helps us get a picture in our mind how it might work for us. Sometimes talk too much.	Y=17-20, look and act real young.	Hardworking; sit back left, look around and observe. I'm one of the O people because most are freshmen! I don't talk just to talk like a lot of other people are doing.	Y don't like to speak up. If you have the right people, you can get more input on things.		All Y tend to be loud and proud. I expected I was going to be in class with a bunch of Y students, but it's only 2 years, that shouldn't make too much of a difference...but it does, because they are all talking about partying and stuff and I'm like "Come on, I've been through all that!". It's real different.	I thought the lab was going to be more group oriented. I think it would be hard to classify or label certain age groups as behaving a certain way, stereotype them, because it's more of an individual thing. I've seen Y who are ten times more talkative than the O. But I would tend to listen more to an O person than I would a Y students, especially when they are relying on experience.	Pr talk to O different. I can't put my finger on it, but there is something. LI is great, which helps a lot.
14-1 16-1	20	30 and above; talk more; more focused; longer attention spans O (30 and up) communicate more effectively, more experience, not really intimidation, just a state of mind; you feel more	Not really want to get on track, ban together; 18-24 or 29 and below; more laid back and informal talk Y attention span not as long, don't want to communicate and get involved.	Hardworking, over-achiever, procrastinator; talkative; sit toward the front	It will be easier for people the same age to communicate and they are going to tend to ban together a little more. Actually I communicate better with O people Didn't have big age	But age might be a factor, like you might feel intimidated and not want to comm...like if I were the only person in a room of 50-60 people over 30, I might feel out of place. But if it's mixed, you know, if you have someone there with you you'll be OK.	It's really more of the individual and what their interests are...there's a whole bunch of other variables involved in the communication process...the interest you have in a subject, the physical aspects, and possibly the culture too. There's 2 or 3 who are active and have been		Don't think it makes too much of a difference because everyone is there pretty much for what they want to do, and it's really the Pr who gets involved more than it is the mixed age.

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		confident. They came from a different generation, so there is that gap			range in lab.		active throughout the semester		
23-1 N.S.	21	O=30s, moms and dads, sit up front because they want to learn. Late 20s sit in between.	You feel really dumb when O look around like "she doesn't know that?" Y talk about stupid stuff. Divide into 18-22, 22-29, 30 and up.	Eager, outgoing, talkative; sit in back, more comfortable with my age, you can talk and not pay attention	We're all the same age so it's just different personalities. I benefit from it, I'll go to the O because their maturity level.				
13-3 5-3	21	Talk more, 35 and up. One lady keeps going on and on way too much. More serious, more into learning	Not there for actual learning, just sit in class, talk about weird stuff, 17-22 Tons of cliques, headstrong, lots of arguing, don't consider all points of view	Commuter;serious, patient. Sit near the front to one side. In the middle group 22-35;concerned more about grades and how we perform in class, finally realizing what college is all about Laid back	Will be good if everyone does their share Get along better with older people because they keep me on track like studying and stuff Lab age 18-22.	At first nobody wanted to respond, but now it's more open and everybody is more comfortable giving thoughts and opinions		Shy/outgoing all depends on the person, not whether they are older or younger The ones who didn't talk a lot are still the ones who don't talk.	.
21-1 24-7-1	21	Over 35; NT do most talking, sit in front	Sit in back, frat groups together. Try to communicate with people in your age group so you can fit in.	Works alone, commuter, good grades, don't talk much.; sit 3rd row middle.	NT will try to take charge, keep it organized and on task, try to get most out of class. Y will be joking, talking about last weekend, won't pay attention M-A is better, they have more background Lab all Y	No lab age interaction, but it would be helpful, wiser, coming back who have been working in the field and stuff.	All Y have things in common, but not a wide range of information		Some Pr try to get responses from O, and others try not to talk to them because they have something to say about everything.
14-2	21	40s and up Wrinkles, gray	Act like still in high school	Good student Sit in middle	If there are more older students I don't	O talk a lot, sometimes too much. It's very	So far I don't think it inhibits younger		

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
18-4		hair, smell like cigaret smoke Talk more – explain too much More into class More willing to put forth ideas	18-29 and think they know what they are talking about but not really More in common	Say anything and sometimes doesn't come out like it sounds	know if I would be more inhibited Didn't notice age range	distracting and irritating. A couple of the Y really talk a lot.	students not to talk or older students to talk more. Haven't had as much group comm as I thought there would be		
3-1 26-5	22	O=35 and up, talk more. Are more articulate. Very vocal, set in their ways	Y use more slang, cuss more Divide 18-21. There's a big difference between 18 and 24.	Procrastinator, good listener, shy. Sit in back side or middle, like to blend in. .	The Y are definitely going to be more vocal, really outspoken. O would definitely talk less. M-A can definitely learn from each other. Lab 18-28	Lab has been very vocal and Y cuss more The one guy looks older and more mature, he definitely helped with the group project, he contributed to the group, but he wasn't overbearing or anything. That's the only close interaction I've had.	I still believe the M-A is good, but when people go on and on it's like "Oh, them again?", like people aren't listening to them any more. O in other classes – I have only come across outspoken ones (30s) who are irritable, it's like they don't even listen when other people have points of view. It's annoying.	It was better than I thought it was going to be. Improvement – more group projects so you get used to the people around you. You get people who've had children, more education, you get a different perspective on life.	
14-3 16-3	22	Older than me Involved Attentive Mature Focused Sit in front More focused, better study habits	18-20 Sit in back Not as focused Don't think about what they're saying, more verbal. More free-flowing More outgoing, opening up a lot; clique-ish	Mature for my age Punctual Studious Outgoing Talkative Talker	Will be fun Beneficial all the way 22-25 trying to grow up and put their act together I just like a lot of different people.	O is very focused	Y have opened up much more		Pr encouraged interaction
1-3	22	O=35; know it all, talk a lot; trying to really be there and learn and stuff	Sit in back, casual attitude, feel frustrated when O get longwinded and we just let them to it, and we don't do much.	Take notes, observe. Sit 2nd row middle. I'm kind of on the edge, some of the	O (35-40) more aware of nonverbal and verbal skills and can adapt to different situations. Negative if O think we are all stupid and	It's really weird, because it's just basically the type of person you are dealing with. One class the O are really helpful and use their experience in		More variety, different aspects from different people. The age factor	Pr treat Fr. harder, more serious, trying to shock them into reality; upper level are more relaxed. LI made it cooler,

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
26-4			We all know what we are talking about, the MTV generation, it's easier to communication.	Y are just here and haven't seen the seriousness of what they are doing in school, don't pay attention. You can't depend on them to get stuff done.	don't know anything, but good when they are open and enlighten us, just depending on the person. Lab 17-26.	a positive way. My other class they always just jump in and think they know it all. So I think it's just the type of person you're dealing with, not necessarily because of their age. But the O do seem to be insightful and know a lot more, and they can use it positively or negatively. In groups the O person and I were trying to get things done, maybe because we are more serious students or something, but the other ones (Y) had these side conversations and talking.		definitely changes the experience that people have. It makes things rounder and changes our own perspective on things.	classroom setting more relaxed, learned more than I thought I would.
4-1	22	NT not straight from h.s 30 and up..take more active participation, understand importance of why they are here	T is somebody who has not had any experience in the real world. T came to college because parents expected them to	Serious, studious, open to other people and ideas; sit near front center.	Going to be different in the way people relate because the T are coming from different perspective. There's not much diversity in my lab, it is not going to benefit the students as much because people learn from different situations.	Majority of class is freshmen; a lot of them don't care about the course, makes it hard for those of us that are actually interested in it. Not as much dedication to learning or to participate. I respect other people's opinions and comments and it facilitates discussion a lot. In classes with a	Thought there would not be as much interaction with other students.	When I was 18 I probably wouldn't have wanted O students in class, but now I look forward to having them. They are a lot of fun to have in there.	
24-4		O person is a lot more talkative than the Y, one of the instigators.	Our lack of experience in life, a fresh perspective.						

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
						wider range of age the discussion is a lot better.			
13-4 N.S.	23	O=30-40; talk more; more political knowledge	Y=under 25. 25-35 are "ideal..career students".	Above average, easygoing; don't talk much; sit in front left. O sit behind me.	Don't think it's going to work well. O and Y different vocabulary; Y profanity, O drag out discussions and use life experiences, a lot of analogies and stuff....Difficult for interaction between Y and O				Pr more casual with O and takes them more seriously, more authoritative with Y
14-4 18-2	23	Older than me; 50 is one of the older; more direct, blunt.; more focused	Quieter; 18-20

Freshmen are pretty quiet. A few stand out, which is surprising. | Knowledgeable, persistent, more of a listener; front row, left of center

Most of the time I'm the initiator.

Lab age 18-25 | O are not going to have a problem, Y will get used to it; O ask more questions, will probably even out | The O sometimes have a lot of questions and Y are like "I wish that guy would shut up" but the different viewpoints, life experiences, it integrates and works really well.

Everybody talks, good interaction. Upperclassmen have a chance to share experiences and help the Y out. If it was just a class of freshmen there would probably still be some quietness. | I didn't expect to do so much group work and interaction. That exceeded my expectations. The Y were quiet at first and now talking up a storm. | Y bring a fresh outlook. Some of us have been here for 4-5 years and are kinda tired; they bring some energy to it. | Pr. Mixed O and Y in groups for discussions, everybody really learned a lot.

Mixing the age groups, that's great. Once they get back into the classroom the Y and used to the O and not afraid to sit by somebody who is say 35. It won't freak 'em out any more. |
| 3-2

24-3 | 23 | Some are more outgoing and | O make more abstract comments | Quiet, calm, analytical; sit in back in the corner

More open now than before. | We should interact, get along, have a sense of humor, don't notice any age differences. Comfortable, I view them just as other | | I expected it to be a lot more socializing than there has been. It hasn't filled out the range of what I thought it would | I like M-A, they are more able to share their experiences, give a different view or opinion. Students will be more | |

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
		forward.			students.		be.	competitive and will be more able to give their best if they are slacking off.	
13-7 N.S.	23	O=30s. Sit middle to front. Take lots of notes. Point them out by the way they look. More prepared.	Not as serious, ask irrelevant questions, silly. Sit in back. Divide into 18-20=Y, 30 and up = O, others are middle upper class.	Hardworking, observant, outgoing. Sit in front side.	More challenging, I have to try harder. Y are funny and it takes me back. I don't know if O are going to feel like it's more challenging with us in there, but it will be for me to have O in there.				
14-8 5-6	23	Older talk more, the NT, late 20s, early 30s; sit closer to front; ask more questions; are more respectful; act more like they are at a job	Y kids sit and back and talk, not pay attention; 18 to 24-25; more immature	Hardworking, good quitter, undecided, talk as little as possible, sit in back or middle	It depends on personalities and stuff. Some students don't like when an O student asks a question, they sigh and just wish they wouldn't, like they are holding up the class or something, and some students don't mind. I don't mind because they seem to ask more intelligent questions.	I knew I was going to be nervous when I was talking, the self-fulfilling prophecy thing.	Don't think the older ladies are that much different from the other students. Everyone is pretty much the same.	Didn't have personal interaction with other-aged students that he noticed. Wasn't there for small group night.	When I'm in a class full of people my age...I feel less open, I may be judged more..students your own age look at you closer as opposed to the O students..you don't have to worry about them looking at you or judging you. It's a lot easier to do the work you are supposed to do when there's older students in class.
12-4 16-8	23	Over 28; ask questions, more mature, concerned with helping other students	16-17; 18-20 socialize together, very clique-ish, 21-27 communicate more	Organized	Lab range 18-23.			Y could be more respectful, more patient, more creative, not belittling people.	Pr seems more patient with O There was good communication provided by the instructor.
22-1	23	O=26-30 and up; verbal is less jivey talking, more	Not as committed as O, lots of talking;	Intense, hardworking, not always consistent;	Want the environment to be about learning, not	Y are less task oriented, but some are really interested in	It turned out a lot better. I surprised myself at being able to have	When you are a student, you are there to do one thing.	

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
5-9		focused O more likely to give thought-out opinions	aggressive, not very respectful or friendly; want to look cool and be cool, want to exude this whole image Y in class are more reluctant to volunteer information. Y more likely to throw out wisecracks.	sit on front row	just about grades.	what has to be done. Being different ages..it doesn't really matter so much, just if they are good students.	confidence in that big group of people.	Talking more is not based so much on age, just based on the individual.	LI knows my name, it's pretty personal, easy to communicate in there, open. Improvement: keep things more of a task-oriented level.
13-1-2 24-2	23	O=35-45, talk more; sit closer to Pr. Take things more seriously. We are more direct in our conversation, different interests, discussing jobs and stuff.	18-20;Sit on back row, don't care about what Pr has to say; don't want to hear what O have to say, just want to get on with what Pr has to say. Y kids communicate really different. I was almost embarrassed to ask the things they brought up. Sometimes it's shocking what comes out of their mouths, so blunt.	Serious, cautious, studious, talkative in small groups; sit middle side. Not like my age. I'm more settled than people my age, don't have a lot in common with them. I'm a senior now and I take things more seriously.	It will be interesting to see those who are 18 coming in with O people to see whether they will listen or just blow them off. It's interesting because you always have something to learn whether it's somebody O or Y than you are interacting with. From 22-25 there are lots of changes. Y need to speak up more and give opinions, and O should sit back and give quieter students a chance.	.	A sophomore girl was very outspoken and had a leader role. I usually find that O tend to speak a lot more, but she was really outspoken.	Just because you may be the same age doesn't mean that…some people act different than what they really are. Some people act O and just because some one's Y or a freshman doesn't mean everyone wants to party and that's all they think about. Or if you are O it doesn't mean you know everything. I think having that mix lets students learn some thing about everybody	Pr talk more calm with O, more energy to get attention of Y. LI chose groups for us and I really liked that because it allowed us to meet everybody and have different kinds of communication. It's given me a variety in that class.
20-3	25	Sit toward front; late 20s, 30s and up; have priorities	Ready to get out of class and do the next thing; Y	Studious, hardworking; sit in front	Y more childish, 22-24 more mature, adult students won't	Y joked around a lot more; we got right down to it, my group	I was real naïve.. Y who are freshmen actually have quite a bit to say.	Y have great ideas, we	Pr shows more respect to O

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
16-12		set; sense of patience; 25 and up NT; larger vocabulary, short and to the point	ramble on most of the time.		talk much, just go in and sit down	had mostly seniors so didn't have as many "dysfunctional" members. Having O did have an influence on our group work. Y attention span is smaller.	I've really been surprised by a lot of them; high level of maturity, some more than I am, really mature for their age. I was really impressed by that. Girls are more mature than guys.	should work on de-creasing criticism of the Y. Intimidation was a factor in that we were O and more experienced, but the Y positively reinforced us. Y enjoyed participation as much as we O did.	We have a great TA
2-3 16-4	25	Older students talk more; late 20s, 30s and up; very friendly, enthusiastic; sometimes too much into it, hold the class back by asking too much	20 and younger; More immature, not together, late to class	Hardworking; sit near the middle and back	See X of O/Y O students make you. sometimes the Y are kind of ostracized, but for the most part I've always enjoyed having O students, they understand more about things like trying to make a living, etc. Age range in lab 18-30s. Refers to self as "older" student	Sometimes there is a little intimidation from O and Y and vice versa. You relax and communicate better with your own age because you have that thing in common.	This group moves more together than usually. It seems like there's not anyone who asks too many questions. There's not really anyone who wants to race ahead either. It's just more of that everyone is unified in their activity.	One of the best parts about college is just to expose people from different environments, and age is definitely a factor in that.	
11-1 17-1	25	O tend to sit together The O lady in there, there is more respect towards here.	Talk more among selves and sit together, talk about parties; talk with O about class There are more quiet when it comes time to speak out, but when it's just talking among themselves it's OK. They are not	Not very talkative; sit in front; one of the older ones We tend to speak up a little more than others.	Looking forward to it	Everybody has been treated equally in the class. It's been really relaxed, and blended in so you can't tell there is that age difference.	The one O lady didn't speak as much as the rest of the class, but she did say things, not as much as others perhaps.		Pr more respectful of O; can't really classify it LI treated everyone equally, made everyone speak every class.

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			as rational in the way they see things.						
20-5	26	Over 23. Older 40s, 50s sitting there philosophizing about life.	Talk more in class; more animated, nonverbal, energetic; go into mid to late 20s.	Motivated, interested, don't participate much; sit middle to back on the side See myself as an O student	O will have more technical reserved answer and Y will squawk because they broke a nail. (But...)	O and Y should interact more in social things, clubs, campus events.	You kind of characterize each individual student rather than by the age group. The 2 or 3 O students tend to take more time to think about what they		
25-2		O are a little bit more reserved, don't offer too much information, monitor themselves.	Y are more passionate about a subject, especially if they are interested, because they do exactly what you just did...you grinned and your eyes lit up. O people, I don't see that they have that as much.	I'm not a spring chicken just out of high school, but don't have the adult problems yet either.	There are some O people who communicate well and some who don't and the same with Y.		are going to talk about, but there are some Y students who do that too. I think it's a characteristic of the way they learn and their upbringing.	Our lab has a lot of integration, everybody is taking their own initiative to interact with other people. The only downside is that some O don" want to interact with Y and some Y don't want to interact with O. They like to stick with their own, but that's just 10-15%.	
20-1B	26	O=25 and up	Y more open in expressing themselves	Motivated, quiet; sit in front; sometimes feel out of place	O more serious and involved. Over 35 might be uncomfortable, different cultural things, awkward.	O are more quiet in some respects, sometimes more cynical	I don't give enough credit to Y, like making a judgment and find out it isn't true. Actually I've been really impressed with a lot of the Y people in my class.		
16-7			No one wanted to disagree even if they believed differently, just wanting to please the peers, mainstream.	Assertive I'm in between. People Y than me there's not a lot of difference, then people O than me I don't see a lot of differences. It's kind of been weird.	Age range in lab 18-40s			It's not whether they are Y or O but the extroverts are going to be more spontaneous and more vocal. I don't think that has much to do with age. I feel intimidated sometimes, like I'm not Y enough or not O enough so I kind of feel awkward. I get along with both age	Age probably has to do with the majority of whoever is in the class as far as the comfort level. The more comfort, the more verbal you are going to be. Whatever age is the majority will be more comfortable.

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								groups, but I still feel awkward.	
12-5 Drop	26	30s – jump out and ask questions. More here for education, paying attention, taking notes, reading books; know when to talk or shut up and appropriate tone of voice or topic	In class because of friends, more concerned with what they are wearing and hanging out with; eager to impress the Pr., sit on the front row; young person not as aware when to talk or shut up	Dedicated, tired, "born-again student." Don't talk much. Sit in middle side."an older student"	Good – learn a lot from older students, interesting Older people and young kids help balance things out, preparing for the real world where there is nonstop mixed ages.				
12-6B 17-2	26	27 and up. O more likely to speak up, get a subject rolling. O got up and told what the groups had done.	Younger than me. Some classes Y participate more depending on subject matter. Definite distinction 18-21 high school is still fresh, parties. In a group with Y they all wanted to single out and do it alone. As far as everybody pulling together to do it, there wasn't communication.	Good student, motivated; sit in front side	The younger ones are still talking about high school stuff they did. Lab range 18-40s	Y talk more, different content, like Spring Break. With O it's more content, explanations and detail. When I hear an O student speak it like they have thought about it, whereas with the Y student they just start babbling and throwing things out and it doesn't sound like they know what they are going to say or what they are going to answer.	Everybody still wants to apeak at once. I expected more working toegher and there hasn't been a whole lot of that. Everybody is just in such a rush to get out of there.	I like the range of ages. It kind of pulls things together. I don't know what the age necessarily has to do with it. Sometimes it just comes from the individuals themselves.	Poor LI, they give him a guilt trip to get out early or blow things off, but he stands his ground.
10-5	27	25 and older talk more	Sit in back; lack of experiences being around different types of people they tend not to communicate	Goal-oriented; sit in front	A real reluctance to talk and communicate I envision some resentments in Y		I found that more apprehension came from me and the two O students in revealing things or in talking. It's been mostly the Y	The Y see their peer audience as being more judgmental where there is	I've learned from the Y too, like don't take everything so serious, don't be such a dork all the time, lighten up just a bit!

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24-8		Not just biding your time waiting for somebody to finish so you can get your say in. You are really absolutely listening.	Very open with what I consider personal, intimate details. They are all just chomping at the bit to talk. They don't seem as comfortable in calming down and regulating the flow of their speech, they get caught up in a lot of negative thinking about how they are going to talk.	I'm one of the O people. We don't see the Y as our peer group, we see them as a collection of individuals.	about O asking questions that don't seem as important as dorms or clubs...		students in class who have been very eager to talk and answer questions out loud. The girls who are 18-19 are way more comfortable speaking out about things that I never heard from girls my age at that time. The vocabulary, the content, ev er y thing! I never knew girls to be this way.	a more relaxed communication with us O students. It's cool seeing all types of ages of people in class. I've always thought that if you wake up every day of your life and you don't learn something, then you didn't have a very good day.	It's cool seeing older older people, middle aged people, people my age who got out of college, got their feet wet a little bit, and then have gone right back in, to re-align what they were going to do. It says something for the kind of people we live around. It says something for the amount of colleges that we have, that people aren't limiting their learning to the first third of their lives.
10-4 16-6	28	Over 25; more confident, know their goal	19-25 are younger and do most of the talking; seek help of other people	Studious, dedicated, hardworking; sit in middle; tend to be bossy	Younger will be very comfortable speaking, will help everybody		Some Y are more outgoing that expected, real pushy, blurt out their emotions, use foul language – really a negative point with me. Don't think the class has opened up as much as it should. I felt nervous in front of the 27 students even though I'm used to speaking in front of 65 people every month at work. That was really something new to me.	Y have no problem complaining; very seldom do they express communication when they want to do something. Sometimes I feel like I'm being shunned to the side. I feel I might have grown out of touch with Y	Pr tries to make fun of O by making them laugh.
B-2	28	40-ish, 25 and up; write lots of notes	Y=under 27; have that confidence already	Diligent, inquisitive, straightforward.; sit middle front row.	Everybody seems to contribute, pretty equal; two ends of the spectrum. A big challenge would be to get people to open up.		I guess it takes them a while to get over their first fear. Towards the end I was sitting back and listening and not really saying much to participate, just to hear	It seemed like they (Y) new it all, this attitude like "I know this" and I'm like	Pr would roll his eyes every time the O would go on about something. Sometimes he'd just cut him off.

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
17-7		We initiated things; we tend to complain more. We are always the ones asking for clarification	Fresh ideas, more imaginative or creative; tend to be nicer as far as communication, polish things.	Lab age 18-28	Often people won't speak out because they are shy. O may not feel comfortable sharing experiences with Y, and Y may not feel comfortable		the other ideas, to listen to the way they would build on the ideas we had put out originally There isn't as big a difference as I thought; everybody is contributing. I know what the Y ones are going through because I've been through it, I still consider myself one of them. I don't think age necessarily has a factor in it. It's more your experiences while you are growing up, if you have had that opportunity in your family to kind of say what you want and you don't get into trouble for it.	"I've lived it". They didn't want to change. Need to be more open-minded.	
1-1 25-6	28	O=25-40, sit in front; more experienced, talk more; articulate more More in common, comraderie among the above 25 than the Y ones	18-24, Sit in back; more shy, more reserved Y have a better idea of what we are talking about, or think they do. Compromise isn't as OK for them as it is for the O students.	Procrastinator, intelligent, good student, willing to learn.; sit in the middle. I listen and speak up when I think there is something to be said, take everyone's feelings into consideration in a communication situation	I wouldn't think age would matter, it would be the amount of interaction a person has had. Some people of 22 have more interactions than some people of 35, so I don't think age would be a factor Like listening to older, have more to say. I hope I can give as much as I am saying that the O	I'm a little intimidating in my appearance but I will always listen to the Y ones because they have so much to say on so many things that are important. Sometimes they are stubborn as to newer ideas, not thinking through the whole scope of ideas. It has stayed truer to the O student being a	We've had some real outgoing Y students that are different from the norm, more and more are coming out and talking more. Y are more educated, more confident among themselves in smaller groups, and quiet in the larger forum. I think they have some really good ideas, the Y kids, and we don't hear as many of them .	O really don't care what anyone else thinks about what they say, so they are confident in what they are saying. Y always want to fit in and don't want anyone to think they are silly or stupid. (Older is over 25).	LI really good at getting on our level Improve – make sure all the students know that their opinion and their voices are necessary in the class, and that no one has a bad idea, help the listening skills and understanding where people are coming from. Just listening I think is

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
					group has given in the past, and I hope I can be that way in my classes..	little more active. O seemed to catch on, the way they communicate with each other. The Y weren't real sure of the answers but the O would talk among themselves and try to figure it out. We were really hard-driven to figure out the right answer and they were just like kind of doing the exercise.	It's been different that what I expected, and more pleasing. I thought I was going to be really nervous going up and speaking. The class has got a pretty good chemistry together and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.		the big key…the most important thing in communication.
3-5B	28	O=25-30 and up. Give more input, seem more from the outside world	Y talk more; aren't intimidated as O who may feel out of place. Just blurt things out w/o knowing what they are saying.; are in their own little world, parties, real outgoing. 18-24, 24-30, 30-50. Some reach maturity before 25 and some much younger. Some of the Y don't care to say anything. They don't want to get involved. They'd rather let everyone else do the work and they get the	Keep informed, take good notes, sit in front side. Listen and pay attention	Expect lab to run smoothly, only one other student is shy like me. Don't believe it's the age, it's just individually. If a person is afraid to speak it doesn't matter if they are teens, 33, 25. They are still going to be afraid.	I'm a little different from others because I have always been shy about speaking, If I had been Y and in the same situation it would have been the same.	In my lab it didn't seem to be a difference, but I'm sure there are some where the O students go to one corner and try to avoid mixing in with others.	Improve – Not be so intimidated by the Y students. They tend to learn easier than we do. The other guy was not as inhibited as I had expected him to be.	O talk to Pr more comfortably
24-7		Some of the O students just shy away from talking to the Y students.							

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
			credit for it.						
12-1	29	Over 30; Talk more, more dedicated, serious, on the ball;	More social, talking to friends, seem real bright, 18-19. the slang and they talk a lot	Active; sit in middle close to front; talk more to the point, sit and think about what I'm going to say before I say it.	It's more of a class system, lower class and snobs..more to do with fraternities and cliques.		When we first started they were real quiet and didn't hardly say anything… toward the end it's almost argumentative. It's like they say "now I've got		
16-2			Lots of rationalizations of why they do things, which are just excuses, lots of immaturity. Lots more slang and cursing. It's more accepted now for this generation. It's just the way they talk.	Not as willing to put up with inconsistencies like favoritism, more openness and direct comments.	Lots of interaction; most are "traditional" age.		something to say". So just getting comfortable with one another in the smaller group.	Between my age group and their group…say you assume something about them and after you talk you realize you are totally wrong, like you assume they like one kind of music and they like something totally different.	
12-2	29	30ish, more reserved; older older students communicate among them- selves (40 and up)	Obnoxious, inexperienced.	Hardworking, persistent, attention to detail; sit in front; ask a lot of questions	It depends on the people, if they have some kind of hangup, having to deal with younger people. It's good because you get a lot of points of view like what you get out there in the real world. It would just be a benefit to everyone to get that kind of mixed input from different age groups.	My impressions were that Y people are kind of inexperienced; the class has reinforced that. The Y and their views – I was more turned off by that.	Wasn't as involved in class as I thought I would be.	Some groups are just young and their views are whatever. Some would have a creative mix but that's just like the lottery.	I thought the labs would be more in depth, more challenging. I guess I didn't get it. I just figured it could be better, more challenging, more fulfilling for everyone.
5-4			Inexperienced.						
12-6A	35	O=mid-30s. Sit in front; participate more	Sit in back. 18-24 are partying, socializing, 25-29 just normal, means more to you, 30s	Good student, good GPA, dedicated; 1st or 2nd row	Think it will work well because everybody brings different perspectives, variety	That's the way it's going to be out in the world, all ages, races, their own life experience.	I'm really struggling to find something that they could relate to.	You communicate and get	Pr treat fr. Classes differently.

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(Cont.)

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
26-1		Not as open to new things, we've already formed opinions and been out there at work; we're not as naïve to specific questions. O will get things clarified, more vocal, say "What exactly do you want?"	focus outside school, families. They are so open to anything, still so much for them to learn. I see more excitement from them.		of ideas. Same challenges you see in the real world.	Everybody has so much to bring. It doesn't matter what your age group. I enjoy talking to someone that's 18 and I think they enjoy talking to me, and I also enjoy talking to someone who is 50 or 60.		to know them…Last week I was terrified about doing the speeches, but I looked out there at the class at people that I had worked with in groups and wasn't as terrified as I thought I would be.	
3-3 5-5	33	O = 25 and up. O contribute to discussions, give broader experiences	Y is fresh out of high school. Y different viewpoint of what is important; everything is a crisis, it's distracting Y viewpoints, different perspectives.	Hardworking, high GPA, dedicated, focused, talk a lot; sit front and center	Different age groups and experiences will benefit everybody. Your personality, style, how comfortable. If they are shy they are not going to speak up whether they are 40 or 18. I don't think age has anything to do with it.	It has helped me be more patient, and realize that they've got great viewpoints too. Getting the Y viewpoints and different cultures. It's been better than I expected.	I expected it to be a little more formal. Y don't have the experience, when people are trying to talk, hearing what they say before interjecting what thoughts are on the tip of their tongue. They are more focused on what they are thinking, they are not hearing.	Like to seek out Y up to my age to talk with I don't like letting people know exactly how old I am just because sometimes I feel alienated, so I don't really let on that much. I've been real hesitant.	Pr are irritating when they are condescending to class; like being treated more like adults and give us respect Small group help getting to know students on a personal level; that makes me more comfortable
13-6A 17-5	37	35 and up	18-20; Anyone younger than me The kids encourage me, take into consideration my comments just like I do with them. I love'em to death!	Scared Sit in front Feel like I'm in my 20s; like it's a real family. We all care for each other's feelings	I have more experience, so it will be interesting. We can come out of our shells as well as the young kids and we can do it just like they can; they are just like we are		Thought it was going to be hard, but I'm not that far away agewise from them. Communication-wise we all speak about the same, at least from my side.	I'm starting to enjoy it now because I feel positive that I can make it in this class, that I can become somebody. The beginning was hard. I feel like I have aged many years, but with the help that I have from my teachers I feel I'll do	Pr has been open to my feelings and is willing to help me 100%.

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
								all right. I've accomplished a damn lot.	
B-3	39	Older than me – 50, 55, 60	18-20; sit in back and talk; they treated me like an old person, rolling eyes, way they were sitting, I wasn't one of them, I felt horrible	Dedicated, committed, extroverted; Sit in front;Sometimes you feel left out in a class full of younger people;	If they don't perform right away and live up to minimum participation I might start making judgments based on age.	The age groups seem to have migrated toward each other, very brief activities at the beginning, then nothing since then.	Thought it would be lots of real Y and I'd be in a class where no one could identify with me. It has not turned out that way at all. I anticipated some immature students who weren't serious about their work, were just there for the grade or the roll check, and that hasn't been the case.	Rather than a specific age it's students who feel at ease talking, usually it's women; level of comitment and interest and it could be any age	Discussing view and the different impression of what is going on – age has a lot to do with that; Pr treated Y like little children and O students treated like adults, put NT on tests; It's a process and there are some 18 year olds that are extremely nature and have lots of experience. Didn't know LI name "not a lot of name exchanging in there" Improve: have more mixed groups and to actually ask that people change groups more often. Even though it's really comfortable in not making a change once you are in your little niche, it would be a growing experience.
25-1		O are serious, dedicated, forthright, not afraid to ask questions	Some Y are shy or reluctant to ask questions, lag behind waiting for someone else to start or take the lead.					Initiating interaction would help. Y don't tend to do it, and I don't tend to do it, and so it just doesn't happen.	
15-2	45	O=28 and up. Pay more attention	18-22,24. Varies on maturity level. Talk about last night, personal things, get bored easily	Dedicated, committed, like to learn, not very talkative; sit to the front on the edge.	Depends on people and activity. Some are more open, outgoing; others are more introverted. Tendency to be more motherly than student-student.	Groups are very interactive, everybody participating, a couple of Y have their own opinion, definitely a difference between them and me.			Pr is more distant with younger, not as personable. Classes with more Y than O
26-6		O hold back on openness.	More outspoken, don't stop to think, no inhibition. Y have to speak out immediately. One	I find myself listening more to the Y ones, rather than interacting, smiling and remembering	Talking depends on subject and how much you know about it; some Y	I've been working toward more of a student-student interaction. I brought		I try to be respective of their opinion whether I agree or not. Need to work on being more comfortable, saying my opinion and not worrying	Interaction has turned out well, due to the person in charge. He's done a very good job in making sure that everybody has that

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Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
			of the Y girls took over the group. Curse-words. At first it offends me. Then I stop and think that is how they talk and not take it as a personal offense.	when I was Y. Still feel more comfortable with O students. That is something I need to work on.	don't want to hear from experiences but others really do what to hear	a different perspective to the groups and what they were thinking		about what they say or think. The O the student gets, the more intense they are in what they are doing, whether it's because they have waited longer, it's taken longer, or just learning the experience of life itself and learning about different values and things.	opportunity to speak and encouraging everyone to speak out and not be afraid to say something. I would have felt more comfortable if there had been a few more O students in there.
15-1 26-2	48	Over 30. More studious. Express opinion based on experience; tend to sit together, hang around; more verbal	Y=18-19. Intelligent, more carefree, get stressed out easily. Very inquisitive. Divide 20-30 into middle – some are more mature and others not. Free and energetic. One student is quiet but most jut say whatever pops into their mind. A couple of students are rather rude, a little negative, and made it a little difficult to interact	Interested, excited about what I'm doing, aggressive. Sit in front right. Have a tendency to be more of a mother. I like the different age groups, to hear and see how they view things com-pared to the way I do. I'm not intimidated.	I sit back and see where everyone is coming from and try to bring the shy ones out. I've always done that. Y have a limited view, not as sensitive to how other people will react. O try to communicate a little better. Comm depends on the personality, how at ease they feel.	I'd like to encourage the barriers with Y and my age group. They look at me at times like "You're not in my age group" and they are real quiet around me. If we could be allowed to interact and share…my experiences could relate to them, to things they might not have given any thought to yet, and I could say "You know, she's got a point there."	I felt apprehensive, yet we communicate and laugh and feel more comfortable about it. The personality and attitude are more important, and their background. Most converse very well.	It's good for people my age to be in groups with Y students. It helps you see things in a different way and communicate more easily. Sometimes if you have all people in the same age groups there is no diversity in there.	Pr approach O with more respect, Y treated more like teenager. Don't think they do it on purpose, it just happens. Important for Pr to make everybody feel comfortable, view everybody as a group, not different age groups.)
13-6C	52	40-50	Late teens; acting crazy	Frightened and nervous; shy I like thinking young. I don't want to get old. I enjoy acting crazy	Some of the Y might be working hard just like us but we don't know, and others are just quiet, they don't talk about things.	The Y – I don't feel different just because I'm O. I feel very comfortable.			

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(Cont.)

Code	Age	XofO	XofY	XofSelf	Expectations	Confirmation	Violation	GenComment	Misc
				just like them.					
17-4			Everything is normal. They are Y and everything they communicate is good.	I'm not shy, don't get intimidated.					
13-6B	55	50s	Young man made me feel comfortable; no age gap there; young people not thinking as seriously. More lively, don't have a care in the world	Nervous Know what we want in life	We know what we want. We're going to try to make it. We have to consider the young people who work and go to class and appreciate them.			Maybe it's me. There is something about me that withdraws. I feel it's in my mind that they know more about the subject than what I do. I'm not very open in class and I		I feel like I just clam up into a shell. (clamps palms together)
17-3			Very positive about themselves all the time, sure of themselves, carefree, take every thing as a joke.				try not to talk if I don't have to. I'm not myself. It's another person being there besides myself. It's like I have gone into a shell. This course has made my self-esteem go down, way down.		Pr is able to carry on with Y and laugh with them and relate to them. I see the differences, and I don't think she has anything against me.

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